



FAIRFAX TOWN COUNCIL MEETING STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE August 6, 2025

PREPARED FOR Mayor and Town Council

PREPARED BY Janet Coleson, Town Attorney
Christine Foster, Assistant to the Town Manager/Deputy Town Clerk

SUBJECT Receive and File Certificate of Sufficiency of Local Recall Petitions Seeking Removal of Councilmembers Blash and Hellman and Approve Setting the Special Municipal Election Date for the Recall

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Town Council:

1. Receive and file the Certificate of Sufficiency of local recall petitions seeking the removal of Councilmembers Blash and Hellman; and
2. Discuss an appropriate Special Municipal Election date for the recall and either:
 - a. Select an election date this evening and adopt the following resolutions:

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFAX CALLING FOR THE HOLDING OF A SPECIAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION ON TUESDAY, _____, 2025 FOR THE SUBMISSION OF THE QUESTION OF THE RECALL OF CERTAIN OFFICERS.

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFAX REQUESTING THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF MARIN TO RENDER FULL SERVICES TO THE TOWN RELATING TO THE CONDUCT OF A SPECIAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY, _____, 2025 FOR THE SUBMISSION OF THE QUESTION OF THE RECALL OF CERTAIN OFFICERS.

- b. Open the discussion and continue this item until no later than August 20, 2025 at which point select an election date for the recall and adopt the resolutions above.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 30, 2025, local proponents seeking the removal of Council Members Lisel Blash and Stephanie Hellman timely filed in the Fairfax Town Clerk's Office two recall petitions. Following signature verification by the County Registrar of Voters, the Town Clerk's Office has certified that both petitions meet the required signature threshold for placing a recall election for both officers on the ballot. Under State law, the Council must now select the date of the recall election, as explained in more detail below.

BACKGROUND

On June 30, 2025, local proponents seeking the removal of Council Members Blash and Hellman timely filed in the Fairfax Town Clerk's Office two recall petitions. After conducting a prima

facie/“raw” count, it was determined that both petitions contained sufficient signatures to qualify. Therefore, the Town Clerk’s Office accepted both recall petitions for filing.

As is standard practice throughout the State, the Town Clerk’s Office referred the petitions to the Marin County Registrar of Voters for formal signature verification with official County voter records. The verification of signatures has been completed by the Registrar of Voters and based upon that review, both petitions have been determined to be sufficient. Under the California Elections Code, the required number of signatures to qualify is 1,479, which represents 25% of the Town’s registered voters. The verification of signatures concluded that 1,552 signatures were valid in the Blash petition and 1,569 signatures were valid in the Hellman petition. Therefore, both recalls have qualified for the ballot.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Pursuant to California Elections Code sections 11224 and 11227, the Town Clerk/Elections Official has submitted to the Town Council a certificate of sufficiency as to both petitions. Within 14 days of receiving the certificate of sufficiency the Town Council shall issue an order stating that an election shall be held pursuant to Elections Code sections 11240 et. seq to determine whether or not the officers named in the petitions shall be recalled.

The Council can call the Special Municipal Election for the recall at this regular meeting tonight or at a special meeting that may take place between August 7 and August 20. If the Council does not call the Special Municipal Election by August 20, the County Registrar of Voters, within 5 days thereafter, shall call the election for the Town.

The dates on which a recall election shall occur are set by State Elections Code. The recall election shall be held on a Tuesday that is not on, before or after a State holiday, and which is not less than 88, nor more than 125 days from the date the Town Council orders the election.

