

1 **CITY OF HOMER**
2 **HOMER, ALASKA**

Aderhold/Mayor

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4 **RESOLUTION 23-072(A)**

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6 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA
7 PROVIDING COMMENTS ON KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH
8 ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 2023-048 TO PLACE AN ADVISORY VOTE
9 QUESTION ON THE OCTOBER 2023 BOROUGH BALLOT ASKING
10 WHETHER THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SHOULD CHANGE
11 ITS REGULAR ELECTION DATE
12

13 WHEREAS, The Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) Assembly introduced Resolution 2023-
14 048 at its July 11, 2023, meeting and postponed the resolution to its August 1, 2023, meeting to
15 allow time for Cities within the Borough to comment; and
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17 WHEREAS, The wording of the ballot proposition to appear on the October 3, 2023,
18 election in Resolution 2023-048 is as follows:
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20 Shall the Kenai Peninsula Borough change the Borough's regular election date
21 from the first Tuesday in October to the first Tuesday following the first Monday
22 in November to align with the Federal and State election date?
23 (THIS IS AN ADVISORY VOTE ONLY)
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25 ; and
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27 WHEREAS, Resolution 2023-048 is accompanied by a memorandum with possible "pros
28 and cons" of changing the Borough election date that could be provided to Borough voters in
29 online election information with the first pro stating that voter turnout would likely increase
30 on even-numbered years when State and Federal elections occur; and
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32 WHEREAS, Alaska Statute 29.26.040 reads: "The date of a regular election is the first
33 Tuesday of October annually, unless a different date or interval of years is provided by
34 ordinance"; and
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36 WHEREAS, Assembly discussion during the Policies and Procedures committee meeting
37 before their July 11, 2023, regular meeting indicated that if the ballot proposition were to pass
38 the KPB Assembly would then spend time researching the election date change, coordinating
39 with others, and considering an ordinance to change the date; and
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41 WHEREAS, Borough and City clerks' offices coordinate closely to conduct Borough and
42 City elections, including cost and equipment sharing, meaning that if the Borough changes its

43 election date, Cities would need to evaluate whether to similarly change their election dates
44 or incur significant additional costs to run elections on their own; and

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46 WHEREAS, Homer is a First Class City within the KPB; and

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48 WHEREAS, Any proposed changes to Borough elections should be coordinated with
49 Cities within the Borough; and

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51 WHEREAS, Voters should be provided with the most accurate information possible
52 regarding ballot propositions initiated by the elected body and the memorandum associated
53 with the resolution provides opinions with no underlying factual information; and

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55 WHEREAS, The ballot measure wording, even with the statement that it is an advisory
56 vote only, reads like a voter initiative, which is confusing, and could lead voters to believe that
57 the vote will implement a change in Borough election date; and

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59 WHEREAS, Within the State of Alaska, State and Federal races are partisan and
60 municipal elections (boroughs and cities) are nonpartisan; and

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62 WHEREAS, While State/Federal and Borough elections may be held on the same day
63 and same locations they would continue to be separate elections requiring separate election
64 workers and voting equipment; and

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66 WHEREAS, Many election workers are employed by the State and the Borough/Cities to
67 conduct elections, the Borough hires approximately 300 poll workers each year, and on even-
68 numbered years when Borough elections align with State/Federal elections approximately 600
69 poll workers would be needed; and

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71 WHEREAS, In recent years, election workers have been difficult to hire; and

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73 WHEREAS, The Matanuska-Susitna Borough changed the date of their municipal
74 elections to align with State/Federal elections in 2019 and voter turnout is reported as follows:

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76 2018 – 16.76% (last election held in October)
77 2019 – 10.31% (first election held in November)
78 2020 – 32.86% (presidential election year)
79 2021 – 17.86%
80 2022 – 40.58%

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82 indicating that voter turnout increased significantly during elections held in conjunction with
83 State/Federal elections, but voter turnout during years without corresponding State/Federal
84 elections was similar to that before the date change; and

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WHEREAS, The desire to increase voter turnout is a laudable goal and the goal should be to increase voter turnout every year; and

WHEREAS, The full range of possible methods to increase voter turnout should be evaluated before placing an advisory vote for one method on the ballot.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Homer, Alaska, provides the following comments to the KPB Assembly regarding Resolution 2023-048:

- Homer City Council agrees with the KPB Assembly that voter turnout at Borough elections could be higher and that working together to explore the full range of methods to increase voter turnout should be investigated collaboratively.
- Homer City Council believes that the coordination should occur before any advisory proposition so that voters are accurately informed about the ramifications of measures proposed to increase voter turnout.
- Homer City Council is opposed to the KPB Assembly placing an advisory vote changing the borough election date from October to November on the October 2023 ballot.
- Homer City Council recommends engaging a Borough-wide group like the Elections Stakeholder Group to investigate methods to increase voter turnout. The group should include relevant representatives from the Borough, the Cities within the Borough, the State Division of Elections, election workers, organizations associated with voting in the Borough and/or State, and others deemed appropriate.
- If the KPB Assembly decides to move forward with an advisory vote for the October 2023 election, Homer City Council has the following recommendations:
 - Amend the wording of the proposition question to the following:

“Shall the Kenai Peninsula Borough investigate and implement methods to increase voter turnout at Borough elections?”

or, if the proposition will be focused on changing the election date, clarify the wording to accurately state what the vote will do by revising to the following:

“Shall the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly introduce an Ordinance that would change the Borough’s regular election date from the first Tuesday in October to the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November to align with the Federal and State election date, **beginning no earlier than the 2025 election cycle?**”

- Amend the memorandum and information provided to voters to include information stated in the whereas clauses of this resolution.

127 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution will be provided to the KPB Assembly as
128 comment on Resolution 2023-048 before their August 1, 2023 regular meeting.

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130 PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA, THIS 24th day of July,
131 2023.

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CITY OF HOMER

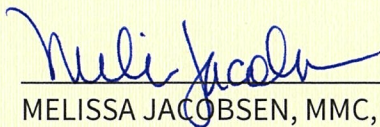


KEN CASTNER, MAYOR

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138 ATTEST:

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MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK

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Fiscal Note: N/A

