



April 2022 TiGER Civic Federation General Membership Presentation

Arlington County Civic Federation

Executive Summary

We believe Arlington County has a good system of government that can be improved upon to achieve better citizen representation and improved government accountability. TiGER's work is intended to promote better citizen representation through voting, election, governance, and citizen engagement reform.

Tonight TiGER is recommending **five changes** to our current system of government. These recommendations have the support of at least a majority of the Task Force and many are supported unanimously.

TiGER is still considering potential recommendations regarding Arlington's **method of elections** and **citizen engagement reform** and will present those recommendations and a draft resolution of support for all our recommendations by June 2022.



Our Process

What is TiGER?

- ❑ **Task Force in Governance and Election Reform (TiGER)** is a ACCF-chartered effort to re-examine our county's governing bodies and electoral system given that it has been over 90 years since Arlington established its current form of government. As a result, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve Arlington County's electoral and governance systems to help ensure that the County Board and School Board best represents our diverse community and promotes effective citizen engagement with our county government.
- ❑ **Areas of Inquiry**
 - ❑ The size of the County Board and the School Board
 - ❑ Alternatives to at-large elections and first-past-the-post voting systems, including district representation (utilizing either single or multi-member districts) and proportional representation (via multi-member, synchronous elections)
 - ❑ Remuneration of County Board and School Board members
 - ❑ Length of Board terms (including the term of Board Chair) and frequency of elections
 - ❑ The role of primaries and caucuses
 - ❑ The role and design of community engagement mechanisms

Our Guiding Principles

1. Improve the quality of our elected officials' representation and policy making
2. Improve citizen engagement and voter turnout
3. Improve the County and School Boards' ability to reflect the opinion and diversity of our communities
4. Improve the quality and diversity of our candidates and campaigns

TiGER's Membership

- Nancy Tate
- John Vihstadt
- Michael Beer
- Dave Schutz
- Chanda Choun
- Sangita Sigdyal
- Beth Grossman
- Kris Brown
- Kevin Appel
- Whytni Kernodle
- Tannia Talento
- Duke Banks
- Chris Wimbush, Chair
- Allan Gajadhar, Civic Federation President

TiGER would like to extend our appreciation to Sharon Valencia and Keith Fred for their service to the Task Force

Workplan Overview

Phase	Phase Description	Desired Outcomes	Timing
Phase 1: Task Force Establishment	The Task Force will assemble, determine its internal organizational structure, and adopt a workplan, including a communications plan.	A clear work plan that provides TIGER members and the public a clear understanding of how the Task Force will complete its work.	January – March 2021
Phase 2: Survey Research and Expert Forums	The Task Force will hold a series of forums to receive further information from experts in each area under consideration. These sessions will be public and include government, community stakeholders, academics with expertise in local government and electoral system, and viewpoints from beyond Arlington County. The Task Force will also conduct survey research to support its work.	Provide the Task Force and the public with the information to determine what changes are necessary (if any) and the potential forms of those changes.	April – August 2021
Phase 3: Adoption of Preliminary Recommendations Guidelines	The Task Force will adopt a Preliminary Recommendations Guidelines, which will detail the Task Force's Preliminary Recommendations on the matters within its purview. The Preliminary Recommendations Guidelines will guide the subject matter subcommittee's implementation proposals, which will be drafted in Phase 4.	A clear, high-level understanding of the set of recommendations (if any) the Task Force plans to advocate for in its final report.	September 2021
Phase 4: Subcommittees Draft Implementation Proposals	Additional Task Force Subcommittees will be formed and will draft implementation proposals for consideration by the Task Force	Detailed proposals to implement the Task Force's recommendations (if any) as defined in Phase 3.	October – November 2021
Phase 5: Review and Adopt Subcommittees' Proposals	The Task Force will review and adopt subcommittee proposals for incorporation into the Task Force's final report.	A detailed and clear understanding of the Task Force's recommendations and how to implement them.	December 2021
Phase 6: Final Public Report Drafting	The Task Force will designate specific individuals or a subcommittee to draft a final report based on approved proposals.	A final report that reflects the majority of the Task Force and its members.	January 2022 – March 2022
Phase 7: Adoption of Final Report	The Task Force will consider, revise, and adopt a final report.	A final report that is supported by the Civic Federation Membership.	April 2022
Phase 8: Advocacy and Outreach	Task Force will advocate for its final recommendations before the County Board, School Board, and the Virginia General Assembly	The adoption of the Task Force's recommendations by the relevant government body.	May 2022 through End of 2023 Regular Virginia General Assembly Session

