

Ordinance No. O-01-2021
Introduced: January 11, 2021
Adopted:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF KENSINGTON AMENDING CHAPTER 2, "GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION", ARTICLE 2, "ELECTIONS", SECTION 2-201. "GENERAL VOTER REGISTRATION", SECTION 2-202, "DISTRIBUTION OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS", SECTION 2-203, "PROCEDURES OF ABSENTEE VOTING", AND SECTION 2-204, "CANVASSING OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS" OF THE TOWN OF KENSINGTON CODE TO DELETE ANY REQUIREMENT THAT A VOTER PROVIDE A REASON FOR VOTING BY ABSENTEE BALLOT AND TO DELETE AN INVALID PROVISION WITH RESPECT TO ELIMINATING VOTERS FROM THE SUPPLEMENTAL LIST.

WHEREAS, pursuant to §5-201 *et seq.* of the Local Government Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, the Town of Kensington (hereinafter, the "Town") has the power to pass such ordinances as it deems necessary to protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the municipality and to prevent and remove nuisances; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 2, "Government and Administration", Article 2, "Elections", Section 2-202, "Distribution of Absentee Ballots", Section 2-203, "Procedures of Absentee Voting", and Section 2-204, "Canvassing of Absentee Ballots" were adopted by the Mayor and Council to provide for voting by absentee ballot in Town elections; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to §4-108 of the Local Government Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, the Town is prohibited from requiring an individual to provide a reason that the individual will be unable to vote in person on election day in order to vote by absentee ballot; and

CAPS : Indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] : Indicate matter deleted from law.
Asterisks * * * : Indicate matter remaining unchanged in existing law but not set forth in Ordinance.
CAPS : Indicate matter added in amendment
[Brackets] : Indicate matter deleted in amendment

WHEREAS, Maryland law prohibits removing a registered voter from the vote list merely for the failure to vote; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council have determined that it is in the public interest and required by State law to delete the provisions in Sections 2-202, 2-203 and 2-204 that reference any requirement that a voter provide a reason for voting by absentee ballot and to delete the provision in Section 2-102 allowing removal of persons from the voter list if that person has not voted in the past five years.

Section 1. NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED AND ENACTED, by the Mayor and Council of the Town of Kensington, Maryland that Chapter 2, "Government and Administration", Article 2, "Elections", Section 2-201, "General Voter Registration," of the Code of the Town of Kensington be, and is hereby, repealed and re-enacted with amendments to read as follows:

Section 2-201. General Voter Registration

(a) – (e) * * * * *

(f) The Board of Supervisors of Elections shall review the books of registration prior to the second Monday in May preceding the next Town election for removal of any person who has died, who has moved out of Town, ~~[who has not voted in at least one Town election within the five preceding calendar years,]~~ or who is otherwise legally disqualified. The Board of Supervisors of Elections shall report, in writing to the Town Council the names of all persons whose registrations are withdrawn and the reasons therefor. All questions arising in connection with the registration or withdrawal of registration of any person shall be determined and decided as provided in Section 707 of the Town Charter.

(g) – (h) * * * * *

Section 2. **BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND ENACTED**, by the Mayor and Council of the Town of Kensington, Maryland that Chapter 2, "Government and Administration", Article 2,

Commented [A1]: The Town will generally be relying on the County's system for maintaining the voter rolls.

“Elections”, Section 2-202, “Distribution of Absentee Ballots,” of the Code of the Town of Kensington be, and is hereby, repealed and re-enacted with amendments to read as follows:

Section 2-202 Distribution of Absentee Ballots

(a) Any qualified and registered voter may apply in writing or in person to the Clerk-Treasurer or Board of Supervisors of Elections for an absentee ballot ~~[if he or she can not be present at any upcoming Town election].~~

(b) If an applicant appears to be eligible to vote as an absentee voter, the Clerk- Treasurer shall, as soon as practicable, deliver to him or her at the place so designated by the applicant, an absentee ballot and envelopes therefor, as hereinafter described in Subsection (f) below. If it appears that the applicant is not eligible to vote as an absentee voter, the Clerk-Treasurer shall, as soon as practicable, so notify the applicant.

(c) The Clerk-Treasurer shall deliver with each ballot and envelope instructions clearly explaining the manner in which the recipient may vote as an absentee voter under the provisions of this Article.

(d) The Clerk-Treasurer shall keep a record of applications for absentee ballots as they are received, showing the date received, the names and residences of the applicants, and places where such ballots were delivered, and, if any such applicants were rejected, the reasons for such rejections. Such applications and records shall be available for public examination for a period of six months after the election. The individual record of each voter to whom an absentee ballot was delivered shall be marked to indicate the fact that an absentee ballot was delivered to the applicant and the date of such delivery. Only those voters to whom absentee ballots have been delivered shall be permitted to use such ballots. No voter to whom an absentee ballot has been delivered shall be allowed to vote in person at the polls at the election, except as provided in Section 2-203 (c) of this Article.

(e) No more than one absentee ballot shall be delivered to any one applicant unless the Clerk-Treasurer has reasonable grounds to believe that the absentee ballot previously delivered has been lost, destroyed or spoiled.

(f) The form of ballots and envelopes for absentee voters shall be as follows:

(1) The ballots shall contain the words “absentee ballot” in large letters in a clear space at the top of each ballot and the signature of the Clerk-Treasurer.

(2) The following shall be delivered to the absentee voter:

(i) An envelope marked “Ballot Envelope” of sufficient size to contain the absentee ballot

(ii) Another envelope, hereinafter referred to as the “Outer Envelope”, of sufficient size to contain the Ballot Envelope. ~~;~~ and (iii) ~~Oath of absentee voter as follows:~~

"I, _____, do hereby swear (or affirm) under penalty of perjury that I am legally qualified to vote in the Town of Kensington's election to be held on _____; that I will be unable to vote in person on the day of such election because _____ as stated in my application for the enclosed ballot; that the enclosed ballot was marked secretly, folded and enclosed and sealed in the enclosed Ballot Envelope and in this envelope; and that I am now disqualified from voting in person in the Town election."

