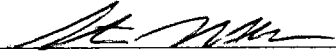



CITY OF SAN LEANDRO

STAFF REPORT

APPROVED AND
FORWARDED
TO CITY COUNCIL



Stephen Hollister
City Manager

DATE: December 7, 2009
TO: Stephen Hollister, City Manager
FROM: Marian Handa, City Clerk 

SUBJECT PROJECT/PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

MATTER OF CONSIDERATION OF USING RANKED CHOICE VOTING (RCV) FOR THE 2010 GENERAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

This report provides information on RCV system approval, cost, timeline, and other considerations. Staff recommends that the Council review and discuss this information, receive public input, and take formal action to not use RCV for the 2010 election. If the Council chooses to delay its decision in hopes that the Secretary of State and/or the other cities will approve RCV, staff suggests continuing the matter to January 19, 2010.

BACKGROUND

RCV System Status

City staff has been following the developments in RCV, which is a method of voting that would eliminate the City's need to hold runoff elections. The California Secretary of State (SOS) must approve a voting system before it can be used in an election. In June 2009, Alameda County's voting systems vendor, Sequoia Voting Systems, requested administrative approval of its RCV voting system from the SOS for use by Alameda County in 2010.

The cities of San Leandro, Oakland and Berkeley have been meeting with the Alameda County Registrar of Voters (ROV) to plan for the possible use of RCV for the November 2010 election. The group has met with representatives from the SOS, and has received assurance that the SOS has all the information it needs to grant administrative approval of the RCV system to Alameda County. As of this writing, however, approval has not been granted.

Cost and Savings

The County has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding, which would divide the \$350,000 system cost among the three cities based on the number of registered voters in each city. San Leandro's share of cost is 12%, or approximately \$42,000. Additionally, the ROV would incur other costs associated with a RCV election, and those costs would be divided proportionately and

passed on to the cities as well. The draft cost-sharing MOU has been reviewed by the City Attorneys of the three cities and the Alameda County Counsel.

The first election using RCV is estimated to cost \$170,000, as the MOU would require the City to pay the full \$42,000 system cost with the first use. By contrast, the cost of a traditional general and runoff election would be approximately \$125,000. In subsequent elections, the cost of an RCV election would be less than the cost of holding a general and runoff election, and the RCV system cost would be recouped by the third election cycle. If RCV is used beginning with the 2010 election, an estimated \$30,000 savings per election cycle would be realized by the 2016 election.

Cost of 2010 Election

Without RCV

\$75k June General Election
\$50k November Runoff Election
\$125k Total

With RCV

\$42k City's share of Sequoia RCV system
 \$10k Mailed notification to voters re: change of election date
 \$10k Firmware upgrade
 \$32k 2nd ballot card plus postage
 \$6k Additional poll worker at each polling place
 \$20k Voter education and outreach
\$50k ROV election administration costs
\$170k Total

Cost of Future Elections

Without RCV

\$75k June General Election
\$50k November Runoff Election
\$125k Total

With RCV

\$32k 2nd ballot card plus postage
 \$10k Ongoing voter education and outreach
\$50k ROV election administration costs
\$92k Total

Cost After 3 Elections

Election Year	Without RCV	With RCV
2010	\$125k	\$170k
2012	\$125k	\$92k
2014	<u>\$125k</u>	<u>\$92k</u>
	\$375k Total	\$354k Total

A robust outreach and education campaign would need to be conducted, to prepare San Leandro voters to use RCV. This campaign would be labor-intensive for a month or more prior to the November 2010 election, require significant staff resources, and cost approximately \$20,000. This \$20,000 for “voter education and outreach” is incorporated in the estimated \$170,000 cost for RCV listed above, and would be used for printed informational materials—tri-fold brochures and a special mailer to voters. A flash media presentation, video clip, and television and radio public service announcements would be part of the RCV voter outreach and education campaign.

The overall time savings from holding one RCV election rather than two traditional elections would be approximately 200 hours per election cycle. The staffing in the City Clerk’s Office, which is responsible for conducting municipal elections, has been reduced from 3.5 FTEs in FY 2005-06, to 2.0 FTEs currently, and the staff time saved by using RCV could be devoted to other priority projects or mandates.

Timeline

The SOS administrative approval must be given before the RCV system can be used. Without this approval, the Council must call the June 2010 election no later than February 1, 2010, and preferably on January 19, 2010.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

There is no requirement for San Leandro to use RCV. The voters of Berkeley and Oakland have passed Charter amendments, requiring that their cities use RCV when it is available. The Council may want to consider placing a measure on a future ballot, asking the voters whether or not they want to use RCV in future elections.

San Leandro can only use RCV if both Berkeley and Oakland also participate; however, at this point, neither city has taken action to move forward with RCV.

The Alameda County Registrar of Voters has been in steady contact with the SOS, and has communicated the urgent need for approval of the RCV system so that election plans can move forward. However, the County still does not have approval to use RCV.

Current City Council Policy

The City Charter was amended in 2000 to require that a successful candidate receive 50%+1 of the votes cast for that office, and to allow the use of an instant runoff voting system when such technology is available to the City.

Previous City Council Action(s)

A City Council work session on RCV was held on July 13, 2009.

City Council Committee Review and Action

The City Council Rules and Communications Committee reviewed the matter at its meeting on October 27, 2009, and recommended forwarding consideration of RCV to the full City Council for discussion and decision.

Fiscal Impact

There is \$60,000 budgeted in FY 2009-10 to conduct the June 2010 election. The use of RCV in 2010 is estimated to cost \$170,000. If the Council chooses to use RCV in 2010, an additional \$110,000 should be budgeted for the FY 2010-11 election budget from the General Fund.

Attachments

None.

CONCLUSION

Given the SOS has not granted administrative approval of the Ranked Choice Voting system, the lack of action on the part of the other cities to adopt the RCV for 2010, the additional cost that would be incurred in the current budget, and the need for a decision in order to move forward with planning for the 2010 election, staff recommends that the City Council adopt a motion, directing staff not to pursue the use of RCV for November 2010, and proceed with calling the June 2010 election.

Delaying the decision until January 2010 will have impacts both on staff workloads and on the candidates and their campaigns. However, the Council can continue the matter to its January 19, 2010 meeting and still meet legal time lines.