TiGER's Public Engagement

- ❑ Public engagement survey
- ❑ **TiGER held seven virtual public forums during the Summer of 2021, adding up to approximately 14 hours of expert and community learning and questioning**
 - ❑ Lessons from Other Local Government, Electoral, and Governance Reforms Processes: Fort Worth, Texas
 - ❑ Lessons from Other Local Government, Electoral, and Governance Reforms Processes: Portland, Oregon
 - ❑ Perspectives on Arlington's Government Roundtable
 - ❑ Current State of Arlington County's Electoral System and Models of Reform: Overview of Voting Systems and RCV
 - ❑ Current State of Arlington County's Electoral System and Models of Reform: Experiences with Voting System
 - ❑ Current State of Arlington County's Mechanisms of Public Input and Models of Reform: Current Forms
 - ❑ Current State of Arlington County's Mechanisms of Public Input: Models for Reform

Watch Our Virtual Forums at <https://www.civfed.org/tiger>

Our Problem Statements and Recommendations

Our Problem Statements

- ❑ The County and School Boards remain the same size as they were in 1930 despite a growing and more dense population. This reality has resulted in overworked elected officials, inadequate representation, and insufficient community engagement.
- ❑ Arlington County does not have sufficient political influence in the region in light of its population and geography and so many of our policy challenges are strongly influenced by our regional neighbors. Yet, Arlington has a County Board and School Board chair that changes each year, limiting the influence of the respective chairs compared to other regional leaders.
- ❑ Arlington's elected bodies do not adequately reflect the county's diversity, including but not limited to racial and ethnic diversity, socioeconomic diversity, and viewpoint diversity. As a result, many Arlington residents, particularly those outside the dominant or majority groups, may not feel represented, and the County Board and School Board may not benefit from the full and robust range of perspectives and experiences of Arlington residents.
- ❑ Our electoral system does not ensure proportional representation in Arlington, encourage the most qualified best, and most diverse candidates to run and get elected to office, or provide strong competitive races in general elections.
- ❑ Arlington election system's reliance on primaries and caucuses discourages candidate participation and voter turnout and presents significant barriers, including the discriminatory candidate impacts as a result of the application of the Hatch Act on federal employees
- ❑ The current system (both structures and processes) for obtaining and utilizing community input is inadequate in informing decision-makers and making many residents feel that they have been heard. The government is not transparent, leading to a lack of accountability. Participants feel that engagement is not authentic and does not make a difference in outcomes. High-time requirements for participation limit the number of people able to participate.

Our First Set of Recommendations

1. Expand the County and School Boards to at least seven members
2. Maintain At-Large Seats for the election of the County Board and the School Board
3. Increase the term of the Chairs of the County and School Boards from the current one-year term to a term of a minimum of two years, with the ability to extend the term for up to another two years if the fellow Board members concur
4. Implement a 3-year phased increase of County Board member and chair salaries to the current statutory pay caps of \$89,951 for County Board members and \$95,734 for the Chair
5. Increase the salaries of School Board members substantially over their current levels of \$25,000 for members and \$27,000 for the chair

TiGER is still considering potential recommendations regarding Arlington's **method of elections** and **citizen engagement reform** and will present those recommendations and a draft resolution of support for all our recommendations by June 2022

Recommendation: Enlarge County and School Boards

Recommendation	Rationale	Intended Outcomes
<p>Expand the County and School Boards to at least seven members</p>	<p>Arlington's elected boards remain the same size as they were in 1930, despite a growing and more dense population, resulting in overworked electeds, inadequate representation, and insufficient community engagement.</p>	<p>Provide the voices, values and contributions of two additional Arlington citizens to the elected bodies of Arlington County government and Arlington Public Schools.</p> <p>Afford Arlingtonians an enlarged opportunity to serve in public office and the greater opportunity to interact with and feel connected to their elected officials.</p> <p>Bring Arlington more closely in balance with the size of governing bodies relative to population in surrounding DMV localities and in counties across the Commonwealth of Virginia.</p> <p>Allow the large and growing amount of day-to-day Board work, as well as the large and growing number of regional and local liaison responsibilities, respectively, to be divided among a greater number of Board members, thus helping to ensure that that work is adequately addressed, as well as assisting individual Board members in meeting their responsibilities and providing better work/life balance through broader sharing of responsibilities.</p> <p>Facilitate opportunities for individual Board members to focus more deeply on certain policy areas and operational concerns, rather than being stretched so thin that only broad, general knowledge of County and APS government is feasible.</p> <p>Mean modest increased costs (relative to overall respective budgets) to the annual County Board and School Board office budgets as a result of salary, benefits and office supplies for two additional County Board and two additional School Board members. Additional office space will also be needed for each new member, consistent with the practice of each body.</p>

Recommendation: At-Large Elections for Boards

Recommendation	Rationale	Intended Outcome
<p>Maintain At-Large Seats for the election of the County Board and the School Board</p>	<p>Considering how geographically small Arlington County is, along with concerns about gerrymandering and the potential for board members representing separate districts to compete against each other to acquire resources for their respective districts and focus on parochial concerns at the expense of the County as a whole, the group determined that elections by district or a hybrid system would hinder the ability to move forward policies and actions that benefit the whole County versus individual districts of the County.</p>	<p>Since candidates for elected office in Arlington County are currently elected at-large, there is no expected change in outcomes from this recommendation</p>

