

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH
Office of the City Clerk

Date: April 3, 2020
To: Karen Conard, City Manager
From: Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk
Re: Report Back on Questions Posed by Councilor Lazenby on April 6, 2020

The following is in response to the questions placed on the April 6, 2020 City Council agenda under Councilor Lazenby's name. The Councilor's questions/comments are in **orange**.

Are guidelines regarding absentee voting set at the state or municipal level in New Hampshire?

The guidelines regarding absentee voting are established on the state level in New Hampshire.

What are the current guidelines regarding Absentee Voting in New Hampshire?

There are four criteria's that entitle a person to vote by absentee ballot:

1. Voter plans to be absent on the day of the election from the city, town, or unincorporated place where they're domiciled
2. Voter cannot appear in public on election day because of observance of a religious commitment
3. Voter is unable to appear in person due to a disability
4. Voter cannot appear at any time during polling hours at polling place because of an employment obligation. For the purposes of this the term "employment" shall include the care of children and infirm adults, with or without compensation

Are there any prospects in the NH State Legislature to broaden these guidelines?

Currently HB 1672 would allow anyone to vote absentee without needing a reason. This may increase voter participation but may make voting in person a thing of the past. This bill passed the House by majority roll call vote 194-132 and it possibly will be assigned to the Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee when the Legislature reconvenes after May 4th.

Are there any prospects to open up early voting in New Hampshire to allow voters to drop off ballots at municipal locations in advance of Election Day?

Currently there is no bill that has been brought forward to allow early voting in New Hampshire this session but previously a bill was proposed and acted upon by the legislation and the bill was killed.

Are there any prospect to allow for voting by mail in New Hampshire?

HB 1572 establishes the New Hampshire local election participation act. This bill would allow the governing body to conduct a local election strictly by mail. The bill was killed by roll call vote in the House on February 13, 2020.