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NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Colorado Municipal League releases spring municipal election preview

April 2, 2020, Denver, CO – While COVID-19 has stopped many activities, it has not stopped the essential activity of elections. On April 7, voters in approximately 100 cities and towns across Colorado will decide their city and town councils and boards of trustees, as municipalities already have plans in place to ensure voters and election workers and voters alike remain safe and appropriately distanced.

More than 40 of those municipalities will also have tax issues or other questions on the ballot. At least 68 elections have been canceled under statutory provisions allowing municipalities to cancel an election when there is no more than one candidate for each open seat.

Ballot questions being considered by voters include:

Tax and bond issues

Sales tax questions on the ballot include:

- Burlington – for capital improvements;
- Center – for downtown revitalization, capital improvements and public safety;
- Creede – for capital improvements;
- Crestone – for water and sewer operational expenses;
- Evans – for streets;
- Grover – for the general fund
- Johnstown – for streets and transportation-related projects;
- Limon – for capital improvements;
- Platteville – for economic development;
- Silver Cliff – for streets and alleyways;
- Westcliffe – for capital improvements;
- Wiley – for general operating expenses.

Firestone is asking to expand the purposes for which a sales tax was approved in 2017, to include construction, operation and maintenance of town facilities beyond the police and municipal court facility.

Tobacco tax questions will be considered in Carbondale, Eagle and Red Cliff.

Pitkin has two separate property tax questions on the ballot: the first to fund streets and ditch improvements, and the second to go toward their town hall.

Lodging taxes will be on the ballot in Fruita, Mead and Yuma.

Nederland voters will consider a tax on short-term rentals. Revenue would be used for health and human services and law enforcement.

Creede is requesting \$1 million in debt authority, and Hugo is requesting \$3.6 million in debt authority, for improvements to their respective wastewater treatment facilities.

Revenue retention

Akron is requesting permission to waive the statutory 5.5% property tax limitation and Berthoud is requesting permission to retain excess revenue collected by the parks and recreation sales tax that was approved by voters in November 2018.

Historically, municipalities have passed a majority of the TABOR-related questions that have been asked, with a 61% approval rate for tax questions, 70% approval rate for debt questions and 86% approval rate for revenue retention questions since voter approval was first required in 1993.

Governance

Eagle voters will decide whether to adopt the home rule charter drafted by its home rule charter commission and Severance voters will consider an advisory question concerning whether the town should initiate the process to become a home rule municipality.

Ault and Pitkin are asking to reduce the number of trustees on their town boards from six to four. Montezuma voters will consider eliminating term limits for their elected officials.

Recalls are on the ballot in Elizabeth, Ordway and Wiggins.

Broadband

Municipalities seeking approval to provide broadband service or partner with the private sector to provide that service include Frederick, Johnstown and Monument.

Marijuana

Retail and medical marijuana businesses are on the ballot in:

- Dolores - stores and dispensaries, cultivation, manufacturing and testing;
- Kremmling - stores and dispensaries;
- Norwood - stores and dispensaries, manufacturing and testing;
- Pierce - stores and dispensaries, cultivation, manufacturing and testing;
- Platteville - stores and dispensaries, cultivation and manufacturing;
- Severance - stores and dispensaries, manufacturing and testing.

Marijuana taxes are also being considered in each of the above municipalities except Pierce.

Sedgwick is asking to clarify its 2016 marijuana excise tax ordinance's language, without any change in the tax rate. In separate questions, Sedgwick voters will also consider a retail sales tax to replace the existing occupation tax and an occupation tax on wholesale transactions.

Publication requirements

To save money on publication costs, Lyons and Palisade are requesting authorization to no longer publish the bills list or contracts awarded, while Lyons and Keenesburg are seeking permission to publish ordinances by title rather than in full.

Delta is requesting a charter amendment to publish city documents on the city's website rather than in a newspaper.

Election changes

Keenesburg and Mead are asking their voters to move their regular town elections to November of even-numbered years.

Burlington voters have the option to update the nominating petition period in their election code to align with state statutes.

Charter amendments

Delta, Johnstown and Woodland Park are asking their voters to eliminate, clarify or otherwise update various provisions of their home rule charter.

Other possible Woodland Park charter amendments include providing a stipend for city council members, setting term limits for board, committee and commission members and editing the charter to include gender neutral language.

Delta is also asking voters to amend contract and debt provisions within the charter, while Glendale voters will decide whether to adjust the city manager residency requirements.

Other issues

Other issues to be decided include:

- Dolores – permitting the operation of off-highway vehicles on designated public streets;
- Estes Park – sale of public property;
- Lyons – two questions concerning the provision of waste hauling services;
- Montrose – granting a non-exclusive franchise to Black Hills Energy for natural gas distribution;
- Rangely – whether to continue the fluoridation of the town’s water.

In May, Pueblo will hold a special election in which voters will decide whether to municipalize the local electric utility.

CML wishes to thank the city and town clerks who assisted CML staff in compiling this election data.

CML has provided COVID-19 guidelines to municipalities holding elections in April. To view these guidelines, visit www.cml.org/covid19 and look under election information.

CML is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization established in 1923 and represents the interests of 270 cities and towns. For more information on the Colorado Municipal League, please visit www.cml.org or call 303-831-6411.

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