



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

John Arntz, Director

Memorandum

To: Elections Commission
From: John Arntz, Director
Date: July 13, 2020
RE: Director's Report: July 15, 2020, Elections Commission Meeting

Following is a brief listing of the work and related information in which the Department of Elections (Department) has been engaged since the previous report issued in relation to the Elections Commission meeting on June 17, 2020.

- I. **In consideration of election timelines, the Department has been planning for safely returning staff to work on site and for resumption of some in-person services.**
 - A. The Department developed and implemented a Health and Safety Plan, in compliance with official government guidance, particularly the relevant portions of San Francisco Department of Public Health and Center for Disease Control guidelines. Among other things, the Plan discusses various measures that the Department has taken to safely return employees to their worksites, including reconfiguring workspace layouts to allow employees to practice social distancing; relocating some activities to different office areas/facilities; procuring and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE); establishing cleaning and disinfection protocols for all office areas; and modifying workplace practices to minimize staff exposure to COVID-19.
 - i. The Department is planning for a significant increase in the number of employees working on site in the next several months. Currently, most employees continue to work from home, with 2 employees at City Hall working every weekday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., and 4-20 staff at City Hall and 1-3 staff at the warehouse working some weekdays on an as-needed basis. Following a gradual increase of personnel working on site in July, the Department expects over 70 employees working at each facility — City Hall, warehouse on Pier 31, and Bill Graham Civic Auditorium — in October and November.
 - B. The Department prepared a Site-Specific Health and Safety Plan with timelines for resumption of some in-person services and public transactions as necessary beginning mid-July, and has been working with the City Administrator's Office to gain their approval of the Plan.
 - i. The Department expects a steady flow of candidates to visit City Hall in the next several months, with a larger peak in the months of July and August, corresponding to nomination periods for several offices and submission periods of ballot arguments (proponents', opponents', rebuttal, and paid). The Department expects a peak of approximately 50-60 daily visitors to its front counter in the second and third weeks of August. Given that all candidate and ballot argument submissions are subject to a 10-day public examination period following each filing deadline, the Department also expects approximately a dozen members of the public to visit the public counter daily during these public examination periods.
- II. **The Department has been engaged in planning and executing the many processes required to conduct the November 3 election while protecting the health and safety of election workers, voters, and the general public.**

- A. On June 29, the Department submitted a report to the Board of Supervisors (Board) and the Elections Commission, regarding its planning for the November 3 election, as required by the Ordinance File No. 200400 enacted by the Board on May 19. This report addresses the following topics: 1) voter outreach, education, and services, including to limited-English speaking communities and persons with disabilities; (2) staffing needs, hiring strategies, and staff training; (3) voting equipment and capacity; (4) preliminary voting locations and hours, dropbox or curbside drop-off locations and hours; (5) ballot collection and processing; and (6) public health measures and procedures for both voters and poll workers. Along with the report, the Department provided a letter that the Elections Commission had issued to the Mayor and the Board on June 18 regarding Department budget cuts.
- B. The Department identified and has been working on revising several processes and materials to reflect requirements resulting from the Governor's signing Assembly Bill (AB) 860 on June 18. AB 860 makes several amendments to the California Elections Code regarding the conduct of the November 3 election, requiring elections officials to mail a ballot to every registered voter, permit any voter to use the Accessible Vote-by-Mail system, and use the ballot tracking system established by the Secretary of State that allows a voter to sign up to receive notifications via email or text message about the status of their vote-by-mail ballot. AB 860 also authorizes elections officials to commence ballot processing 29 days before Election Day instead of 10 business days and extends the deadline by which vote-by-mail ballots must be received by the county elections official to the 17th day after Election Day (the Department will count ballots received in the mail up until November 20, so long as ballots are postmarked on or before Election Day.)
- C. The Department is currently developing the Voter Information Pamphlet for the November 3 election. The Department has begun assembling and formatting candidate information and statements submitted to date, proofreading the materials against the official submissions, and sending the files to the contractor who lays out, typesets, and translates the materials.
- D. To date, the Department has secured 361 facilities to serve as polling places on Election Day. The Department is currently awaiting responses from nearly 90 sites and is working on possibly relocating nearly 140 former polling places that have been based on the square footage available for social distancing or unavailable for use in the November 3 election.
- E. The Department is in the initial planning stages of relocating its City Hall Voting Center to the area in front of the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. Such a plan for providing in-person voting services in an outdoor environment may enhance protection of voters wishing to obtain personal assistance, use accessible voting equipment, pick up or drop off ballots, cast their ballots in person, or, after the registration deadline, register conditionally and vote provisionally. The City has indicated its preference for early voting processes that would traditionally take place in City Hall to be organized in an outdoor space.
- F. The Department has been working on identifying COVID-19 related changes to polling place layouts, signage, and voting procedures. The Department has been collaborating with the Department of Public Health in ensuring that the safety procedures and practices that the Department plans to establish at in-person voting locations are in line with the current federal, state, and local health guidelines.

III. The Department continues to provide information to City voters, candidates, and the general public, and to undertake the many activities associated with the maintenance of the voter roll.

- A. The Department has been collaborating with the City's COVID-19 Command Center (CCC) outreach team to distribute election information to vulnerable and low voter turnout populations in the following neighborhoods: Civic Center/Downtown, South of Market, Bayview/Hunters Point, Portola, Visitacion Valley, Chinatown, Western Addition, Excelsior, Mission, and Ingleside.
 - i. Through this collaboration, the Department intends to distribute approximately 20,000 *Stay Healthy and Vote Safely!* door hangers alerting residents to voting by mail and advising them to take steps (e.g., register to vote, check to make sure your registration is current) to ensure timely delivery of their ballots this fall.
- B. The Department continues to facilitate candidate and measure filings for the November 3 election. With access to City Hall limited, the Department has been conducting in-person transactions in its office, by appointment.
 - i. The period for signatures in lieu of filing fee for candidates for the offices of Board of Education and Community College Board closed on July 8.
- C. The Department has been preparing materials for the Ballot Simplification Committee meetings that are scheduled to begin on Monday, July 20 and will likely continue through Monday, August 10. The Department will assist in hosting remote meetings of the Ballot Simplification Committee to prepare a fair and impartial summary of each local ballot measure for the November 3 election.
- D. The Department is currently facilitating two Community Benefit District (CBD) elections: The 2020 Fisherman's Wharf Landside CBD Election and the 2020 Castro CBD Election. On July 14, the Department will conduct the canvass of ballots cast in those special elections, which will be broadcast live on the Department's web channel, at <https://sfelections.sfgov.org/community-benefit-district-election-live-stream>.
- E. The Department continues to process registration affidavits, requests for translated materials, and other voter forms, and to conduct many other activities associated with maintaining an accurate and up-to-date voter roll. The Department has been receiving and processing a steady volume of registration affidavits submitted by mail and online using the Secretary of State's website.
- F. The Department continues to respond to public inquiries received via email and phone on a daily basis, and fulfill requests for registration forms and other voter materials.

IV. The Department has submitted budget reductions to help the City close an anticipated \$1.7 billion deficit.

- A. The Department has not yet received information regarding the possible reductions to its budget for the next fiscal year and expects information within the next few weeks.
- B. Attachment 1 provides an update on the open source projects and funding from Linda Gerull, Director, Department of Technology.