

It makes sense to move elections to even-numbered years

Posted: Wednesday, July 21, 2010 12:00 am

Editorial from the Half Moon Bay Review

It makes sense to move elections to even-numbered years

Moving Half Moon Bay elections to even-numbered years is a good idea. So good, in fact, that representatives of regional districts that are currently paying more to place their ballots apart from general elections ought to follow suit.

This week the county's election manager certified that 1,143 registered voters in the city had signed petitions recommending the change. Among that number was longtime City Councilwoman Naomi Patridge, who is on record saying the city ought to make the change without forcing the vote if petitioners gathered signatures necessary to get the matter on the November ballot.

Proponents say the city should change from so-called "off-year" elections so that municipal balloting occurs on even-numbered years when the state and federal governments schedule their general elections. They theorize that such a change would involve more voters who are naturally drawn to presidential and gubernatorial contests and further assert that the change would save the city money. More on that in a minute.

Some City Council members have been lukewarm to the idea, at least in part, because they don't trust the people pushing for change. The most public faces behind the measure are former City Councilman Jim Grady, former Cabrillo Unified trustee Roy Salume and political activist John Lynch, who is perhaps most well-known for his work with the League for Coastside Protection.

It would be a shame if the City Council (members of which would each be granted an additional year in office to sync with the even-numbered schedule) turned away from a good idea due to mistrust.

It should be noted that there is debate over whether such a change makes sense from a financial viewpoint.

County Elections Manager David Tom says that communities pay for elections proportionately, based on the number of registered voters. He says, therefore, that it's generally less expensive to schedule elections in even-numbered years when state and federal entities pick up much of the cost. He says it can cost as much as \$1 more per registered voter to hold elections in odd-numbered years.

Some have noted, because of the proportionality rule Tom cites, that the city's change would only make it more expensive for a host of Coastside entities that are currently holding their elections in odd-numbered years, which is true. It's also why the Coastside County Water District, the Montara Water and Sanitary District, the Granada Sanitary District, the Midcoast Community Council, and the Coastside Fire Protection District should make a similar change.

Now is as good a time as any for public agencies to take measures to save money and attract more interest from voters. They shouldn't let political factionalism cast the deciding vote. — Clay Lambert