

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

### REPORT TO COUNCIL

**SUBJECT:** Voting at Age 16 in Greenbelt City elections

**BACKGROUND:** In their report 2015-1, the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) recommended to Council that the voting age in Greenbelt City elections be lowered to age 16. Council referred the YAC report to the Advisory Committee on Education (ACE) for comments. The YAC report made their recommendation for these reasons: (1) Several neighboring municipalities have lowered their voting age to 16; (2) in Maryland, 16-year-olds are able to drive, work, pay taxes and are likely to take a High-School course in "Local, State and National Government"; (3) at age 18, people typically go through major life changes including leaving home and attending college; (4) the change is likely to increase participation in city elections from all areas of Greenbelt.

**FINDING:** YAC member Ema Smith is assigned as the liaison to ACE. At the ACE meeting on January 24, Smith presented the YAC report and showed some additional research including the results of a survey of ERHS students.

**RECOMMENDATION:** ACE discussed the YAC report and voted to support the YAC recommendation. Early voting will allow 16 and 17-year-olds to learn about voting and their local government at a time when they are still typically living at home. They would be able to discuss their choices with their parents or guardians. Voting in the municipal elections two years before they are eligible to vote in state or national elections will help to train future voters in their civic responsibilities.

Approved by ACE on 1/24/2017 with a vote of 6-0 with three members absent.