



CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK

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SAM S. GASTON
CITY MANAGER

November 2, 2021

Dear Mountain Brook Residents,

There are 460 municipalities in the State of Alabama. 449 of these municipalities elect all members of their governing body every four years which coincides with Presidential elections (even years). Nine (9) cities in Alabama currently have “off-year” (odd years) elections: Birmingham, Huntsville, Montgomery, Mobile, Auburn, Tuscaloosa, Gadsden, Bessemer and Dothan. The other two cities, Mountain Brook and Scottsboro, have staggered elections.

Earlier this year, the Alabama Legislature adopted Act #2021-157 (Senate Bill 119) with the intention of moving all municipal elections to an off-year cycle (odd years). However, because the cities of Mountain Brook and Scottsboro are covered under previously enacted special legislation for their staggered terms of office, the Act inadvertently did not include these cities.

Act 2021-157 was passed in the Alabama House of Representatives by a 91-5 vote and the Alabama Senate by a 30-0 vote. The implementation of Act 2021-157 required adding a 5th year to the terms of office of the governing bodies of 449 municipalities in Alabama that were elected in 2020. Besides Mountain Brook and Scottsboro, this Act excluded the nine cities above whose elections already occur on the “off-year” cycle.

This Act was passed for three (3) reasons:

1. It is difficult for cities and counties to recruit enough poll workers for up to five (5) elections in one year including the Republican/Democrat primaries and runoffs, municipal elections and runoffs and the general election in November. Mountain Brook has experienced first-hand the difficulties in securing sufficient poll workers especially during the 2020 elections.
2. Also, the logistics associated with programming, testing, certifying, cleaning, and transporting more than 400 voting machines to the 176 voting locations across Jefferson County alone becomes especially challenging during the even year Presidential election cycles.
3. Changing municipal elections to an off-year cycle is expected to increase voter turnout and awareness for local elections and reduce election fatigue and confusion.

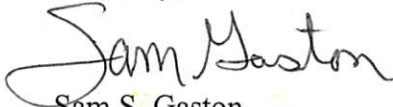
As mentioned above, the cities of Mountain Brook and Scottsboro have staggered elections. Both cities sought and obtained special legislation to hold biennial elections in order to ensure the continuity of experienced elected officials and minimize the risk of having a complete change of the governing body in one year. Mountain Brook changed its elections to staggered terms in 2004. Currently in Presidential election years, the mayor and two councilmembers are elected to four (4) year terms while the other three (3) councilmembers are elected two (2) years later for four (4) year terms.

The City Council, by a 4-1 vote, has asked our state legislators to pass a bill in early 2022 that will allow Mountain Brook to change its election cycle so it will track all other municipal elections in the State. This change requires adding a 5th year to the terms of all the current members of the governing body extending their terms to 2023 and 2025 when elections would be held next for four (4) year terms. This would move the election of the mayor and two (2) council members off Presidential election cycles. Scottsboro is also seeking this change from their local state legislators. If this legislation does not pass, then Mountain Brook, and possibly Scottsboro, would be the only two (2) cities in Alabama with elections during the Presidential election cycle.

For these reasons, the majority of the City Council believes it is in the best interest of our community to change its election cycle including extending the terms of the current members of the governing body by one (1) year then revert back to four (4) year terms starting in 2023 and 2025.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me, at gastons@mtnbrook.org or 205-802-3803, during the week of November 8, 2021.

Sincerely,



Sam S. Gaston
City Manager