If the Council calls the Special Municipal Election this evening, the 88-125 day timeline to hold the recall election will fall between Sunday, November 2, 2025 and Tuesday, December 9, 2025. The Tuesday election dates would be as follows:

- November 4, 2025 – A “regularly established election date” under the Elections Code
- ~~November 11, 2025~~ – [Not Available – Veterans’ Day]
- November 18, 2025
- November 25, 2025 - Technically legally available, but two days before Thanksgiving
- December 2, 2025
- December 9, 2025

If the Council chooses to continue this item to an August 20, 2025 special meeting, the 88-125 day timeline to hold the recall election will fall between Sunday, November 16, 2025 and Tuesday, December 23, 2025. The Tuesday election dates would be as follows:

- November 18, 2025
- November 25, 2025 - Technically legally available, but two days before Thanksgiving
- December 2, 2025

- December 9, 2025
- December 16, 2025
- December 23, 2025 - Technically legally available, but two days before Christmas

Staff notes that while the estimated cost of holding an election on any of these dates will be similar, November 4, 2025 is the more common date on which to hold elections during odd-numbered years. The Town also reached out to the County Elections Office regarding the above dates. While they confirmed that they would conduct an election for Fairfax on any of the legally available dates identified above, they expressed a strong preference for November 4, 2025 since that is the more common election date and they will be conducting elections for other agencies that day. If the Council delays consideration of this matter beyond this Friday, August 8, 2025, it will be too late to schedule the recall election for the November 4, 2025 special election date.

Change to recall election format

It is further noted that, until recently, recall elections in general law cities were two-question ballots for each officer – (1) shall the officer be recalled and, (2) if so, who shall succeed the officer? As part of the recall election, a slate of candidates would simultaneously run for the remaining term of the office in the event the recall was successful, like a Town Council election.

However, the Elections Code was amended in 2023 so that local recall elections are now one-question ballots for each officer – (1) shall the officer be recalled? Instead of holding a simultaneous election for a successor, State law now provides that if a recall is successful, a *vacancy* is created in the office that shall be filled according to law. The seat would then be filled either by Town Council appointment or by a subsequent special municipal election.

FISCAL IMPACT

The County Registrar of Voters has provided an estimate of \$9-\$10 per registered voter to perform a recall election on any of the legally available dates. Currently, there are 9,506 registered voters in Fairfax. The special election is therefore estimated to cost between \$53,000 and \$59,000.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Town Clerk's Certificate of Petition Sufficiency
- B. Marin County Certificate of Petition Verification Results (Hellman)
- C. Marin County Certificate of Petition Verification Results (Blash)
- D. Resolution Calling Special Municipal Election for Recall
- E. Resolution Requesting Full Election Services from Marin County

TOWN OF FAIRFAX
CERTIFICATE OF SUFFICIENCY OF LOCAL RECALL PETITIONS
(Seeking Removal of Councilmembers Lisel Blash and Stephanie Hellman)

I, Christine Foster, Deputy Town Clerk of the Town of Fairfax, County of Marin, State of California, hereby certify that two recall petitions seeking the removal of Councilmembers Lisel Blash and Stephanie Hellman were filed with this Office on June 30, 2025;

That each section of the petitions contain signatures purporting to be signatures of qualified electors of the Town of Fairfax, California;

That attached to the petitions at the time they were filed, were affidavits purporting to be the affidavit of the person(s) who solicited the signatures, and containing the dates between which the purported qualified electors signed these petitions;

That the affiant stated his or her own qualification, that he or she had solicited the signatures upon that section of the petition, that all of the signatures were made in his or her presence, and that to the best of his or her own information and belief, each signature to that section of the petition was the genuine signature of the person whose name it purports to be;

That after the proponents filed the petitions and based upon verification by the County of Marin Registrar of Voters, I have determined the following facts regarding these petitions:

Petition for Lisel Blash:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Total number of signatures filed: | 1,783 |
| 2. Number of signatures verified: | 1,783 |
| 3. Total number of signature needed: | 1,479 |
| 4. Number of signatures found sufficient: | 1,552 |
| 5. Number of signatures found not sufficient: | 231 |

Petition for Stephanie Hellman:

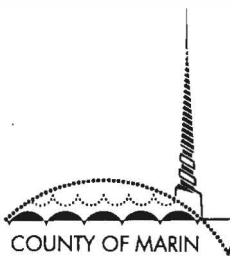
- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Total number of signatures filed: | 1,806 |
| 2. Number of signatures verified: | 1,806 |
| 3. Total number of signature needed: | 1,479 |
| 4. Number of signatures found sufficient: | 1,569 |
| 5. Number of signatures found not sufficient: | 237 |

Based on the above, each petition is deemed to be sufficient.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the official seal of the Town of Fairfax this 14th day of July, 2025.



