

CITY OF FORT BRAGG

**ELECTIONS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**PROGRESS**  
*report*

**August 12, 2019**



# WHAT IS THIS ABOUT



## Started with a Letter from the Coast Committee for Responsive Representation

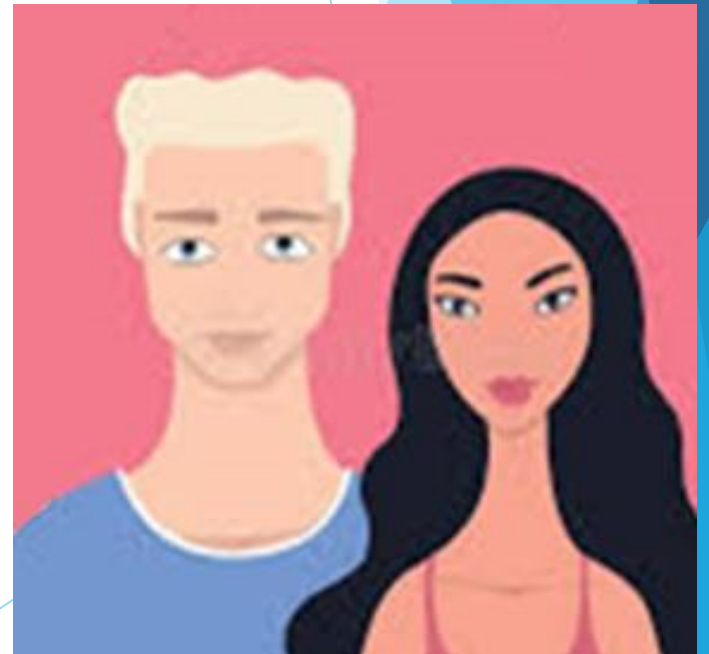
- ❖ Letter claimed City of Fort Bragg has racially-polarized voting
- ❖ Letter claimed City of Fort Bragg is in violation of California Voting Rights Act (CVRA)
- ❖ Letter demanded City of Fort Bragg to transition to district-based elections

# Does Fort Bragg, CA have Racially Polarized Voting??



## CITY HIRED A DEMOGRAPHER PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- No evidence of racially polarized voting in past elections
- Dividing the city into 5 districts divides ethnic groups and neighborhoods
- Using surnames is flawed method, especially in a marriage with mixed ethnicity.



# FURTHER DISCUSSIONS



## Key Points from 2018 Settlement Agreement

- ✓ Demographic Analysis
- ✓ No Fees for Candidates
- ✓ Public Outreach for Inclusion
- ✓ Establish a Committee to Recommend Changes by 2020 Election

For  
your  
effort



Mesi  
Merci beaucoup  
Thank you very much  
Muchas gracias  
Tack så mycket  
Vielen dank  
Molte grazie  
Dank U zeer  
ありがとうございます  
감사합니다  
非常感謝

# NEW AD HOC COMMITTEE

**RUBEN ALCALA**

**JIM BRITT**

**SHARON DAVIS**

**ANDREW JORDAN**

**JUNE LEMOS**

**TESS ALBIN-SMITH**



# ELECTIONS REVIEW COMMITTEE

## PURPOSE



1. Research and evaluate electoral systems
2. Evaluate options available to general law and charter cities; opportunities and limitations
3. Recommend a preferred electoral system
4. Recommend the benefits and limitations of a charter city, and (if appropriate)...
5. Suggest a draft charter city ordinance in time for November 2020 City Council election ballot

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# Comparison of **Electoral District Types** For City Council Elections

- At Large Voting
- District Voting





# Comparison of Electoral District Types For City Council Elections

**“AT LARGE” ELECTION  
(Current System)**

**All city residents vote  
As one voting block->**



# Comparison of Electoral District Types For City Council Elections

## “AT LARGE” ELECTIONS (Current)



### PROS

- Status Quo requires no expense
- Prevents Gerrymandering of neighborhoods
- More Candidate Choices
- Less Chance for Empty Seats and Unqualified Candidates

