



Communities for Accountable City Council (CACC)

Returning District/Ward Elections to the City of Alexandria

Candidate Survey

Dear Candidate: _____

Communities for Accountable City Council (CACC) is a non-partisan grassroots organization of Alexandria, Virginia residents who fundamentally believe in City of Alexandria government accountability. As such, CACC members believe that district/ward-level elections for the Alexandria City Council are foundational to our City government remaining one that is made of Alexandria residents, by Alexandria residents and for Alexandria residents.

You may know that the City of Alexandria had district/ward-level City Council representation for most of its history. Current public sentiment regarding Alexandria City Council accountability awakens this long-standing part of our city's history. On March 7, 2024, the [Alexandria Times](#) published the results of an on-line poll question, "Do you think election reform is needed in Alexandria?" to which a combined 74% of respondents answered "Yes, we need wards".

In the spirit of creating a more informed electorate, the CACC wishes to publicly inform Alexandria residents of each candidate's position regarding our City's Council election system. The CACC does not seek to endorse any Alexandria City Council or Mayoral candidate.

The CACC has compiled the following publicly available information about at-large elections for your consideration. As you have declared your candidacy for one of six at-large seats on the Alexandria City Council during the 2024 election, the CACC respectfully requests that you thoughtfully consider this information and respond to a few follow-up questions (below) regarding this vital civic issue.

City of Alexandria At-Large Elections have Segregationist Roots

"A large part of the reason Alexandria moved to an at-large system in 1950 was to intentionally limit minority voices. The move, after nearly 150 years of ward representation, was part of widespread resistance to school desegregation to ensure fewer voices from minority neighborhoods." -Source: Citizen Group Advocates for Return to Ward Representation in Alexandria - Alexandria Living Magazine, April 20, 2021

The Alexandria City Council Attempts to Eliminate Vestiges of Segregation from the City

The current Alexandria City Council has worked aggressively to eliminate vestiges of segregation and racism from the City's history for posterity. For example, in 2020, the City removed a 131-year old Confederate soldier statue at the intersection of Washington & Prince Streets. In 2021, T.C. Williams High School, named after ardent segregationist Thomas Chambliss Williams, was renamed Alexandria City High School. In 2023, the City's "Zoning For All" legislation upzoned all single family homes in the name of reversing racist zoning laws. In 2023, the City Council approved the renaming of 23 streets named by the City in honor of Confederates during the 1950s.

At-Large Elections are Out of Step

Individual election districts exist everywhere, except for Alexandria City Council. The U.S. House of Representatives are election districts. The Virginia House of Delegates are election districts as are the Virginia Senate. The Metropolitan Council of Government membership is by-district. The Alexandria School Board is elected by district. Alexandria City Council elections, though, are strictly At-Large.

At-Large Elections have been Declared Illegal - in Virginia Beach

On May 31, 2021, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Norfolk Division, in the case of Latasha Holloway, et. al. Plaintiff v. City of Virginia Beach, et. al., Defendant, concluded, "By a preponderance of the evidence, the Plaintiffs have demonstrated that the at-large system of elections for the Virginia Beach City Council denies Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians equal access to the electoral and political process, in contravention of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. Accordingly, it is hereby DECLARED that Virginia Beach's at-large method of election is illegal and cannot be enforced in future elections."

Source: Memorandum Opinion and Order in Holloway et. al. v. City of Virginia Beach - Filed March 31, 2021.pdf

As a candidate for Alexandria City Council during the 2024 City Council election cycle, in consideration of the above information:

1. Do you acknowledge the segregationist underpinning of Alexandria's At-Large elections?
Answer: ___ Yes ___ No
2. Do you acknowledge that the City Council is avoiding reform of its very seat of power by adhering to at-large elections that were implemented by 1950's era segregationists?
Answer: ___ Yes ___ No
3. Do you acknowledge that Alexandria's At-Large elections are out of step with representative democracy in Virginia and across our Nation?
Answer: ___ Yes ___ No
4. Do you think that it is both prudent and fiscally responsible for the Alexandria City Council to proactively restore Wards-based elections to the City of Alexandria to potentially avoid an indefensible position?
Answer: ___ Yes ___ No
5. As a candidate for Alexandria City Council during the 2024 City Council election cycle, do you pledge to work to restore district/ward-based elections to the Alexandria City Council?
Answer: ___ Yes ___ No

Please return your responses to info@AccountableALX.org by April 22.

Thank you,

Communities for Accountable City Council

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www.AccountableALX.org

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