



# MEMORANDUM

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**Information on the possible Consequences for Homer Elections if Kenai Peninsula Borough Citizen Initiative Propositions 1 and/or Proposition 5 on the Kenai Peninsula Borough Ballot for October 7, 2025 are Approved by the Kenai Peninsula Voters.**

**Item Type:** Informational Memorandum  
**Prepared For:** Mayor Lord and City Council  
**Date:** September 22, 2025  
**From:** Donna Aderhold, Councilmember  
**Through:** Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager

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**Summary:**

The Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) and the City of Homer will hold municipal elections on October 7, 2025, and the City of Homer coordinates its elections with the KPB. The KPB election this year includes five propositions, two of which (Propositions 1 and 5) are citizens initiatives to be voted on by all eligible borough voters.

Based on the KPB voter pamphlet, Proposition 1 would require that “all paper ballots cast in person on election day would be counted manually by hand, rather than using electronic tabulating equipment. The hand counting would occur immediately after the polls close at local precincts, and the ballots would be counted by registered voters of the Kenai Peninsula Borough.” Also based on the KPB voter pamphlet, Proposition 5 would change “the regular borough election date from the first Tuesday of October to the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November” which aligns with the State of Alaska regular election.

**Background:**

As a bit of background, the Homer City Clerk, who served as a subject matter expert, and I served as members of two recent KPB assembly organized task forces associated with municipal elections:

- Election Stakeholder Group convened in 2019 to “research ways to increase voter participation by developing sustainable election processes that maximize accessibility and inclusivity while conserving public resources”; and
- Voter Turnout Workgroup convened in 2023 to “explore actionable options and ideas that are aimed at increasing awareness, participation, and voting in local elections, including but not limited to, changing the Borough election day to align with that of the State of Alaska”.

Both groups provided recommendation reports to the KPB assembly at the conclusion of their meetings, which are available on the KPB website at the link: <https://www.kpb.us/local-governance-and-permitting/leadership-governance/working-groups-initiatives/inactive-task-forces>

The voting machines used by the KPB and City of Homer are tabulators and operate on the same principles as the standardized paper tests given to students before the age of fully computerized tests in that the tabulators are programmed to read ballots for specific elections and count the filled-in bubbles for each race. As part of

the election process, the KPB currently selects, at random, three precincts to audit each year with a hand count, and the audits indicate that the electronic tabulators have a greater than 99% accuracy rate.

If passed, the citizen initiative ballot measures would apply to KPB elections and not to the City of Homer elections, but the adoption of one or both ballot measures could significantly affect City of Homer elections.

The State of Alaska Division of Elections runs elections for state (governor, legislature, and statewide ballot measures) and federal (U.S. President and Congress) offices, and state law requires that their elections be conducted completely separate from municipal elections (i.e., no equipment, workers, tables, ballots, or other election requirements may be shared). In addition, state elections are held every other year during even numbered years, and municipal elections are held annually.

Based on this information, I would like Homer City Council members to understand the possible consequences of voting to approve KPB Proposition 1 and/or Proposition 5, as listed below.

#### PROPOSITION 1: HAND COUNT IN PERSON PAPER BALLOTS FOR BOROUGH ELECTIONS

Key provisions from the KPB voter pamphlet:

1. Hand Counting of Paper Ballots: The proposed citizen initiative ordinance mandates that all paper ballots cast in person on election day be manually counted by hand by registered voters of the Kenai Peninsula Borough. The counting would take place after the polls closed at local voting precincts.
2. Absentee Ballots: Absentee ballots would still be accepted and processed according to Alaska State Law and KPB Code of Ordinances, Title 4. These absentee ballots would be added to the election day count after they are processed.
3. Implementation Date: If approved by the voters at the October 7, 2025 election, this ordinance will be effective on January 1, 2026.

Possible consequences to KPB elections:

- The KPB would likely need to hire more election workers for their municipal elections:
- Polls are open for 13 hours (7:00 am to 8:00 pm) on election day and some poll workers work the entire time without much break. To reduce worker fatigue and stress, KPB would need to have poll workers for multiple shifts. Poll workers are required to start no later than 30 minutes prior to the opening of the polling precincts and would be required to stay until the hand count is concluded.
- Before tabulating or counting ballots, election workers are required by law to ensure the number of ballots handed out while the polls are open matches the number of ballots voted and the number of ballots spoiled. Error rates in this step without the electronic tabulators would likely increase and it would take longer to complete this step and move to hand counting ballots.

Hand counting ballots would likely lead to high error rates:

- KPB ballots typically include multiple races on each ballot, potentially including races for assembly, school board, and various road, emergency services, and/or hospital service area boards. In addition, there could be any number of propositions. Each of these would need to be hand counted.
- Hand counting late in the evening and after midnight would be difficult when most people are naturally tired and have reduced concentration ability and decision-making capabilities.
- Hand counting ballots is highly dependent on the honesty and integrity of the individuals involved in counting.
- The proposition does not include a provision for recounting ballots by hand or with a tabulator to check for accuracy.

Possible consequences for City of Homer elections:

- City of Homer elections would continue to use machine tabulators.
- Currently, the City of Homer and KPB coordinate elections and share some voting equipment and election workers. It may no longer be possible to coordinate some aspects of elections.
- Attracting election workers is a perennial issue. If the KPB requires more election workers, the City of Homer may have fewer qualified individuals interested in working its elections.

#### PROPOSITION 5: CHANGE THE CURRENT ELECTION DATE TO ALIGN WITH THE STATE OF ALASKA ELECTION DATE

Key provision from the KPB voter pamphlet:

1. Change of Regular Election Date. The proposed citizen initiative ordinance changes the regular borough election date from the first Tuesday of October to the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November.

Possible consequences to KPB elections:

- Because state and municipal elections must be separate, many current polling places would not have adequate room for both elections, and voters could be required to go to two voting locations on Election Day, leading to voter confusion.
- There are a limited number of companies nationwide that are certified to prepare and print ballots for elections. These companies would likely prioritize the state/federal ballots over municipal ballots, which may lead to difficulties in the KPB receiving ballots timely before elections.
- The KPB may have difficulty hiring the number of election workers needed because many election workers work during municipal elections in October and state elections in November.
- State and federal elections would likely take priority for voters, who may pay less attention to municipal candidates and issues before election day (i.e., voter turnout may increase, but voter education on local issues may decrease).
- Voter turnout for municipal elections may swing widely each year because state elections are held every other year.

Possible consequences to City of Homer elections:

- City of Homer elections would continue to be held on the first Tuesday of October unless the City Council took action to change the election date to match borough and state elections.
- If the City of Homer maintained the October election date, the City would be responsible for all aspects of its elections. There would be no coordination with the borough and no sharing of resources.
- The cost of each election to City of Homer residents would likely increase if the city and borough elections are no longer aligned.
- Turnout for City of Homer elections would likely decline.
- If the Homer City Council took action to move elections to match the borough and state, the issues of hiring election workers, locating election sites, voter turnout swings, and voter understanding of local issues listed above would apply.

**Recommendation:**

This memorandum is informational only. No action is needed.