Christine Foster
Deputy City Clerk



ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Providing a responsive, transparent, and professional approach to conducting elections.

Natalie Adana
REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

Melvin Briones
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR
OF VOTERS

PO Box E
San Rafael, CA 94913

Marin County Civic Center
3501 Civic Center Drive
Suite 121
San Rafael, CA 94903
415 473 6456 T
415 473 6447 F
415 473 6899 TTY
www.marinvotes.org
elections@marincounty.gov

MARIN COUNTY REGISTRAR OF VOTERS CERTIFICATE OF SIGNATURE VERIFICATION California Elections Code sec. 9114-9115

I, Natalie Adona, Registrar of Voters, County of Marin, hereby certify that the verification of signatures on Petition to Recall Fairfax Councilmember Hellman received by this office on June 30, 2025, was completed at the request of the town clerk of the Town of Fairfax.

The signatures were verified pursuant to California Elections Code sec. 9114, and I determined the following facts as confirmed in the attached report—Petition Summary Report.

Signatures Required	1479
Raw Count	1806
Full Count	1806
# Valid Signatures	1569
# Request to Withdraw	4
# Invalid Signatures	237
Duplicate Signatures	50

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have set my hand and affixed my official seal on the 11th Day of July 2025.



Natalie Adona
Registrar of Voters



Petition Summary Report

Fairfax Recall Hellman

Fairfax Recall Hellman

Signatures Required	1479		
Raw Count	1,806		
Sample Size	1,806	<i>Percent of Sigs</i>	<i>Percent of</i>
Sigs Checked	1,806	<i>Checked</i>	<i>Sample Size</i>
Sigs Not Checked	0		0.0 %
Sigs Valid	1,569	86.9 %	86.9 %
Sigs Invalid	237	13.1 %	13.1 %
Duplicated	50	2.8 %	2.8 %
Non-duplicate Invalids	187	10.0 %	10.4 %

RESULT	ABBR	RESULT DESCRIPTION
--------	------	--------------------

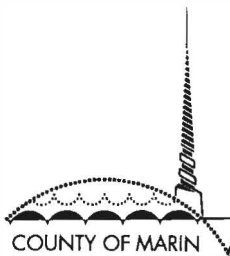
Approved	Approved	1,569	86.9 %
NotReg	Not Registered	55	3.0 %
OutOfDist	Out of District	39	2.2 %
Duplicate	Signed more than once	50	2.8 %
RegLate	Registered Late	21	1.2 %
RegDiffAdd	Registered at a Different Address	37	2.0 %
CantIdentfy	Cannot Identify	2	0.1 %
NoResAdd	No Residence Address Given	2	0.1 %
NoSig	No Signature	5	0.3 %
SigNoMatch	Signatures Don't Match	26	1.4 %

STATISTICS SUMMARY	Value	% Raw	% Req
--------------------	-------	-------	-------

Pages Processed	139	100.0 %	
Total Signatures Checked	1,806	100.0 %	122.1 %
Uncorrected Valid	1,569	86.9 %	106.1 %
Duplicate Adjustment	0		
Estimated Valid	1,569	86.9 %	106.1 %

Min Required (95%): 1405.1

Min Required to pass
Based on Sample (110%): 1626.9



ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Providing a responsive, transparent, and professional approach to conducting elections.