# Comparison of Electoral District Types For City Council Elections

## “AT LARGE” ELECTIONS (Current)



### CONS

1. CVRA Lawsuits a possibility
2. Minority vote may be diluted by majority



# Comparison of Electoral District Types For City Council Elections



## “DISTRICT” ELECTIONS



# Comparison of Electoral District Types For City Council Elections

## “DISTRICT” ELECTIONS

- *What is a voting district in a city?*
- *How are Districts determined?*
- *How many candidates can run per district?*
- *What happens if there are NO candidates in one or more districts?*



# Comparison of Electoral District Types For City Council Elections

## “DISTRICT” ELECTIONS

### PROS

- Satisfies CVRA
- One council person more accountable
- Can eliminate racially-polarized voting



# Comparison of Electoral District Types For City Council Elections

## “DISTRICT” ELECTIONS



### CONS

- Only one choice per district
- Empty seat if no candidate
- District boundaries may be flawed
- Chance of ethnic and economic biases
- Possible unfair cost to run (solved)
- Alternative voting systems redundant

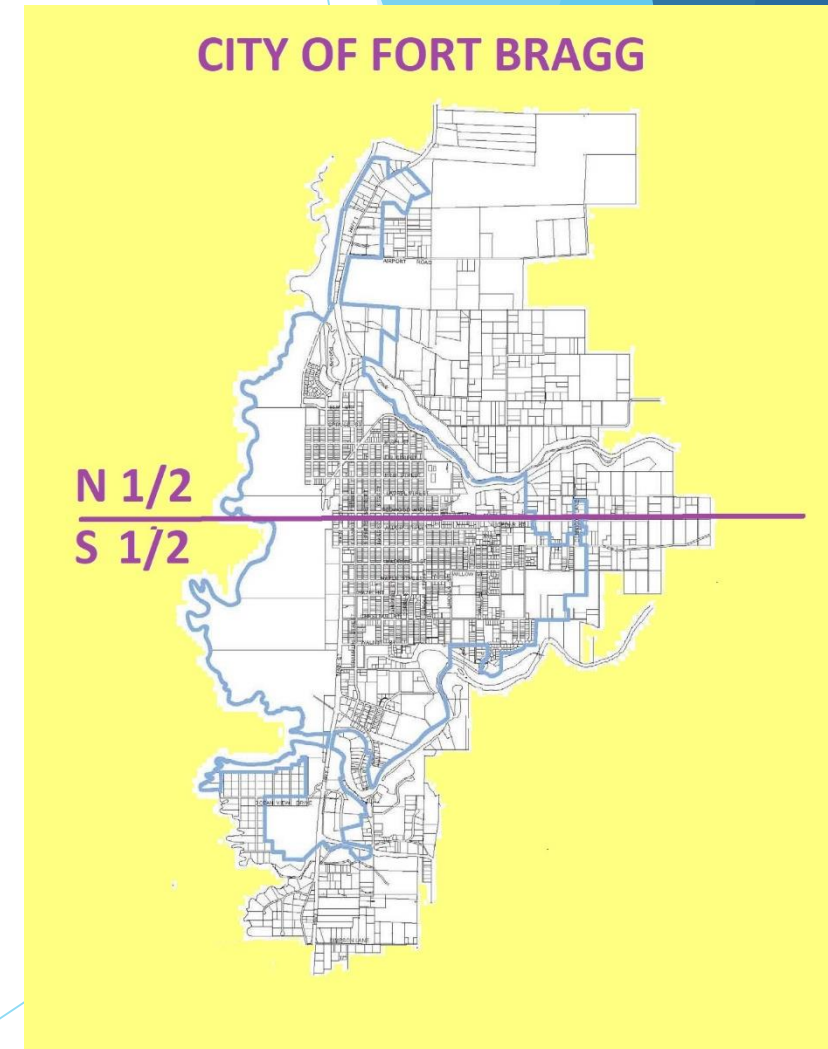
# District Voting Discussion Points



Premise: *South 1/2 of Fort Bragg has 4x Latino or Hispanic Citizen Voting Age Population.*

