



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Council Memo

Department Source: Law

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: May 4, 2026

Re: Calling a Special Election to be Held in Ward 4 on August 4, 2026, to Elect a Council Member to Fill the Remainder of an Unexpired Term

Impacted Ward: Ward 4

Executive Summary

A resolution has been prepared to call a special election in Ward 4 of the City of Columbia on August 4, 2026, to elect a council member to fill the remainder of an unexpired term.

Discussion

With the announcement of Council member Nick Foster's resignation effective June 12, 2026, it is necessary for the Council to call a special election to elect a Ward 4 council member to fill the remainder of the unexpired term of Council member Foster (Section 9 of City Charter). The Ward 4 council seat will remain vacant until a successor is elected and qualified.

The exact timeframe for the special election is not set out in the City Charter so it is within the discretion of the City Council to establish the timeframe, considering the statutory deadlines to notify the election authority.

State law requires ten (10) weeks' notice to the election authority that the special election will be held with the actual names which will appear on the ballot to be provided to the election authority a minimum of six (6) weeks prior to the date of the special election (Section 115.125 RSMo). That said, distribution of absentee ballots by mail may begin up to six (6) weeks prior to the election date, so the election authority in fact needs to receive the names to be printed on the ballot eight (8) weeks prior to the election date to allow adequate time for printing so as not to impair distribution of the absentee ballots (Section 115.281 RSMo). If the City does not provide a minimum of eight (8) weeks' notice to the election authority of the names to be printed on the ballot there is a high risk that any voters in Ward 4 that need to vote using an absentee ballot would not be able to receive an absentee ballot for the Ward 4 Council member election. The proposed timeline set out below is built to ensure the availability of absentee ballots to Ward 4 voters by providing a minimum of eight (8) weeks' notice to the election authority.

The date of August 4, 2026 is the next regular election day available for public elections. If there are any other ballot measures to be presented to the voters on that date it would result in economies of scale related to cost-sharing for the election. As an alternative, state law allows the Council the discretionary authority to select a different date in September or October on which to call a special election in order to fill a vacancy in office to accommodate an extended period of time for filing a nominating petition. If Council determines it wants to designate a day other than August 4, 2026 as the date to fill the vacancy in Ward 4, a new resolution will need to be drafted for Council consideration.

The below timeline, which is reflected in the attached Resolution, allows for a 3-week filing period during which a candidate may submit a nominating petition. For historical reference, the timeline for the special election to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Lisa Meyer (2025) was identical to the draft timeline below. The timeline for the special election to fill the vacancy created by the recall of Nick Knoth (2024) allowed for a 6-week filing period in which to submit a nominating petition to the City Clerk. The timeline to fill the vacancy created by the resignations of Ginny Chadwick (2015) and Helen Anthony (2012) allowed for a 5-week filing period to submit a nominating petition. The resignation of Andrea Waner (2023) occurred at a point in time that allowed for appointment of a successor to fill the remainder of the term.

The timeline in order to hold the special election on August 4, 2026 to fill the Ward 4 vacancy would be as follows:

- May 4: Resolution setting special election approved by Council
- May 5: Press release and other communication of special election process distributed
- May 6: Nominating packets for prospective candidates available from City Clerk
- May 10: Publication of election notice in newspaper of general circulation
- May 12: Opening date to file nominating petition (3 weeks prior to closing date of June 2)
- May 26: City Clerk notice to election authority that the City will hold a special election (notice of intent to call special election 10 weeks prior to election day with names added 8 weeks prior – see below)
- June 2: By 5:00 p.m., closing date to file nominating petition (7 days prior to date required to notify election authority of names to appear on ballot)
- June 9: City Clerk notice to election authority of names to appear on ballot (8 weeks prior to election day)
- August 4: Election Day

Do not hesitate to reach out if there are any questions or additional information is desired.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: Fiscal impact unknown at this time as the cost is based on the various entities who have placed an item on the ballot for any particular election. In April 2025, the



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City's proportionate share for the costs relating to the municipal election for Mayor and Wards 3 and 4 council members was \$89,396.15 with 14 entities having items on the ballot. In August 2025, the special election for Ward 2 due to the resignation of Lisa Meyer had a total cost of \$27,632.63 with three entities having items on the ballot. In April 2024, the City's proportionate share for the costs relating to the municipal election for Wards 2 and 6 council members, was \$30,265.02 with 17 entities having items on the ballot. In August 2024 relating to the special election due to the recall for the Ward 1 council member and the CIP tax issue extension, the cost was \$92,494.96 with three entities having items on the ballot.

Long-Term Impact: Not applicable.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
11/05/2012	R207-12 calling a special election to fill vacancy in Ward 5 due to the resignation of Helen Anthony.
01/05/2015	R13-15 calling a special election to fill vacancy in Ward 1 due to the resignation of Ginny Chadwick.
04/16/2024	R89-24 calling a special election to fill vacancy in Ward 1 due to the recall of Nick Knoth.
05/05/2025	R62-25 calling a special election to fill vacancy in Ward 2 due to the resignation of Lisa Meyer.

Suggested Council Action

Provide guidance to staff on date to hold special election to fill the vacancy.