



**Request for City Council Committee Action
From the Department of the City Clerk**

Date: February 5, 2009

To: Elections Committee

Subject: Ranked Choice Voting Implementation

Recommendation: Motion to receive and file reports

Prepared by: Cindy Reichert, Assistant City Clerk/Director of Elections

Approved by: Steve Ristuben, City Clerk

Status of IRV Implementation

The position of Mayor and all City Council positions are up for election in 2009, along with nine Park Board and two Board of Estimate and Taxation positions. The City Charter calls for our election to be run using Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) for the first time. Several IRV implementation activities have been completed or decided, including the adoption of the ordinance. Many other administrative activities are yet to be undertaken. These include finalization of the ballot design and marking instructions, development of hand count procedures, equipment and process testing plan and protocol, creation of a results reporting component, beta testing in the form of a demonstration election, development of a communications plan, and conduct of a city-wide voter education program.

Timelines

Two timelines have been attached to this report. The first illustrates activities and a proposed timeline for conducting an IRV election. This is an aggressive timeline. The second is a timeline illustrating activities normally undertaken in a primary/general election scenario. We are preparing to move forward on a dual track - undertaking IRV implementation activities while at the same time preparing a contingency plan which includes a primary election. Though no legal deadline for deciding whether a primary will be held has passed, there are many administrative processes that need to be undertaken during the month of February to prepare for a municipal primary. The need to move forward with these activities is magnified by the size of our jurisdiction.

Resources

Reports provided to Council in 2006 and 2007 called for additional department staff or a consultant to assist with implementation at a cost of approximately \$75,000. That amount was appropriated in the 2009 budget process and we are considering how an RFP for consultant services should be structured. At the same time department budget reduction proposals call for elimination of one full time election department position. If the Council agrees that we should continue to move forward with IRV implementation for 2009, this staff reduction should be reconsidered.

Voter Education Program

An important component to the success of IRV will be adequate voter education on the new methodology. Especially considering lessons learned through examination of ballots during the 2008 Senate recount, we know that extensive training individualized for targeted populations will be required. We are very reluctant to undertake the community outreach portion of the voter education process prior to receiving a final decision by the Minnesota Courts. Our concern would be confusion arising from a voting method that could later be invalidated by a higher court.

Based on the experience of two similarly large jurisdictions that have implemented IRV, we know how to structure and carry out an effective communications program. We are aware that other jurisdictions have conducted voter education in a shorter time frame, however, planning for the programs began much earlier and funding to ensure complete saturation was not an issue.

- San Francisco received final approval just months prior to the election, but planning for the communications program had begun shortly after adoption two years earlier. Their communications program included participation from many staff persons, community groups and advertising agencies who worked together to design the program prior to its roll-out. The majority of education activities took place during the four-month period leading up to the election and cost approximately \$750,000.
- Pierce County, Washington began their voter education process a full year prior to their election date and used the San Francisco program as their model. Their communication process was derailed by a change in format for the state primary which caused them to revise their communication plan and repeat training that had already been conducted. In the end, their communication program cost just under \$250,000.

An essential component of our administrative preparation and voter education process will be the conduct of a “demonstration” election which will provide a real world opportunity to determine weak points in the process, materials, forms and equipment necessary to conduct an IRV election. In addition to serving as a testing environment, input gathered from the participants will be used to refine the later stages of the voter education program and provide a training opportunity for Election Department staff and Election Judges. The concept of conducting a demonstration election is not new, and is common practice in the State of Minnesota when significant changes to election equipment and procedures occur.

PROPOSED IRV TIMELINE		Prior Year	Municipal Election Year												
Task	(3-6 months)	Jan*	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov Week 1	Nov Week 2	Nov Week 3	Nov Week 4
LEGAL DECISION															
Presidential Election (July - November Activity)															
Develop Ballot Design and marking Instructions															
Develop Hand Count Procedures															
Develop instructions to absentee voters															
Develop testing plan and protocol															
City-wide voter education program planning															
Conduct city-wide voter education blitz															
Recruit Election Judges															
Memory Card Programming (Demonstration Election)															
Ballot Printing (Demonstration Election)															
Preliminary testing (Demonstration Election)															
Train election judges (Demonstration Election)															
DEMONSTRATION ELECTION															
Hand Count (Demonstration Election)															
Post Election Audit (Demonstration Election)															
Finalize materials															
Develop EJ training materials															
Candidate Filing															
Train election judges															
Memory Card Programming															
Ballot Printing															
Preliminary testing															
Absentee Voting															
Health Care Outreach															
ELECTION DAY															
Hand Count															
CERTIFY ELECTION RESULTS															
Conduct post election audit															

Activities Yet to be Undertaken =  IRV Activity =  Key Dates = 

PRIMARY/GENERAL TIMELINE

Municipal Election Year

Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov Week 1	Nov Week 2	Nov Week 3	Nov Week 4
EJ Newsletter with current year dates														
Notify Boards of election this fall with dates														
Post in NH Newsletters (Feb Monthlies)														
Prepare handout for public and potential candidates														
Update website with current year dates														
Send Polling Place agreements														
Contact Chair Judges														
Search for replacement polling places														
Adopt polling places														
Health Care Facility scheduling														
Prepare Candidate filing packets														
Mail EJ assignments														
Develop EJ training materials														
EJ Training														
Notify Auditor of Primary														
Update AB permanent list and send apps														
Candidate Filing														
Memory Card Programming (Primary)														
Ballot Printing (Primary)														
Preliminary testing (Primary)														
Absentee Voting (Primary)														
Health Care Outreach (Primary)														
PRIMARY DAY														
CERTIFY PRIMARY RESULTS														
Ballot Printing														
Memory Card Programming														
Preliminary testing														
Absentee Voting														
Health Care Outreach														
ELECTION DAY														
CERTIFY ELECTION RESULTS														

Includes Primary Information = Activity = Key Dates =