

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 17, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH THE CHARLES E. BEATLEY, JR. CENTRAL LIBRARY AS AN ADDITIONAL ABSENTEE VOTING SITE FOR THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

**ISSUE:** Consideration of an ordinance to establish the Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library as an additional absentee voting site for the 2012 Presidential Election.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council pass on first reading and set for public hearing, second reading and final passage on March 17, 2012, an ordinance to establish the Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library as an additional absentee voting site for the 2012 Presidential Election.

**BACKGROUND:** Virginia law permits individuals to vote an absentee ballot (by mail or in-person) if they will be unable to vote at their precinct on election day and they have a valid reason such as an 11 hour work day (including commuting time) or a vacation or business trip. Currently, in-person absentee voting in Alexandria is conducted at the Office of Voter Registration and Elections, 132 North Royal Street, across the street from City Hall.

The Alexandria Electoral Board, which is composed of three bipartisan members who are appointed by the Alexandria Circuit Court for staggered three year terms, is responsible for making recommendations to City Council concerning changes in precinct boundaries and for establishing new precincts including changes to the absentee voting precinct. City Council has the authority to make these changes.

**DISCUSSION:** On October 18, 2011, the Alexandria Electoral Board voted unanimously to recommend that City Council add the Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library as an additional site for absentee voting in the 2012 Presidential Election. This will accomplish the following:

- Increase the capacity for in-person absentee voting. In-person absentee voting increased from approximately 1,000 voters in 2000 to 3,361 voters in 2004 and 10,898 voters in 2008. As a result, in 2008 some absentee voters had to wait more than 2 hours to vote.
- Provide a more convenient location for individuals who reside in the west end and need to vote in-person absentee. In 2008, the in-person absentee voting rate in the west end

was less than half the rate for residents who lived within walking distance of the existing location across from City Hall.

State law requires absentee voting to begin at least 45 days prior to the election and also requires the in-person absentee site be open during the two Saturdays preceding a general election. In light of the increasing demand for in-person absentee voting during the Presidential Election, the Electoral Board is planning to keep the office at 132 North Royal Street open for absentee voting during the five Saturdays preceding the 2012 Presidential Election and to have additional hours in the evening for in-person absentee voting on seven weekdays preceding the election. In addition, the Electoral Board plans to more than quadruple the number of voting booths that are available for in-person absentee voting at 132 North Royal Street for the Presidential Election.

In addition to these measures, the Electoral Board is recommending that City Council add Beatley Library as an additional in-person absentee voting site during the last nine days of absentee voting for the 2012 Presidential Election. The Library has agreed to provide space for in-person absentee voting and this would significantly increase capacity during the busiest days of absentee voting. If approved, this site would be open for in-person absentee voting from Thursday, October 25, 2012, through Saturday, November 3, 2012 (excluding Sunday). The operating hours would be from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Monday through Thursday, 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on the two Fridays, and 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the two Saturdays.

If City Council approves this ordinance, the United States Justice Department will also need to approve this request to provide an additional absentee voting site for the 2012 Presidential Election. The City Attorney has prepared the submission to the Justice Department. In addition, after the request has been approved, the Electoral Board will work with the City's Communications staff to publicize the new absentee voting location.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** It will cost approximately \$15,920 to provide additional staffing and election officers to operate an additional absentee voting site at the Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library, and this funding is included in the FY 2013 Budget Request for the Office of Voter Registration and Elections.

**ATTACHMENT:** Ordinance.

**STAFF:** Donald E. Ledwig, Secretary, Alexandria Electoral Board  
Peter Newbould, Chairman, Alexandria Electoral Board  
Bruce Brown, Vice Chairman, Alexandria Electoral Board  
Rose Dawson, Director, Alexandria Library  
James L. Banks, City Attorney

Introduction and first reading: 2/28/2012  
Public hearing: 3/17/2012  
Second reading and enactment:

INFORMATION ON PROPOSED ORDINANCE

Title

AN ORDINANCE to amend and reordain Section 2-2-11 (ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTRAL ABSENTEE VOTER ELECTION DISTRICT AND VOTING PLACE) by adding Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library as an additional absentee voting place for the 2012 Presidential Election.

Summary

The proposed ordinance adds The Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library as an additional absentee voting place for the 2012 Presidential Election. Currently, the City has only one permanent absentee voting place located at 132 North Royal Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

Sponsor

City of Alexandria Electoral Board

Staff

Tom Parkins, Registrar of Voters  
Eric Spicer, Assistant Registrar  
James L. Banks, Jr., City Attorney  
Christina Zechman Brown, Assistant City Attorney

Authority

Va. Code § 24.2-712 (1950 as amended)

Estimated Costs of Implementation

Approximately \$15,920 to provide additional staffing and election officers (already included in the FY 2013 budget request).

Attachments in Addition to Proposed Ordinance and its Attachments (if any)

Memorandum from City Manager Rashad Young to City Council, January 31, 2012, CONSIDERATION OF AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH THE CHARLES E. BEATLEY, JR. CENTRAL LIBRARY AS AN ADDITIONAL ABSENTEE VOTING SITE FOR THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

AN ORDINANCE to amend and reordain Section 2-2-11 (ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTRAL ABSENTEE VOTER ELECTION DISTRICT AND VOTING PLACE) by adding Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library as an additional absentee voting place for the 2012 Presidential Election.

THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA HEREBY ORDAINS:

Section 1. That the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia granted to the governing body of each county or city the right to establish one or more central absentee voter precincts for the purpose of receiving, counting, and recording absentee ballots cast in the county or city. Va. Code § 24.2-712 (1950 as amended).

Section 2. That the Alexandria Electoral Board, which is comprised of three bipartisan members who are appointed by the Alexandria Circuit Court for staggered three year terms, is responsible for making recommendations to City Council concerning changes in precinct boundaries and for establishing new precincts including changes to the absentee voting precinct. On October 18, 2011, the Alexandria Electoral Board voted unanimously to recommend that City Council add the Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library as an additional site for absentee voting in the 2012 Presidential Election.

Section 3. That Section 2-2-11 of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981 as amended, be, and the same is hereby adopted to read as follows:

Sec. 2-2-11 Establishment of central absentee voter election district and voting place.

There is hereby established for the City of Alexandria one Central Absentee Voter Election District, to be used for all elections. The voting place of the Central Absentee Voter Election District shall be located at 132 North Royal Street, Alexandria, Virginia. The Central Absentee Voter Election District shall conform in all respects with the provisions of section 24.2-712 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended.

There is hereby established for the City of Alexandria an additional Central Absentee Voter Election District, to be used for the 2012 Presidential Election. The voting place for the additional Central Absentee Voter Election District shall be located at the Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library, 5005 Duke Street Alexandria, VA 22304. The additional Central Absentee Voter Election District shall conform in all respects with the provisions of section 24.2-712 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended.

Section 4. That this ordinance shall become effective upon the date and at the time of its final passage; provided, however, that the change in voting place herein made shall not be implemented until the changes are first submitted to the Attorney General of the United States

and no objection is interposed within 60 days of the submission, as required pursuant to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended.

WILLIAM D. EUILLE  
Mayor

Introduction: 2/28/2012  
First Reading: 2/28/2012  
Publication:  
Public Hearing: 3/17/2012  
Second Reading: 3/17/2012  
Final Passage:

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