Natalie Adona
REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

Melvin Briones
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR
OF VOTERS

PO Box E
San Rafael, CA 94913

Marin County Civic Center
3501 Civic Center Drive
Suite 121
San Rafael, CA 94903
415 473 6456 T
415 473 6447 F
415 473 6899 TTY
www.marinvotes.org
elections@marincounty.gov

MARIN COUNTY REGISTRAR OF VOTERS CERTIFICATE OF SIGNATURE VERIFICATION California Elections Code sec. 9114-9115

I, Natalie Adona, Registrar of Voters, County of Marin, hereby certify that the verification of signatures on Petition to Recall Fairfax Councilmember Blash received by this office on June 30, 2025, was completed at the request of the town clerk of the Town of Fairfax.

The signatures were verified pursuant to California Elections Code sec. 9114, and I determined the following facts as confirmed in the attached report—Petition Summary Report.

Signatures Required	1479
Raw Count	1783
Full Count	1783
# Valid Signatures	1552
# Request to Withdraw	4
# Invalid Signatures	231
Duplicate Signatures	54

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have set my hand and affixed my official seal on the 11th Day of July 2025.



Natalie Adona
Registrar of Voters



Petition Summary Report

Fairfax Recall Blash

Fairfax Recall Blash

Signatures Required	1479		
Raw Count	1,783		
Sample Size	1,783	Percent of Sigs Checked	Percent of Sample Size
Sigs Checked	1,783		
Sigs Not Checked	0		0.0 %
Sigs Valid	1,552	87.0 %	87.0 %
Sigs Invalid	231	13.0 %	13.0 %
Duplicated	54	3.0 %	3.0 %
Non-duplicate Invalids	177	10.0 %	9.9 %

RESULT ABBR	RESULT DESCRIPTION		
Approved	Approved	1,552	87.0 %
NotReg	Not Registered	59	3.3 %
OutOfDist	Out of District	30	1.7 %
Duplicate	Signed more than once	54	3.0 %
RegLate	Registered Late	18	1.0 %
RegDiffAdd	Registered at a Different Address	35	2.0 %
CantIdntfy	Cannot Identify	4	0.2 %
NoSig	No Signature	6	0.3 %
SigNoMatch	Signatures Don't Match	25	1.4 %

STATISTICS SUMMARY	Value	% Raw	% Req	
Pages Processed	141	100.0 %		
Total Signatures Checked	1,783	100.0 %	120.6 %	
Uncorrected Valid	1,552	87.0 %	104.9 %	Min Required (95%): 1405.1
Duplicate Adjustment	0			Min Required to pass Based on Sample (110%): 1626.9
Estimated Valid	1,552	87.0 %	104.9 %	

RESOLUTION NO. 25-_____

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFAX, MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, CALLING FOR THE HOLDING OF A SPECIAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION ON TUESDAY, _____, 2025 FOR THE SUBMISSION OF THE QUESTION OF THE RECALL OF CERTAIN OFFICERS.

WHEREAS, under the provisions of the Elections Code relating to general law cities in the State of California, two recall petitions were timely filed demanding the recall of Town Council Members Lisel Blash and Stephanie Hellman; and

WHEREAS, the Marin County Registrar of Voters and the Town Clerk have verified and certified that each petition was signed by more than twenty-five (25) percent of the registered voters of the Town of Fairfax ("Town"); and

WHEREAS, the Town Council is therefore authorized and directed by statute to submit the proposed recall to the voters of the Town.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFAX, MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, DOES RESOLVE, DECLARE, DETERMINE AND ORDER AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. That pursuant to the requirements of the laws of the State of California relating to general law cities, there is called and ordered to be held in the Town of Fairfax, Marin County, California, on Tuesday, _____, 2025, a Special Municipal Election for the purpose of submitting the questions of the recall of Town Councilmembers Lisel Blash and Stephanie Hellman.

SECTION 2. That on the ballots to be used at the election, in addition to any other matters required by law, there shall be printed substantially the following two questions:

Shall Lisel Blash be recalled (removed) from the office of Town Councilmember of the Town of Fairfax?	YES	
	NO	

Shall Stephanie Hellman be recalled (removed) from the office of Town councilmember of the Town of Fairfax?	YES	
	NO	

SECTION 3. Pursuant to California Elections Code §11327, Councilmembers Blash and Hellman may each file a statement of not more than two hundred (200) words with the Town Clerk/Elections Official in accordance with Elections Code §§ 13307 and 13308, to be sent to each voter, together with the voter information guide.

