



## Request for Committee Action Office of City Clerk – Elections & Voter Services Division

**Date:** June 11, 2014

**To:** The Honorable Elizabeth Glidden  
Chair, Committee of the Whole

**Subject:** Requesting authorization to participate in a state-wide pilot project testing the use of electronic poll books (e-poll books) in selected polling places during the 2014 Gubernatorial General Election.

**Recommendation:** No action required at this time. Receive and file the report.

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**Background:** In the aftermath of the 2012 Presidential Election, election administrators advocated for the use of electronic poll books (e-poll books) as an important process improvement that could streamline the verification of voters' registration status and expedite Election Day registrations at the polls. (The City of Minneapolis had specifically identified the use of this new technology as a necessary reform and advocated for authorization to use e-poll books as part of its 2013 state legislative platform.) In response, the State Legislature established an Electronic Roster Task Force and authorized a pilot project to be conducted in 2013, which included the following jurisdictions: Dilworth (Clay County); Minnetonka (Hennepin County); Moorehead (Clay County); St. Anthony (Hennepin and Ramsey Counties); and St. Paul (Ramsey County). A report detailing the experiences of the first pilot project is appended for reference, listed as *Attachment A*.

The Electronic Roster Task Force was charged with researching specific issues, such as various technologies and types of electronic rosters, data security, functionality, and direct and indirect costs associated with the use of electronic rosters (e-poll books). The task force was comprised of fifteen members, which included state legislators, state department representatives, election officials, two election judges, and one individual familiar with electronic roster technology appointed by Governor Dayton. Assistant City Clerk Grace Wachlarowicz, who is the director of the City's Elections & Voter Services Division, was a member of the task force appointed by the Minnesota School Boards Association. The Electronic Roster Task Force Findings and Recommendations Report is appended for reference, listed as *Attachment B*.

In summary, both reports indicate that the use of e-poll books has merit in conducting elections. However both reports concluded that the data collected was limited due to low voter turnout in 2013 and that additional testing was necessary. Consequently, the State Legislature authorized a second pilot project to be conducted in conjunction with the 2014 Gubernatorial Election. This second pilot project authorizes the use of e-poll books by counties, municipalities, and school districts and directs the Secretary of State to evaluate and report on the results of the second project. Unfortunately, the State Legislature stripped all state funding to support this project; thus, participating jurisdictions must absorb any costs associated with the pilot project. A copy of the enabling legislation (House File No. 2166) is appended for reference, listed as *Attachment C*.

Many jurisdictions will be participating in the 2014 pilot project. The general consensus amongst election administrators is that electronic rosters may increase voter service by reducing long lines and wait times and

increasing the efficiency and accuracy of verifying a voter's registration status and expediting the processes associated with same-day registration. Each participating jurisdiction will deploy e-poll books in a limited number of precincts and evaluate the voter experience in a high voter turnout election, the functionality of use in the polls, and gather quantitative data to evaluate pre-election, Election Day, and post-election administration, and to identify both the direct and indirect costs associated with the use of this new technology. Within Hennepin County, the cities of Minnetonka, Edina, and St. Anthony have already indicated that they will be participating in this year's pilot project. As the largest city and one of the top-three largest voting jurisdictions in Minnesota, this kind of technology could have significant benefits to serving voters. For that reason, the Minneapolis Elections & Voter Services Division is requesting authorization to participate in the 2014 pilot project.

It is anticipated that each participating city in Hennepin County will work with the vendor of their choice. The goal is to use different vendors in each municipality to broaden the scope of the project. Staff also is interested in ensuring multiple vendors have the opportunity to participate, as a means of expanding the pool of potentially eligible providers in the event that permanent authorization is granted and uniform standards established by the State. Vendors interested in participating include Datacard Group; ES&S; Hart; KNOWiNK; SOE; and Votec. If approved to participate in the pilot project, Minneapolis intends to partner with Votec; however, staff is not opposed to working with two vendors, if a viable plan can be arranged. Votec (and other vendors) will provide the systems (including hardware and software) for use in the pilot project at no cost to the jurisdiction. Of course, there may be some incidental costs absorbed by the City, which staff expects would be minimal. Staff anticipates any such costs will be covered by the existing budget for the Office of City Clerk, but will request contingency funding if necessary and appropriate.

If authorized to participate in this year's pilot project, Minneapolis plans to deploy e-poll books in five precincts, based on the following criteria:

1. Polling place serving multiple precincts; specifically the Powderhorn Park facility located at 3400 15th Avenue South, which serves as the polling place for three separate precincts:
  - **W9 P2 Registered voter count: 2,467 registered voters (as of 060614)**
  - **W9 P5 Registered voter count: 618 registered voters (as of 060614)**
  - **W9 P7 Registered voter count: 1,190 registered voters (as of 060614)**
2. Precinct with recurring high volume of Election Day (same day) registrations; specifically, the University Lutheran Church of Hope, located at 601 13th Avenue SE, which serves voters near the University of Minnesota, and experienced a 60% EDR in the 2012 Presidential General Election:
  - **W3 P1 Registered voter count: 2,177 (as of 060614)**
3. Precinct(s) serving a high number of voters speaking English as a second language; specifically, the Coyle Community Center, located at 420 15th Avenue South, which serves a voting community with significant need for translation and language assistance. The Coyle Center served a population with some of the highest second-language voter turnout in the 2013 Municipal Election.
  - **W6 P3 Registered voter count: 2,714 (as of 060614)**

*[Note – The Powderhorn Park polling place also serve a high-number of voters speaking Spanish.]*

**Financial Impact:** Staff does not foresee any significant fiscal impact caused by participation in this pilot project, primarily because the vendors have agreed to provide—at no cost—the e-poll book systems that will be used as part of the project. Incidental costs that may be incurred will be covered by the existing budget appropriation for the Office of City Clerk, or a separate request for contingency funds will be submitted, if necessary and appropriate.

**Attached:** Attachment A: 2013 Electronic Roster Pilot Project Report  
Attachment B: Electronic Roster Task Force Report & Recommendations  
Attachment C: House File No. 2166 (2014 Session)