Factual? Depends on how the lines are drawn

Fort Bragg must divide into **5** (not 2) districts







# Alternative Types of **Electoral Systems** For City Council Elections

1. Plurality Voting
2. Cumulative Voting
3. Ranked Choice Voting



# Alternative Types of Voting Methods For City Council Elections



- 1. Plurality Voting**
2. Cumulative Voting
3. Ranked Choice Voting



# Alternative Types of Voting Methods For City Council Elections

## **PLURALITY ELECTION SYSTEM** (Current Voting System)



### PROS

- Status Quo requires no expense
- “At Large” can incorporate alternative voting systems

### CON

Majority votes may oppress the minority

# Alternative Types of **Electoral Systems** For City Council Elections



1. Plurality Voting
- 2. Cumulative Voting**
3. Ranked Choice Voting

# Alternative Types of Voting Systems For City Council Elections

## CUMULATIVE VOTING

### WHAT IS IT?

Cast all votes for one candidate!



### Pros

Minority candidate can win if voters work together to combine votes

### Cons

- Limits voting options
- Risky

# Alternative Types of Voting Methods For City Council Elections

## CUMULATIVE VOTING

Consider...

*How can the current plurality  
voting produce the same result?*

When there are 3 openings,  
You can vote for 1 person  
instead of 3





# Alternative Types of **Electoral Systems** For City Council Elections

1. Plurality Voting
2. Cumulative Voting
- 3. Ranked Choice Voting**



HOW DOES RANKED CHOICE VOTING WORK?

**MPRnews**

# Alternative Types of Voting Methods For City Council Elections

## RANKED CHOICE VOTING (RCV)



### PROS

- Can rank top candidates in order of choice
- No need to vote *against* a candidate.
- Minority choice could win!
  - ✓ Works well in multi partisan elections

### CONS

- Need to vote to be a Charter City
- Need to vote to adopt RCV as an election method.
- Extra cost of ballots, software, and instruction materials.

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- 3. Recommend a preferred electoral system**
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# Should we Recommend A preferred electoral system ?



## Changing the Electoral System

May be a good idea

Doesn't protect the city

Who should initiate if wanted?



**Ask the community!**



# ELECTIONS REVIEW COMMITTEE

## PURPOSE

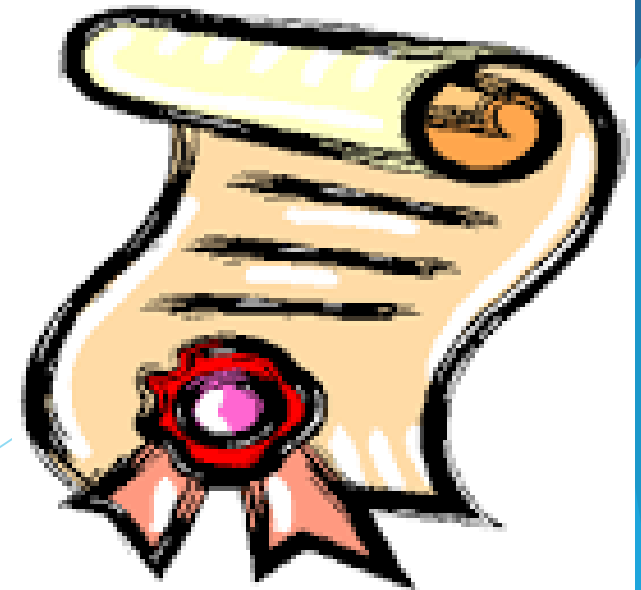


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# CHARTER CITIES

## WHAT IS A CHARTER CITY?

- Fort Bragg is a “General Law City” governed by State Law.
- Charter Cities have their own constitution, and conduct their own business with their own rules
  - *Municipal elections (except CVRA)*
  - *Land use and zoning decisions*
  - *How a city spends its tax dollars*
  - *Municipal contracts*



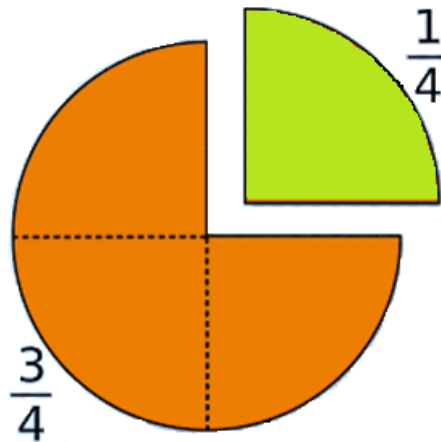
# CHARTER CITIES



ARE THERE ANY CHARTER CITIES IN CALIFORNIA?