SECTION 4. That the ballots to be used at the election shall be in form and content as required by law.

SECTION 5. That the Town Clerk, through the Marin County Registrar of Voters, is authorized, instructed and directed to procure and furnish any and all official ballots, notices, printed matter and all supplies, equipment and paraphernalia that may be necessary in order to properly and lawfully conduct the election.

SECTION 6. That the precincts, ballot drop box locations and hours of operations, vote center locations and hours of operations, vote-by-mail procedures and timing, and election officers, and all other persons and procedures for the Special Municipal Election shall be the same as those utilized by the County of Marin.

SECTION 7. That in all particulars not recited in this resolution, the election shall be held and conducted as provided by law for holding municipal elections.

SECTION 8. That notice of the time and place of holding the election is given and the Town Clerk is authorized, instructed and directed to give further or additional notice of the election, in time, form and manner as required by law.

SECTION 9. That the Town Clerk shall certify to the passage and adoption of this resolution and enter it into the book of original resolutions.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED ON August 6, 2025

LISEL BLASH, MAYOR

ATTEST:

CHRISTINE FOSTER
DEPUTY TOWN CLERK

RESOLUTION NO. 25- [REDACTED]

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFAX, CALIFORNIA, REQUESTING THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF MARIN TO RENDER FULL SERVICES TO THE TOWN RELATING TO THE CONDUCT OF A SPECIAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY, [REDACTED], 2025 FOR THE SUBMISSION OF THE QUESTION OF THE RECALL OF CERTAIN OFFICERS

WHEREAS, by adoption of Resolution No. 25-[REDACTED] on August 6, 2025, the Town Council has called and given notice of a Special Municipal Election to be held on Tuesday, [REDACTED], 2025 in the Town of Fairfax, County of Marin, for the purpose of submitting the following questions regarding the recall of Councilmembers Lisel Blash and Stephanie Hellman:

Shall Lisel Blash be recalled (removed) from the office of Town Councilmember of the Town of Fairfax?	YES	
	NO	

Shall Stephanie Hellman be recalled (removed) from the office of Town Councilmember of the Town of Fairfax?	YES	
	NO	

WHEREAS, by adoption of this Resolution, the Town Council desires that the County of Marin render full services to the Town in connection with said Special Municipal Election; and

WHEREAS, all necessary expenses in performing these services shall be paid by the Town of Fairfax.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFAX, CALIFORNIA, DOES HEREBY RESOLVE, FIND, DETERMINE, AND ORDER AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Pursuant to the provisions of Section 10002 of the Elections Code of the State of California, this Town Council requests the Board of Supervisors of Marin County to permit the County Registrar of Voters/Election Department to render full election services to the Town of Fairfax. The full election services which the Town of Fairfax requests the Registrar of Voters/Election Department, or such other official as may be appropriate, to perform, and which such officer is hereby authorized and directed to perform, if said Board of Supervisors consents, include: the preparation, printing and mailing of voter information guides and sample ballots; making such publications as are required by law in connection therewith; the establishment of voting centers and ballot drop boxes, the preparation, printing, mailing and furnishing of vote-by-mail ballots and

other necessary supplies or materials to conduct the election; the canvassing of the returns of the election and the furnishing of the results of such canvassing to the Town Clerk of the Town of Fairfax; and the performance of such other election services as may be requested by the Town Clerk.

Section 2. The Town shall reimburse the County for services performed when the work is completed and upon presentation to the Town of a properly approved bill.

Section 3. The Town Clerk shall certify to the adoption of this Resolution and is directed to forward without delay to said Board of Supervisors and to the County Registrar of Voters/Election Department each a certified copy of this Resolution.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED ON August 6, 2025

LISEL BLASH
MAYOR

ATTEST:

CHRISTINE FOSTER
DEPUTY TOWN CLERK