

**City of Salisbury
Election Board Minutes
Thursday, July 16, 2026
Salisbury Fire Department Station 16**

Members Present: Chair Susan Carey, Secretary Stephen Feliciano, Lou Rimbach.

Others Present: City Attorney Ashley Bosche, City Clerk Julie English, City Council President Councilwoman April Jackson, City Council Vice President Sharon Dashiell, City Councilwoman Melissa Holland, City Councilwoman Michele Gregory, and four members of the community.

Call Meeting to Order

Ms. Carey called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. Mr. Feliciano moved to open the meeting, and Mr. Rimbach seconded. The vote was 3-0.

Agenda Presentation

Ms. Carey reviewed the purpose of the meeting: for Board members to discuss proposed Charter changes to §C6-12, governing vacancies in the offices of Mayor and Council; to discuss the process for conducting a special election; and to develop questions to submit to the Wicomico County Board of Elections. Time was reserved at the end of the meeting for public comment, limited to three minutes per speaker.

Charter Amendment — Council and Mayoral Vacancies

City Attorney Ashley Bosche reviewed the recommended Charter changes to §C6-12, which governs vacancies in both the office of the Mayor and Council seats. The section would be rewritten in its entirety so that the vacancy process for the Mayor and for Council mirror one another, regardless of the cause of the vacancy. If 12 months or more remain in the vacated term, a special election would be required; if less than 12 months remain, an appointment process would apply instead. For a special election, Council would pass a resolution setting the filing deadline for the certificate of nomination, the date of the special election, the method of public notice, and the location of the election, and it would then be the Board's responsibility to carry out the election under those parameters. As drafted, a special election must be conducted within 120 days of the vacancy, but no sooner than 30 days after public notice is published.

Ms. Bosche also noted that she had finalized a proposed appointment policy memorializing Council's discussion at its May 11 meeting. She indicated the policy would be adopted by a separate Council resolution rather than as part of the Charter amendment, since a policy can be amended more easily than the Charter.

Special Election Logistics and Costs

The Board discussed whether the City could conduct a special election in-house using paper ballots, versus relying on assistance from the Wicomico County Board of Elections. Ms. Bosche raised concerns regarding ballot security and the training and staffing of election judges, and stated she did not believe the Board could administer a special election entirely on its own. Ms. Carey and Mr. Feliciano agreed that the Board lacks sufficient staff and volunteer capacity to conduct a special election without County assistance, noting that even a single-district election requires a minimum of approximately 20 workers per polling site, and that a citywide (mayoral) election would be significantly more involved than the City's regular election process. The Board reached consensus that it could not conduct a special election without assistance from the Wicomico County Board of Elections, and that this would be communicated to Council.

City Clerk Julie English shared cost information from the City's finalized 2023 general-election budget, totaling approximately \$91,536 for a citywide election (salaries, polling-place rental, voting equipment, advertising, printing, labor costs, and postage). She estimated that a single-district special election would cost a minimum of approximately \$20,000, noting that certain costs remain fixed regardless of the size of the election, so a single-district cost is not simply one-fifth of the citywide total. The Board noted that costs have likely increased since 2023 and agreed it will need an itemized cost breakdown from the County before proceeding further. It was also noted that special-election funding is not budgeted in advance and would require a Council budget amendment from the general fund at the time a special election is called.

Mail-In Ballots

Ms. Bosche noted that Council had previously indicated a preference against mail-in ballots for a special election in order to shorten the timeline, but that the current City election code permits mail-in ballots in all special elections. She

advised that this inconsistency would need to be resolved, either by amending the Charter and code to prohibit mail-in ballots in special elections, or by retaining mail-in ballots and building an appropriate ballot-return deadline into the special-election timeline.

Appointment Process and Policy

The Board reviewed Ms. Bosche's newly finalized draft appointment policy, which would apply when less than 12 months remain in a vacated term. The Board noted that the draft did not clearly spell out candidate qualifications beyond residency, and suggested the policy either reference the Charter's existing qualification requirements directly or attach the City's candidate/domicile verification packet. It was noted that candidate documentation is submitted to and reviewed by the City Clerk before being forwarded to the Board for review and approval, consistent with the existing candidate-packet process. The Board also discussed standardizing the Council interview process for appointments, including a fixed amount of time (approximately four minutes) for each candidate to speak, and a standard set of questions, developed with input from Human Resources, with each Council member asking one question, to be used consistently for every appointment rather than decided individually each time. The Board expressed general support for the proposed policy, subject to Council's review and formal adoption by resolution.

Other Business

A related gap in the Charter was raised for the Board's future consideration: the Charter does not currently address who assumes authority (such as a city administrator acting in place of the Mayor) during an extended absence of an elected official who has not resigned, for example due to military deployment or serious illness, as distinguished from an actual vacancy. This was noted as a topic for future Charter review rather than a decision item for this meeting.

Public Comment

The following topics were discussed during public comment:

- Preservation of mail-in ballots in any special election, citing a recent local election decided by only 11 mail in ballots and the importance of mail-in access for residents unable to get to the polls
- Requests for public input in any appointment process, including public observation of candidate interviews and a standardized set of interview questions applied equally to all candidates
- A suggestion that the City establish a dedicated special-election reserve line item in the annual budget, funded incrementally over time, rather than relying solely on the general fund
- Interest in how the Town of Ocean City and other nearby jurisdictions have handled special elections, including cost and use of absentee and provisional ballots, as a benchmark for Salisbury's process

Board members clarified that the discussion focused on the special election and appointment processes generally, and reiterated that the Board can make recommendations, but Council has final authority over any Charter changes.

Next Steps

Board members are to submit their questions for Ms. Church to Ms. English by the beginning of August. Ms. English will coordinate with Ms. Church to schedule her attendance at a future Board meeting, tentatively mid-August, after which the Board plans to present its findings to Council at a work session, tentatively by the end of August. Ms. English will also research how the Town of Ocean City structures and funds its special elections and report back to the Board.

Adjournment

Mr. Feliciano moved to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Carey seconded. The vote was 3-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Stephen Feliciano, Secretary

Approved: 09.28.2026