

## **Length of terms topic of hearing**

Walkertown voters to give their views on changing system

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### **WALKERTOWN**

Town residents will get a chance to have their say on whether council members should serve four-year terms or stay with two-year terms.

The town council will hold a public hearing on the topic during tonight's meeting, which starts at 7 in the Walkertown library.

If approved, the change would involve electing two of the council's four members every two years. The mayor's term would extend from two to four years as well.

"The group felt that it takes a little while to get indoctrinated into the job," Council Member Ralph Landreth said. "Extending the term would make it a more efficient operation and would allow us to get more done, after we have learned our jobs somewhat."

Landreth was appointed to the council last March to fill the unexpired term of Horace Warner, who died Feb. 21, 2006. Landreth said he feels that he is learning on the job. He supports the move to four-year terms.

"I have tried to catch up, and I have gone to other meetings to learn something about it," he said. "And I am learning by listening to the council. My deal is to study the issues that come up and vote the way our citizens feel about it. It takes a year to learn the ropes, and then it is time to have another election."

Walkertown has had four-year terms. Until 1994, council members served staggered four-year terms. But that year, residents voted 655-271 to switch to two-year terms.

In 1998, the council discussed switching back to four-year terms but nothing came of it.

This time, the town is considering changing the town charter to bring about the four-year terms. Under the provisions of that change, the council would ease into the new system by electing two members to four-year terms this year, and electing two other members to two-year terms.

Then in 2009, the two seats up for election that year will become seats with four-year terms. The result will be two members coming up for election to four-year terms from that point.

For this year, the two council members getting the most votes would serve the four-year terms.

Landreth said that staggered terms would give the council some continuity. No election could turn out the entire council and leave no one with experience from the previous council.

Landreth said that staggered terms would keep voters from electing an entirely new

**council if they were upset about the way things were going.**

**Forsyth County cities and towns have terms of different lengths. In Winston-Salem, council members represent wards and serve non-staggered four-year terms.**

**Rural Hall, Bethania and Tobaccoville give council members four-year staggered terms. The mayor of Tobaccoville serves a two-year term, but the mayor of Rural Hall serves a four-year term. Bethania elects the mayor from its council.**

**Lewisville, Kernersville and Walkertown give mayors and its council members and aldermen two-year non-staggered terms. Clemmons has a hybrid system - four of the five council terms last four years, but one seat has a two-year length.**

**The mayor also serves for two years.**

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