PSAB is often asked what to do when borough officials consistently cannot find anyone eligible to fill a vacancy on council or how to spark interest for a registered elector to run for office in the upcoming municipal election. A few reasons why people do not serve include the following: there are a lot of meetings, they have a busy family life, shuttling children to activities, some are totally apathetic to the political process even though national surveys show that local government is rated higher than state or federal government. At times, a resident is not a viable candidate because he is not a registered voter or perhaps has not lived in the borough one year continuously prior to the date of the November election.

More than 400 boroughs have less than 1,000 population and yet even boroughs with twice that population have used section 818 of the Borough Code to reduce the number of council seats. Please note that this provision does not apply where council members are elected by wards.

Act 28-2020 amended Section 818 of the Borough Code which changed the method to reduce the number of council seats. First, the population of the borough cannot exceed 3,000 population or no reduction is authorized.

- The court of common pleas shall, upon petition of at least 5% of the registered electors of any borough not divided into wards, which, according to the latest official census, had a population of not more than 3,000, certify the question of a proposal to reduce the total number of members of council for the borough from seven to five or to three, as specified by the petition, to the board of election of the county for a referendum vote of the residents at the next general election held not sooner than the thirteenth Tuesday after the date of the petition. The sufficiency of the number of signers to the petition shall be ascertained as of the date when the petition is presented to court. Upon receipt of the certified election results, the court shall enter a final decree granting or denying the request of the petitioners. A petition under this section may not be considered more than once in five years.

Here is the process that Section 818 (c) occurs to decrease the number of council seats after the voters approve the referendum question:

- (1) At the municipal election following the decrease in the number of members of council from seven to five:

  (i) If four members of council would otherwise have been elected, three members shall be elected.
(ii) If three members of council would otherwise have been elected, two members shall be elected.

(2) At the second municipal election following the decrease in the number of members of council:

(i) If four members of council would otherwise have been elected, three members shall be elected.

(ii) If three members of council would otherwise have been elected, two members shall be elected.

(3) At all following municipal elections, the proper number of members of council shall be elected to correspond to the number of members of council whose terms are to expire the first Monday of the following January.

(d) Election.—

(1) At the municipal election following the decrease in the number of members of council from seven to three:

(i) If four members of council would otherwise have been elected, two members shall be elected.

(ii) If three members of council would otherwise have been elected, one member shall be elected.

(2) At the second municipal election following the decrease in the number of members of council in the borough:

(i) If four members of council would otherwise have been elected, two members shall be elected.

(ii) If three members of council would otherwise have been elected, one member shall be elected.

(3) At all the following municipal elections, the proper number of members of council shall be elected to correspond to the number of members of council whose terms are to expire the first Monday of the following January.