Recommendation: Longer County and School Board Chair Terms

Recommendation	Rationale	Intended Outcome
<p>Increase the term of the Chairs of the County and School Boards from the current one-year term to a term of a minimum of two years, with the ability to extend the term for up to another two years if the fellow Board members concur</p>	<p>TiGER reviewed the term periods of other elected officials in areas contiguous to Arlington County and in the region. While the Arlington County Board Chair is selected by their peers for a one-year term, other neighboring governmental entities (e.g., Fairfax County, the City of Alexandria, D.C., Montgomery County, MD, etc.) have multi-year terms and are able to wield more significant influence in regional discussions because of their longer tenure and positional authority.</p> <p>The shorter term for the Arlington County Board chair also limits their ability to form stronger, more meaningful partnerships and strategic relationships with fellow elected officials that could benefit Arlington County residents.</p> <p>This also holds true for the Arlington School Board Chair which position is also elected annually by their peers and tradition holds that board members rotate into this position, changing the Chair every year. This is not the case in other neighboring jurisdictions.</p>	<p>Extending the length of office of the County Board and School Board chairs will facilitate the chairs forming longer and stronger relationships with other local elected leaders, facilitating longer term projects that are regional in nature but have dividends and benefits for Arlington County, and perhaps exercising more influence in regional discussions because the role is on more of an equal footing with other elected leaders who are serving longer terms.</p> <p>Maintaining an indirect election of the Board Chair will help to ensure that the Chair, who generally serves as the spokesperson of the Board and sets the agendas for the meetings, is generally supported by their colleagues, resulting in a more collaborative and potentially effective Board.</p>

Recommendation: Increased Salaries for County Board Members

Recommendation	Rationale	Intended Outcome
<p>Implement a 3-year phased increase of County Board member and chair salaries to the current statutory pay caps of \$89,951 for County Board members and \$95,734 for the Chair</p>	<p>The scope and complexity of managing the County are already large and continue to grow. Yet, the resources provided to attract diverse and high caliber individuals to fill the local elected positions have lagged behind.</p> <p>Although County Board membership has historically been considered “part time”, Board members are responsible for making and overseeing the County policy decisions that the County Manager administers. The Board also makes land use and zoning decisions, sets real estate, personal property and other taxes, approves an annual budget, and adopts the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan every two years.</p> <p>In addition, Board members have liaison responsibilities to 82 separate groups. These include Standing Advisory Commissions (38), Ad Hoc Advisory groups (4), Quasi-judicial groups (7), regional bodies and their sub-bodies (15), Business Improvement Districts and Partnerships (6), Community groups (11) and miscellaneous (1). Group assignments are generally split equally among the Board members, with the Chair taking somewhat fewer. With 5 Board members, that represents about 16 groups per person; with 7 members that averages about 11 per member.</p>	<p>Ensure salary levels are more consistent with similar roles in the DMV area, make these elected positions more attractive and feasibly available to a wider cross-section of residents.</p> <p>Enable the County to attract and retain candidates and elected officials from a wider band of backgrounds and financial circumstances.</p>

Recommendation: Increased Salaries for School Board Members

Recommendation	Rationale	Intended Outcome
<p>Increase the salaries of School Board members substantially over their current levels of \$25,000 for members and \$27,000 for the chair</p>	<p>The scope and complexity of managing the County’s school system are already large and continue to grow. Yet, the resources provided to attract diverse and high caliber individuals to fill the local elected positions have lagged behind.</p> <p>Although School Board membership has also historically been considered “part time”, Board members have a broad range of responsibilities. Those include setting system policies, appointing the Superintendent and monitoring implementation of the policies, adopting an annual budget and a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan every two years (in concert with the County Board), and maintaining links with all Arlington parents and relevant organizations pertaining to public education in Arlington, in addition to other responsibilities.</p> <p>School Board members have liaison responsibilities to 118 separate groups. These include Standing Advisory Committees (13), School Board Subcommittees (2), Individual Schools and Programs (43), and Arlington Civic Associations (60). As with the County Board, group assignments are generally split equally among the Board members, with the Chair taking fewer assignments. With 5 Board members, that represents on average 23 assignments per member; with 7 members that would average about 16-17 assignments per member.</p>	<p>Ensure salary levels are more consistent with similar roles in the DMV area, make these elected positions more attractive and feasibly available to a wider cross-section of residents.</p> <p>Enable the County to attract and retain candidates and elected officials from a wider band of backgrounds and financial circumstances.</p> <p>Encourage greater equity in line with our County’s values as it is inequitable to pay School Board members so much less than County Board members, when all these positions are much closer to being full-time than they were in earlier years.</p>

Next Steps

- TiGER is still considering potential recommendations regarding Arlington's **method of elections** and **citizen engagement reform** and will present those recommendations and a draft resolution of support for all our recommendations by June 2022 for debate and consideration by the full Civic Federation Membership
- Send your feedback and additional questions to tiger@civfed.org