

Stakeholder/Election Reforms

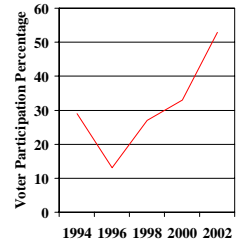
City of Cumberland

February 11, 2003

<http://www.AdventureGovernment.com>

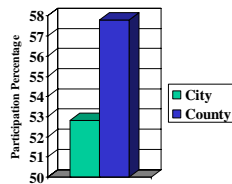
Phase I Success Stories

- Consolidated elections increased participation rates in city elections dramatically.
- Campaign finance law introduced more financial accountability.
- Problems still exist.



Background

- Low level of city resident participation in last election compared to county.
 - 52.8% of registered voters in city versus 57.8% in rest of county.



Current Needs

- Need to increase influence of city electorate in state/county contests.
- Need to increase size of stakeholders to improve quality, speed and ownership of decision making.



Current Needs

- Need to improve citizen access to meetings, voting, and election candidacy.
- Need to educate public about local government efforts and how government works.
- Need to recognize citizen volunteers and efforts they make on behalf of the city.



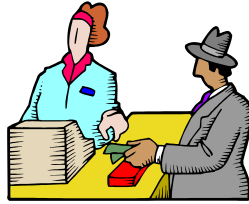
Election Board Research

- Have Election Board research two questions
 - (1) Why are voter participation rates in Cumberland lower? Voter rolls not accurate? Voter apathy? Access?
 - (2) What would be the effect on senior voter turnout of moving polling stations to Queen City Towers, Booth Towers, Cumberland Man, etc.
- Charter: Election Board will "Perform such other duties as may be assigned to it by this Charter, Ordinances and Resolutions, and by the direction of the Mayor and City Council."



Voter Registration

- City version of “motor-voter”
- Flag residents who have not registered to vote with water and sewer, tax bills
 - Notice on bill
 - As part of customer service in billing department
- Information and registration materials available in billing/collections department.



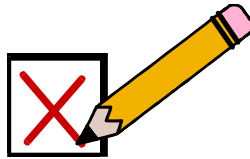
Election Changes

- Decrease age requirements for Mayor and City Council Candidates
 - Current Charter rules are 25 (Mayor) and 21 (City Council)
 - Voter registration allowed at 18 years.
 - Half of all cities of our size allow all voter registrants to file for public office.
 - Proposal: Decrease age requirements to 18 years of age.



Advisory Referendum

- Add up to three issues of public concern to each city election ballot.
- Non-binding (not a referendum)
- Examples:
 - Re-opening Downtown Mall
 - Bond issues
 - Tax increases, decreases



Large Meeting Hall

- Allow Council meetings with potentially large turnout to be held in venues (e.g., FH High, Allegany College) that will comfortably accommodate a larger audience.
 - Change would require change in Charter.
- Have occasional events/meetings in neighborhood settings.



Neighborhood Advisory Council

- Create Council or Committee of representatives drawn from neighborhood associations
 - Representative from each NA
 - Helps to cultivate new associations and provides advice on best practices to fledgling NAs
 - Takes part in long-range planning studies and other community studies conducted by the City.
 - Advises staff on Community Betterment program
 - Advises M&CC on community issues (e.g., crime control, housing, streets, recreation)
 - Frederick City model



Community Summits

- Annual meeting arranged around pressing community concern to inform public about plans and progress and “brainstorm.”
 - Mid April Economic Development Summit



Recognition of Citizen Volunteers

- An annual recognition of commission members and volunteers and provide opportunity for networking.
- Enhance professional development opportunities by providing occasional orientations on city government.
- Commissions are training ground for future leaders.



Goals

- Increase city voting numbers by achieving parity with county in registration and participation
- Increase citizen participation in local government and community problem solving
- Increase quality and ownership of local planning and policy making.