**482 TOTAL municipalities in California.**

**361 Cities  
General law**



**121 cities  
Charter/Home rule**

# CHARTER CITIES

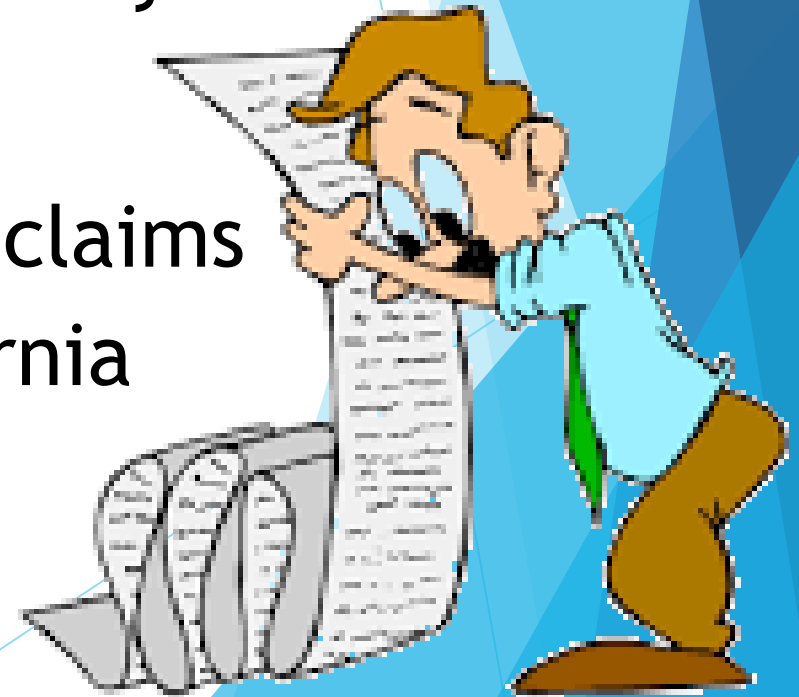


## PROS

- Required if switching electoral systems
- Gives greater local control—necessary?

## CONS

- Does not exempt cities for CVRA claims
- May be outdated as list of California mandates grows.





# Should Fort Bragg become a CHARTER CITY??



City must first have ...

- ✓ A DESIRE FOR MORE GOVERNMENT INDEPENDENCE
- ✓ VOTER APPROVAL TO BECOME A CHARTER CITY
- ✓ VOTER APPROVAL FOR CHANGING THE VOTING SYSTEM



# RECOMMENDATIONS regarding conversion to Charter City

- May be a good idea
- Doesn't protect the city
- Who should initiate if wanted?

Same recommendation as for  
changing electoral systems...

Ask the Community!



# THE COUNTY VOTING MACHINES HAVE BEEN UPDATED!!



# ABOUT THE NEW COMPUTER VOTING MACHINE SOFTWARE

- ✓ Updated Election Results
- ✓ Paper Trail
- ✓ Set up for counting majority votes, but can do other election systems

## **BUT....**

- Different software needed for other systems
- County will add charges for extra labor



# Key Points from 2018 Settlement Agreement **NEW INCENTIVES**

- ✓ Demographic Analysis
- ✓ **No Fees for Candidates**
- ✓ **Public Outreach for Inclusion**
- ✓ Establish a Committee to Recommend Changes by 2020 Election



# Elections Review Committee will hold 3 PUBLIC FORUMS TO SEEK INPUT



**WED SEPT 18**

**SAT OCT 12**

**MON NOV 18**

~

**Daytime and Evening  
at Different venues (TBA)**

