

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-13

BALLOT PROPOSITION OCTOBER 6, 2026

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA PROPOSING TO AMEND
SECTION 6.01 "INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM" OF THE HOME RULE CHARTER AND,
SUBMITTING THE QUESTION OF SUCH AN AMENDMENT TO THE QUALIFIED VOTERS
AT THE REGULAR ELECTION ON OCTOBER 6, 2026**

1. CLASSIFICATION. This ordinance is of a permanent nature and is intended to become a part of the Sitka Home Rule Charter.

2. SEVERABILITY. If any provision of this ordinance or any application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of this ordinance and application thereof to any person or circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

3. PURPOSE. The purpose of this ordinance is to amend language in the Home Rule Charter (HRC) of the City and Borough of Sitka, Article VI "Initiative, Referendum and Recall," Section 6.01 "Initiative and Referendum." The current charter requires a special election to be scheduled not less than 40 days nor more than 90 days after the filing of an initiative or referendum petition signed by at least one-third of electors who voted in the last regular annual election. This amendment proposes to remove that mandatory requirement and replace it with a discretionary provision allowing the Assembly, by ordinance, to order a special election on the matter if it determines it is in the best interest of the municipality. Otherwise, the petition would go before the voters at the next scheduled regular or special election.

4. ENACTMENT. NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka that the Home Rule Charter of the City and Borough of Sitka, Section 6.01 "Initiative and Referendum," be amended by revising the language in Section 6.01 to read as follows (deleted language stricken, new language underlined):

* * *

**ARTICLE VI
INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM AND RECALL**

Section 6.01 Initiative and Referendum

The powers and rights of the initiative and referendum are reserved to the people of the municipality as prescribed by law. The assembly, by ordinance, shall regulate the procedure for their exercise but such regulations shall require that a petition to initiate or repeal an action be signed by qualified voters of the municipality equal in number to at least twenty percent of the total number of electors voting at the last regular annual election and the subject of the petition shall be submitted to the voters at the next previously scheduled municipal special or regular election that will be held at least 40 days after certification of the petition. ~~However, a special election must be scheduled not less than 40 days or more than 90 days after filing of a petition containing the signatures of not less than 1/3 of the total number of electors voting at the last regular annual election.~~ If the assembly determines it is in the best interest of the municipality, the assembly may, by ordinance, order a special election to be held on the matter before the next scheduled election.

A vote of a majority of the electors who vote on the question shall be required. An ordinance adopted by the initiative procedure may not be amended or repealed by the assembly for a period of one year after the date of the election at which it was adopted, and should two or more ordinances adopted at the same election have conflicting provision, the one receiving the largest affirmative vote shall prevail. Ordinances repealed by referendum shall be null and void from the day following the day of the election.

* * *

5. BALLOT PROPOSITION. The following question shall be placed on the ballot at the regular election on October 6, 2026:

Proposition No. _____

Shall the City and Borough of Sitka amend Section 6.01 of its Home Rule Charter to remove the requirement for a mandatory special election when at least one-third of voters in the last regular election sign an initiative or referendum petition, and instead allow the Assembly, by ordinance, to determine whether holding a special election is in the best interest of the municipality?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Informational: See Ordinance 2026-13. Under the current Charter, a special election must be held when an initiative or referendum petition is signed by at least one-third of voters in the last regular election. This amendment would remove the mandatory special election requirement. The petition would instead go before voters at the next scheduled regular or special election, unless the Assembly passes an ordinance calling a special election on the matter.

6. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall become effective on the day after the date of its passage.

The amendment to the Charter set forth in Section 6.01 hereof shall only become effective if the ballot proposition set forth in Section 5 hereof is approved by a majority of the qualified voters at the regular election held on October 6, 2026.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska this 26th day of May, 2026.

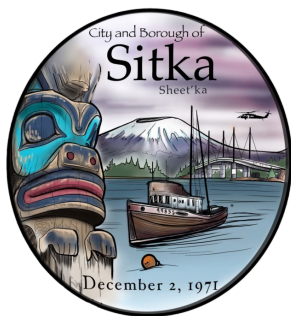
Steven Eisenbeisz, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sara Peterson, MMC
Municipal Clerk

1st reading: 5/12/2026
2nd and final reading: 5/26/2026

Sponsor: Administrator



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members

Thru: John Leach, Municipal Administrator 

From: Sara Peterson, MMC, Municipal Clerk 

Date: April 27, 2026

Subject: Proposed Home Rule Charter Amendment – Section 6.01 (Initiative and Referendum)

Background

The City and Borough of Sitka Home Rule Charter, Article VI, Section 6.01 currently provides that when an initiative or referendum petition is signed by at least one-third of voters in the last regular annual election, a special election must be scheduled not less than 40 days nor more than 90 days after the filing of that petition. This ordinance proposes to amend Section 6.01 to remove the mandatory special election requirement and replace it with a discretionary provision. The Assembly could, by ordinance, order a special election when it determines doing so is in the best interest of the municipality. Qualifying petitions would instead go before voters at the next scheduled regular or special election, unless the Assembly passes an ordinance calling a special election on the matter.

Analysis

The 2025 special election, triggered by an initiative petition meeting the one-third signature threshold, cost the municipality \$18,251.05. This cost provides context for the proposed amendment. Whether the current mandatory special election provision should be replaced with Assembly discretion is a policy question for the Assembly and, ultimately, the voters.

State law allows Alaska municipalities to decide whether to call a special election in similar situations (AS 29.26.170). Sitka's Charter is different, and while this proposal does not adopt the State's specific timelines or procedures, the reference is included only to show that allowing discretion, rather than requiring a special election, is a standard policy approach for many Alaska municipalities.

Fiscal Note

No additional election costs are anticipated, as the proposition will be included on the ballot for the October 6, 2026 regular election if approved by the Assembly.

Recommendation

The Municipal Clerk submits this ordinance for Assembly consideration.