



## GUIDE TO RETURNING TO MARCH ELECTIONS

After trying November elections, some towns found they preferred March elections, believing March elections allow for more emphasis on town issues, officers, and the annual meeting, rather than having town issues competing for attention with state and national election concerns. This resource discusses the law and process towns may use to return to March elections.

The question of whether to return to March elections may be placed on the ballot *only* by unanimous vote of the board of supervisors and only if the town has conducted at least 2 elections in November.<sup>1</sup> The transition requires the return to 3-year terms of office for supervisors and 2-year terms of office for clerks and treasurers.

There is no option for electors to begin this process. One possible explanation for this restriction is based on the fact that the return to March elections may require the current terms of office of elected officials to be shortened. If electors began the process to return to March elections and adopted a transition plan that shortened the current terms of office of any elected official, the official may challenge that the action amounts to an illegal removal or recall of the officer. If, however, the supervisors themselves agree to a transition plan that shortens their terms of office, they may be deemed to have agreed to the shortened term and waived any grounds for complaint.

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### PROCESS TO RETURN TO MARCH ELECTIONS

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1. Ensure the town has conducted at least 2 elections in November. If it has not, the board of supervisors may not place the question on the ballot.
2. The board of supervisors must unanimously pass a resolution designating the second Tuesday in March as the Town General Election.
3. The board may use the attached sample resolution as a template, modifying the language to reflect whether one or two supervisors are to be elected in the next November election, and the proposed plan to shorten or lengthen the current board members' terms of office.<sup>2</sup>
4. The question of whether to return to March elections must be submitted to the voters by a ballot question. The ballot question should be something similar to: "Shall the Second Tuesday in March of each year be designated as the date of the \_\_\_\_\_ Township general election?"
5. If the ballot question is approved, then the transition plan described in the board's resolution is enacted. If it is rejected, the existing process for November elections remains in place.

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<sup>1</sup> Minn. Stat. § 205.075, subd. 2a.

<sup>2</sup> The attached Resolution includes sample years for demonstration purposes.

RESOLUTION # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Township  
\_\_\_\_\_  
County, Minnesota

**RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE SECOND TUESDAY IN  
MARCH AS THE TOWN GENERAL ELECTION**

**WHEREAS**, Minn. Stat. § 205.075 authorizes towns that have conducted at least two town elections in November to return to traditional March elections by re-designating the second Tuesday in March of each year as the date of the town general election; and

**WHEREAS**, \_\_\_\_\_ Township has conducted at least two town elections in November since \_\_\_\_\_ and thus qualifies to return to March elections; and

**WHEREAS**, the town board determines that changing the town's general election date from November to March serves the public's interest by restoring the focus to Township Day and the annual Town Meeting, and prevents Town offices and questions from being buried on a larger ballot;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the town board of \_\_\_\_\_ Township, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Minnesota does hereby designate the second Tuesday in March of each year as the date of the town general election; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the designation shall take effect beginning with the 2018 town election if the electors ratify this resolution at the next town election, scheduled for November 2016; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that should the voters approve the return to annual March elections, the following transition plan shall be used to provide an orderly transition from November elections and their required four-year terms of office, to annual March elections with their three-year terms for supervisors and two-year terms for the clerk and treasurer.

1. The supervisor position that is scheduled be elected at the same election at which this ballot question is submitted in November 2016 shall be designated Supervisor position A and shall serve until a successor is elected and qualified in the March 2018 election. Beginning March 2018, the Supervisor A position shall be elected for a term of 3-years and shall serve until a successor is elected and qualified.
2. The supervisors whose terms are scheduled to expire on the first Monday in January 2019 shall be designated Supervisor position B and Supervisor position C, and shall have their terms extended until successors are elected and qualified in the March 2019 election.
  - A. The Supervisor B position, currently held by Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_, shall then be on the ballot for a three year term that shall begin with the certification of the March 2019 election such that it will subsequently be on the ballot in March 2022.
  - B. The Supervisor C position, currently held by Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ shall be on the ballot for a one year term that shall begin with the certification of the March 2019 election such that it will subsequently be on the ballot for a regular three year term in March 2020.
3. The position of clerk scheduled to be on the ballot in November 2016 shall be elected to a term that shall next be on the ballot in March 2018 for a regular two year term.

4. The position of treasurer whose term is scheduled to expire on the first Monday in January 2019 shall have the term extended such that it shall next be on the ballot in March 2019 for a regular two year term.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that after this transition plan has been fully implemented, all supervisor positions shall have regular terms of three years, the position of clerk shall be elected to a two-year term in the even-numbered years, and the position of treasurer shall be elected to a two-year term in the odd-numbered years; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that any reduction in an existing term for a supervisor position under the above transition plan is voluntarily made as demonstrated by the unanimous vote approving this resolution; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that if the voters fail to approve the ballot question designating the second Tuesday in March to be the date for the Town election, the above transition plan shall not be used and all terms of office shall remain under current town election cycles and applicable State laws governing November town elections; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the clerk is hereby authorized and directed to prepare the ballot question and take such other actions as may be needed to submit the question of approving the designation of the Second Tuesday March as the date of general town election date to the electors for a vote at the next general town election scheduled for November 2016.

Adopted unanimously this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

By the \_\_\_\_\_ Town Board

Attested to by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Town Board Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Town Clerk