

## Stakeholder/Election Reforms

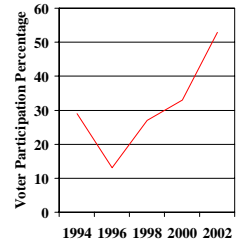
City of Cumberland

February 11, 2003

<http://www.AdventureGovernment.com>

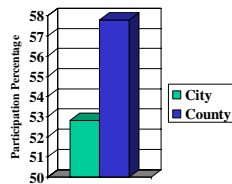
## Phase I Success Stories

- 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.



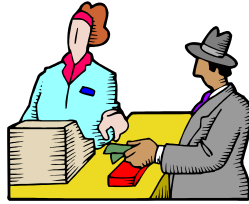
## Election Board Research

- 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.



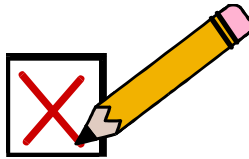
## Election Changes

- 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.

