## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Item:** | 5 | **Name:** | Sahar Fathi |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2019-0051 | **Date:** | February 12, 2019 |

**SUBJECT**

Proposed Ordinance 2019-0051 would adopt the alteration of voting precincts for 2019.

**SUMMARY**

Proposed Ordinance 2019-0051 would adopt boundary revisions to King County’s voting precincts for 2019. The proposed alterations would comply with State law and County Code to equalize precinct populations, reflect annexation activity, and ease election administration.

The proposed changes for 2019 would alter 49 of the existing 2,603 precincts countywide (1.8 percent of all existing precincts). The changes would add 11 precincts and abolish four, for a net gain of 7 precincts. The proposed changes would result in a total of 2,610 precincts countywide.

The precinct alteration process includes a public review period of 10 days, as well as input and review by both major political parties.[[1]](#footnote-1) This year, the review process ran from January 15 through January 24. According to the Department of Elections, the political parties and the members of the public had no comments, other than being in support of the proposed precinct alterations.

To comply with state law, the precinct alterations must be effective by April 30, 14 days before the May 13 start of the candidate filing period. To meet the April 30 deadline, Council action with regular processing is needed by April 5.

**BACKGROUND**

Washington State law[[2]](#footnote-2) and King County Code[[3]](#footnote-3) both set out protocols for the establishment and revision of voting precincts.

The State gives the Council the authority to establish precinct boundaries, as well as to set a maximum number of active registered voters within each precinct. The State statute allows that precinct boundaries may be altered “at any time,” except, “during the period starting 14 days prior to the first day for candidates to file for the primary election and ending with the day of the general election.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

The State statute also requires that:

* Every precinct must be within a single congressional district, legislative district, County Council district, and city.[[5]](#footnote-5)
* Each precinct should be as contiguous and compact as practicable.[[6]](#footnote-6)
* Precincts should follow visible, physical features to the extent possible.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The Code notes that precinct alterations should be organized, “as necessary, to implement precinct balancing and to accommodate the incorporation and annexations of unincorporated county areas into incorporated cities.”[[8]](#footnote-8) Specifically, it requires that:

* Precincts can have no more than 900 active registered voters.[[9]](#footnote-9)
* Any proposal to revise voting precincts must be transmitted to the Council for approval by ordinance at least 30 days before the State-imposed deadline by which the alteration ordinance must be effective.[[10]](#footnote-10) For 2019, the State deadline is May 13, making the transmittal deadline to Council April 12[[11]](#footnote-11). (The proposed ordinance was transmitted on January 29, thus meeting this requirement.)
* Elections must make the proposed alterations available to the public and the political parties for a review period of at least 10 days.[[12]](#footnote-12) (This year, the review period extended from January 15 through January 24, thus meeting the requirement.)

**ANALYSIS**

Proposed Ordinance 2019-0051 would alter 49 of the existing 2,603 voting precincts (1.8 percent of the existing precincts). The proposal would add 11 precincts, and abolish four, for a net gain of 7 precincts. The proposed changes would result in a total of 2,610 precincts countywide. Table1 summarizes changes to voting precincts within each Council district.

**Table 1. Proposed Voting Precinct Changes by Council District**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Council District** | **Altered** | **Added** | **Abolished** |
| **1** | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| **2** | 8 | 4 | 0 |
| **3** | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| **4** | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| **5** | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| **6** | 9 | 0 | 3 |
| **7** | 11 | 2 | 0 |
| **8** | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| **9** | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | **49** | **11** | **4** |

Elections staff notes that the primary reason for precinct alterations this year was due to the balancing of oversized precincts and election administrative maintenance. According to Elections staff, because state law and King County Code[[13]](#footnote-13) limit the maximum number of voters in a precinct, precinct balancing requires altering the oversized precincts with the precincts surrounding them to equalize the number of voters or splitting the precinct into two precincts. Elections staff have also stated that the Elections administrative maintenance are alterations to create better precinct boundaries, usually due to a precinct line splitting a parcel boundary or based on public input.

**Comment Period.** The precinct alteration process includes input and review by both major political parties in King County. The process also includes an advertised, 10-day public comment period, with materials and maps available on the Elections website, prior to transmittal to Council

According to Elections staff, the political parties and public did not offer any comments on the proposed changes, other than that they were in support.

**Notifying Voters.** After adoption, the ordinance and attachments become an amendment to the official list of County voting precincts. Elections will notify voters of their new precinct status following the Council’s adoption of the ordinance.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Ordinance 2019-0051 (and its attachments)
2. Correspondence Brief Sheet from Julie Wise
3. Transmittal Letter

**INVITED**

1. Julie Wise, Director, Department of Elections
2. Dave Wilson, GIS Supervisor, Department of Elections

1. KCC 1.12.010.E [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. RCW 29a.16.040-050 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. KCC 1.12.010 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. RCW 29a.10.040(1) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. RCW 29a.16.050(1) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. RCW 29a.16.050(2) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. RCW 29a.16.050(3) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. KCC 1.12.010.C [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. KCC 1.12.010.D [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. KCC 1.12.010.E [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Thirty days before the candidate filing period is actually April 13, but since that it is a Saturday – this would mean the transmittal date is April 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. KCC 1.12.010 E [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. RCW 29A.16.040-050 and KCC 1.12.010 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)