

State mandates November school board elections – Mark Kapel – Oakland Press

It's official. The state has mandated November school board elections in even numbered years for all Michigan districts.

The school boards are free to determine, in the mandated format, whether they wish to have four- or six-year terms.

Jim Crowley of the Clark Hill consulting firm, who spoke to the Bloomfield Hills School Board about the changes, complimented the district for being ahead of the curve by already switching to six terms and a November election.

Still the board is continuing to debate the wisdom of four- or six-year terms and has invited public comment.

Board Member Mark Bank has been at the forefront of collecting that data and continues to ask for more emails and public comment.

District resident Chris Fellin disagrees with the need for more data. Using a Freedom of Information Act, he obtained the email sent to board member Mark Bank on the subject. Of 46 emails Fellin counted, 39 were in favor of changing to four-year terms and 9 against.

Among respondents Fellin counted three former School Board Members of which 2 favored a four-year term and one favored six. He believes the issue should be placed on the November ballot.

Of the seven board members present (Robert Herner was absent, and Jacqueline El-Sayed had few comments) two members — Board President Ingrid Day and Cynthia Van Oeylen favored a six-year term. Van Oeylen said the stability of the board definitely had an effect on the success of students and the school district.

Bank perhaps because of his role as emailer retriever appeared to be ambivalent but said the length of a six-year term initially discouraged him from seeking a school board position.

Joan Berndt, the newest member and oldest member of the board, said six years was a very long time. When the subject of historical perspective was brought up, Board Member Ed Ford cited a preacher who once said nothing gets one's attention like a hearse driving up to the door. The economic collapse of 2009 was just that Ford who favors a four-year term.