



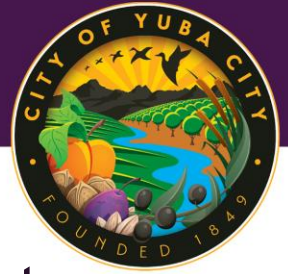
**Changing from an “at-large”  
to a “division-based”  
system of elections.**

**September 7, 2021**



**Presentation By:  
Dave Vaughn, City Manager**

# Purpose



- To determine whether to declare the Council's intent to change from at-large elections for members of the City Council, to division-based elections, and to establish a timeline for doing so.

# Background



- The members of the Council are currently elected at-large. Under an at-large system of elections, every voter in the City votes for each member of the Council, regardless of where the voter or the candidate is registered to vote in the City. Under a district-based system of elections, the City is divided into districts, candidates may only run for the seat representing the district in which they are registered to vote, and voters may only vote for a candidate from their division.
- All California county board of supervisors are already elected by district. The transition to district elections for cities is now becoming increasingly common in California. Regionally, the cities of Chico, Davis, Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, and Roseville have all recently transitioned to district elections. One of the reasons for these transitions is that district elections are consistent with the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA), which encourages district elections for communities with a significant population of minority groups. Additionally, if certain jurisdictions do not transition them self, they could be compelled to do so by a judge through a process that could potentially restrict community input or set aside election results.

# Background (continued)



- The initial 2020 Census data was finally released on August 12, 2021. The day before, the City received a letter from attorney Matthew Rexroad on behalf of a prospective person allegedly residing in the City, claiming that the City’s at-large system of elections violates the CVRA. The letter demands that the City switch to a division-based system of elections, and threatens to sue the City if the City does not voluntarily switch to a district-based system of elections (“Letter”). The Letter specifically alleges that the District’s at-large election system dilutes the ability of Latinos and those of Indian Ancestry to elect candidates of their choice or otherwise influence the outcome of the City’s elections.
- While Yuba City has a tradition of a diversity of representation, including the nation’s first Sikh woman as Mayor as well as a Latina of Mexican-American origin currently sitting on the Council, public agencies who do not move to district-based election are exposed to a greater legal risk. Despite inaccuracies in the Letter, it serves to trigger certain timelines under the CVRA – even though all of the updated 2020 Census information has not been released from the U.S. Census Bureau.
- The first step toward switching to division-based elections is to adopt a resolution (1) declaring the City’s intention to transition from at-large to division-based elections, (2) describing specific steps the City will take to facilitate this transition, and (3) establishing an estimated timeframe for doing so. The resolution before the Council tonight is only a preliminary step, not a final authorization to transition to division-based elections. The full process for the transition is described in this staff report.

# Alternatives



1. Continue this matter to the next Council meeting scheduled for September 21, 2021 (this is still within the initial 45 day “safe harbor” period, which ends on September 25, 2021.)
2. Decline to adopt a resolution of intent to move to district-based elections.

# Recommendation



Adopt a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Yuba City Declaring its Intention to Transition from At-Large to Division-Based Elections.