(Signature of absentee voter)]

Section 3. BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Mayor and Council of the Town of Kensington that Chapter 2, "Government and Administration", Article 2, "Elections", Section 2-203, " Procedures of Absentee Voting " of the Code of the Town of Kensington be, and is hereby, repealed and re-enacted with amendments to read as follows:

Section 2-203. Procedures of Absentee Voting

(a) The procedure for absentee voting is as follows: The absentee voter shall mark the absentee ballot, insert it in the Ballot Envelope and then seal this envelope. The voter shall then insert this envelope, ~~together with a completed and signed oath~~ into the outer envelope, and then seal this envelope. The voter shall then deliver the foregoing to the Clerk-Treasurer or the Board of Supervisors of Elections on or before the close of the polls on Election Day.

(b) No absentee ballots actually received by the Clerk-Treasurer or the Board of Supervisors of Elections after the close of the polls shall be valid.

(c) Any person to whom an absentee ballot has been delivered who has not returned said ballot as provided in Subsection (a) above and who ~~finds that he or she is able~~ DECIDES to vote in person at the polls on Election Day, may vote in such election if ~~he or she delivers their~~ THEIR unmarked absentee ballot, together with both the Ballot Envelope and the Outer Envelope, IS RETURNED to

the Board of Supervisors of Elections prior to the close of the polls. The Board of Supervisors of Elections shall clearly mark each of such materials "void" and shall enter in the appropriate register the fact that such materials have been returned but not used.

Section 4. BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Mayor and Council of the Town of Kensington that Chapter 2, "Government and Administration", Article 2, "Elections, Section 2-204, "Canvassing of Absentee Ballots", of the Code of the Town of Kensington be, and is hereby, repealed and re-enacted with amendments to read as follows:

Section 2-204 Canvassing of Absentee Ballots

The procedure for the canvassing of ballots shall be as follows:

(a) The Clerk-Treasurer shall deliver all sealed Outer Envelopes received to the Board of Supervisors of Elections. No sealed Outer Envelopes shall be opened at any time prior to the canvassing of the absentee ballots.

(b) When an Outer Envelope is opened, the Board of Supervisors of Elections shall conclusively determine whether or not the person who has submitted the absentee ballot is a qualified, registered voter in the Town to whom an absentee ballot was delivered under this Article [~~has properly completed the oath specified in Section 2-202 (f) (2) (iii) above,~~] and has not voted in person at the election. The Board of Supervisors of Elections shall then enter in the appropriate register the fact that the voter [~~whose name appears on the oath~~] has voted by absentee ballot. They shall thereafter separately open the Ballot Envelopes in such a manner that they are unable to match the name of the absentee voters with the particular absentee ballots that have been submitted. The Board of Supervisors of Elections shall then proceed to count and certify the absentee ballots.

(c) The Ballot Envelopes found to be invalid by the Board of Supervisors of Elections shall not be opened. The Board of Supervisors of Elections shall keep a record of all absentee ballots which have been rejected and the reason for each such rejection. Such record, and envelopes [~~and oaths~~] described in Section 2-202 of this Article, shall be available for public inspection at the Town office for a period of six months after the election.

(d) Whenever the Board of Supervisors of Elections shall determine from proof or investigation that any person who has marked and delivered to the Clerk-Treasurer or Board of Supervisors of Elections an absentee ballot has died before Election Day, said Board of Supervisors of Elections shall not count the ballot of the deceased voter. If at or prior to the time of such

counting and canvassing the Board of Supervisors of Elections shall not have determined that the absentee resident who marked a ballot had died before Election Day, said ballot shall be counted. The fact that said absentee resident may later be shown to have been actually dead on Election Day shall not invalidate said ballot or said election.

(e) For the purpose hereof the term “deliver” shall mean delivery by mail or by any other means.

Section 5. BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Mayor and Council of the Town of Kensington that upon formal introduction of this proposed Ordinance, the Town Clerk shall distribute a copy to each Council member and shall maintain a reasonable number of copies in the office of the Town Clerk. The proposed ordinance or a fair summary thereof together with a notice setting out the time and place for a public hearing thereon and for its consideration by the Council, shall be:

- a. Posted at the town hall by the next business day;
- b. Posted on the official town website;
- c. Sent to those persons listed on the official town email list /mail subscription service; and
- d. Published once prior to the public hearing in the town newsletter or sent by substitute regular mail to newsletter circulation addresses.

The public hearing shall be held at least fifteen (15) days after introduction and may be held separately or in connection with a regular or special council meeting and may be adjourned from time to time. All persons interested shall have an opportunity to be heard. This Ordinance shall become effective on _____ provided that the ordinance or a fair summary thereof is:

- a. Posted at the town hall by the next business day for at least two (2) weeks;

b. Posted on the official town website;

c. Sent to those persons listed on the official town email list /mail subscription service;
and

d. Published once in the town newsletter.

INTRODUCED by the Mayor and Council of the Town of Kensington, Maryland at a public meeting assembled on the ____ day of _____ 2021.

ADOPTED by the Mayor and Council of the Town of Kensington, Maryland at a public meeting assembled on the ____ day of _____ 2021.

EFFECTIVE the ____ day of _____, 2021.

ATTEST:

TOWN OF KENSINGTON

By: _____

Susan Engels, Clerk-Treasurer

By: _____

Tracey Furman, Mayor

**APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL
SUFFICIENCY:**

Suellen M. Ferguson, Town Attorney