



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

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To: Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager

From: Board of Election Commissioners

Date: September 9, 2021

Re: RECOMMENDATION TO RELOCATE CERTAIN POLLING SITES FOR THE 2021
MUNICIPAL ELECTION

In accordance with Chapter 255 of the Acts of 2020, as amended by Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2021 and Chapter 29 of the Acts of 2021, there are procedures required when moving precincts or polling locations which affects any polling place changes. The section states:

“Notwithstanding section 24 of chapter 54 of the General Laws or any other general or special law to the contrary, the select board, board of selectmen, town council or city council may, by recorded and public vote, change any polling place to be used at the election not less than 20 days prior to the date of the election if it is determined that the public convenience or public health would be better served.

If the select board, board of selectmen or town council determines that the public convenience or public health would be better served, they may house all polling places in a single building within the municipality, if such building is suitably equipped; provided, however, that alcoholic beverages shall not be served or consumed in that portion of a building used as a polling place, during voting hours or while ballots are being counted therein.

In cities, the city council may designate polling places in non-adjacent precincts if they determine the public convenience or public health would be better served.

In making a decision to change a polling place, the select board, board of selectmen, town council or city council shall evaluate and report on whether such change would have a disparate adverse impact on access to the polls on the basis of race, national origin, disability, income or age, and not later than 3 days prior to changing a polling place, shall make publicly available on its website and at the office of the town or city clerk a report on its evaluation.

When the polling places have been designated pursuant to this section, the board of registrars shall post on the municipal website and at other such places as it may determine, a description of the polling places and shall notify voters by using an electronic means, to the extent available, such as via email or reverse 911 call.”

The City’s primary responsibility for the 2021 election is to conduct a fair election in a manner that facilitates maximum voter participation while minimizing voter confusion and risk during COVID-19. Accordingly, “the select board, board of selectmen, town council or city council may, by recorded and public vote, change any polling place to be used at the election not less than 20 days prior to the date of the election if it is determined that the public convenience or public health would be better served...”

Due to everchanging status of the coronavirus and lack of available and suitable locations to serve as polling places it has been determined by the City of Cambridge Board of Election Commissioners (“Board”) that public health and convenience would be better served if some polling sites were relocated for the upcoming Municipal Election, November 2, 2021.

The City of Cambridge has 34 precincts and 25 polling sites. Of those 34 precincts, the Board recommends that five (5) of these precincts in four (4) polling sites be relocated. The Board has located suitable locations to serve as polling sites that would meet state regulations and be in the same ward and precinct or in close proximity to the current polling places with hopes of providing voter convenience and to minimize voter confusion.

Each of the proposed polling locations were evaluated and the Board determined that these sites will not have a “disparate adverse impact on access to the polls on the basis of race, national origin, disability, income or age...” The proposed locations are accessible for all voters, near previously used polling locations, and provide enough space to accommodate the necessary voting equipment and supplies and social distancing of poll workers, and voters.

In accordance with 950 CMR 51:00 “Polling place accessibility for elderly and handicapped voters” a Polling Place Accessibility Survey was completed for each of the proposed relocation sites to enable the Board to determine that they are fully accessible for all voters and suitable as polling locations. In addition, the Board will adhere to public health guidelines and ensure election workers receive training on properly sanitizing equipment, PPE and social distancing to mitigate public health risks.

The following is a list of polling places used during the 2021 Municipal Election and the recommended relocation sites:

Precinct	Current Location & Reason for Relocation	Polling Locations for 2021 Elections
1-1	Kennedy-Longfellow School 158 Spring Street, Cafeteria Unable to be used while school is in session	Community Charter School of Cambridge, 245 Bent Street
1-2	Kennedy-Longfellow School 158 Spring Street, Cafeteria Unable to be used while school is in session	Community Charter School of Cambridge, 245 Bent Street
9-2	National Guard Armory 450 Concord Avenue Mandatory restrictions on military buildings (ex. mandatory face covering)	Cambridge Water Department, 250 Fresh Pond Parkway
9-3	Haggerty School Not available for voting	Russell Youth Center, 680 Huron Avenue, Second Floor
11-3	St. John the Evangelist Church – returning to previous polling place	Burns Apartments, 50 Churchill Avenue, Community Room

At a meeting held on Thursday, September 9, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. the Board voted 4 in favor, 0 against, to submit this request recommending the relocation of certain polling sites for the 2021 Municipal Election to the City Council for review and determination as per Chapter 255 of the Acts of 2020.