Municipal Elections- The Basics

Statutory Requirements:

- Sec. 29.26.010. Administration. (a) The governing body shall prescribe the rules for conducting an election. (b) For an election in which voters cast ballots at polling places in their precincts, the governing body shall appoint an election board composed of at least three judges for each precinct. If the governing body appoints an election board, a judge shall be a voter of the precinct for which appointed unless no voter is willing to serve. (Canvass Board)

- Sec. 29.26.020. Nominations. (a) Subject to other provisions of this title, the governing body shall provide by ordinance for nominations of elected officials by providing for declaration of candidacy or for petition requiring the signatures of not more than 10 voters, or for both.

Municipal Elections- The Basics

Statutory Requirements:

- Sec. 29.26.030. Notice of elections. (a) Subject to other provisions of this title, a municipality shall give at least 20 days notice of an election. (b) This section applies to home rule and general law municipalities. (§ 9 ch 74 SLA 1985)

- Sec. 29.26.040. Date of regular election. The date of a regular election is the first Tuesday of October annually, unless a different date or interval of years is provided by ordinance. (October 1, 2024)

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Statutory Requirements:

- Sec. 29.26.050. Voter qualification. (a) A person may vote in a municipal election only if the person
  - (1) is qualified to vote in state elections under AS 15.05.010;
  - (2) has been a resident of the municipality for 30 days immediately preceding the election;
  - (3) is registered to vote in state elections at a residence address within a municipality at least 30 days before the municipal election at which the person seeks to vote; and
  - (4) is not disqualified under article V of the state constitution.
- (b) Voter registration by the municipality may not be required. However, in order to vote for a candidate or on a ballot measure relating to a specific local election district or service area, a municipality may by ordinance require that a person be registered to vote in state elections at least 30 days before the municipal election at an address within the boundaries of that local election district or service area. The municipality has the responsibility to determine if a voter meets the requirements of the ordinance and this section. (VREMS, DOE Registers)

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When do Pre-Election Tasks Begin?

Pre-election tasks begin immediately after the previous election is concluded.

In this training we will cover election tasks beginning on January 1 of the election year.

Post-election tasks will be covered in a subsequent training.

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Absentee By-Mail Ballots

Prepare the application and have it posted and ready on January 1st if your community participates in absentee by-mail voting.

Keep a spreadsheet of absentee by-mail ballot applications and mailing addresses.

Mail ballots in a timely fashion so that they may be returned to your municipality by polling day.

Print and have ready in office copies of the State and Borough absentee by mail applications for members of your community.

Election Workers and Canvass Board

May or June is a good time to mail your previous election workers for recruitment in the current year. Elections workers includes both precinct workers for the day of election and your canvass board for canvassing elections results.

Does your code require the governing body to confirm your election workers? If so, schedule this legislation to go before your council.

AS 29.26.010 Administration states:
(b) For an election in which voters cast ballots at polling places in their precincts, the governing body shall appoint an election board composed of at least three judges for each precinct. If the governing body appoints an election board, a judge shall be a voter of the precinct for which appointed unless no voter is willing to serve.

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Notice of Offices to Be Filled

A notice of offices to be filled lets the community know which seats are up for election this election cycle.

Check your election files to determine which seats will be up, or which members are filling a partial term that needs to be voted on in the upcoming election.

Check your code for the dates that the notice of offices to be filled must be published or otherwise advertised.

Publish the notices in accordance with your code, paying close attention to the required dates.

Sec. 29.20.140. Qualifications.

(a) A borough voter is eligible to be a member of the assembly and a city voter is eligible to be a member of the council. A member of the governing body who ceases to be a voter in the municipality immediately forfeits office.

(b) A municipality may by ordinance establish a durational residency requirement not to exceed three years for members of the governing body.

(c) A municipality may by ordinance establish district residency requirements for members of its governing body. A member of the governing body who represents a district and who becomes a resident of another district in the municipality continues to serve until the next regular election unless provided otherwise by ordinance.

(d) Except by ordinance ratified by the voters, no limit may be placed on the total number of terms or number of consecutive terms a voter may serve on the governing body.

(e) This section applies to home rule and general law municipalities.

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Declaration of Candidacy

Sec. 29.26.020. Nominations. (a) Subject to other provisions of this title, the governing body shall provide by ordinance for nominations of elected officials by providing for declaration of candidacy or for petition requiring the signatures of not more than 10 voters, or for both.

Check your city code for what dates the declaration of candidacy packets must be posted. If this is not listed, remember that a notice of election (with candidates) must be posted 20 days prior to the election per Alaska Statutes.

Make sure the opening and closing dates of the candidacy filing period are clearly listed on all notices.

Post all notices and make all documents available per your code requirements.

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Ballot Questions Deadline- Council

Does your city code include a deadline to adopt legislation to place questions on the ballot before the voters? The code could look like:

3.05.130 Propositions and questions.
An ordinance or resolution placing propositions and questions before the voters must be adopted not later than 53 calendar days before a regular election, or 60 calendar days before a special election.

Inform your council of the deadline with enough time for the council to pass legislation to place questions on the ballot.

Check your Election Supplies

Envelopes
     Questioned
     Early/Absentee
     By-Mail

Ballot Boxes (For Receiving Voted Ballots)

Ballot Transport/Security Envelopes

Ballot Marking Pens

"I Voted" Stickers

Tables

Chairs

Voting Booths

Precinct locations and agreements to use them on election day

Absentee/Early Voting Location

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Ballots- Create Your Own

If you create your own ballots in your municipality, here are a few things to remember:

List the Seats and Candidates alphabetically. Be sure to spell candidate names as they are listed on the declaration of candidacy.

Leave space on each seat race for write-in candidates.

List any ballot propositions or referendums in the order in which they were filed. Also make sure to have a complete copy of the legislation for voters to read.

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Ballots- Ordering Printed Ballots

Do you order printed ballots?

Be sure to check with your printer for their deadlines of when you need to have complete ballot information to them.

Carefully proofread all ballot races prior to submission.

Carefully review ballot proofs returned to you prior to final printing. Have more than one set of eyes verify the information.

When ballots are received, check all stubs for duplicate ballot numbers.

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Notices of Elections- Voter Registration

Sec. 29.26.030. Notice of elections. (a) Subject to other provisions of this title, a municipality shall give at least 20 days notice of an election. (b) This section applies to home rule and general law municipalities. (§ 9 ch 74 SLA 1985)

Check your code for notice of elections requirements.

If your code is silent on this matter, the above state statute is your guidance.

Notices of election shall include all races and questions to be placed before the voters, as well as the time, place, date, and other relevant polling place information.

Post a notice that voters are required to be registered as a voter in the City 30 days prior to elections.

Election Worker Training

Once you have recruited and confirmed your election workers:

- Schedule election worker training.
- Update training manual for any changes from previous years.
- Include forms for elections workers to be paid after their service (consult finance).
- If possible, hold election worker training in the polling place to familiarize workers with the location.
- Re-confirm at training that the workers will be available on polling day.
- Have back-up workers available.

What do you need from the Division of Elections?

The State of Alaska Divisions of Elections maintains all voter registrations.

- Your precinct register to use on polling day will come from the SOA DOE.
- Call the Division 30 days before your polling day to request.
  - They will mail you a precinct register with a list of all your registered voters.
  - Use this precinct register on polling day.
  - Maintain this precinct register to return to the Division of Elections.
  - The Division of Elections will use your signed register to record who voted.

- The City Clerk can ask the DOE for access to VREMS, the voter registration electronic management system maintained by the State. This system allows clerks to access voter registration information for verification purposes.

Receiving Ballots

If you ordered ballots, recording the receipt of ballots is necessary:

- Check that the number of ballots you ordered matches the number of ballots you received.
- Verify receipt of sample ballots.
- Carefully review ballot stubs for duplicates.
- Sign the ballot receipt and file it.
- Store the ballots in a secure location until you are ready to give them to the election chair or use them on polling day.

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Polling Place Set-Up

Before polling day:

- Schedule election workers to help set-up for polling day (voting booths, tables, chairs).

- Ensure all necessary notices and voter instructions are posted.

- Arrange all supplies and have them ready.

- Issue precinct key/ballots to the election chair if this is your process.

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Questions?

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