



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
**DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS**

John Arntz, Director

## Memorandum

To: Elections Commission  
From: John Arntz, Director  
Date: October 18, 2020  
RE: Director's Report: October 21, 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 September 16, 2020.

- I. **The Department continues to hire and onboard temporary personnel and to procure services and materials necessary to conduct the November 3 election.**
  - A. Following Department of Human Resources' procedures, the Department hired and onboarded, mostly remotely, nearly 240 temporary employees to aid the full-time staff with maintenance of voter records, signature comparison on vote-by-mail ballot envelopes, facilitating voting during the early voting period, ballot processing, and supporting polling places on Election Day. Over the next several weeks, the Department expects to onboard an additional 100 temporary employees to facilitate emergency ballot deliveries, staff ballot drop-off stations in the City, and assist with conduct of post-election Official Canvass.
  - B. In accordance with the City's procurement policies, the Department continues to purchase materials and supplies, and procure services required for the upcoming election.
- II. **The Department has been executing the many processes required to conduct the November 3 election while protecting the health and safety of employees, voters, and the general public.**
  - A. The Department mailed over 500,000 ballots for the November 3 election to all registered San Francisco voters. The Department will continue mailing VBM packets to new registrants up through the October 19 registration deadline and those who need replacement ballots through October 28.
  - B. Corresponding to the mailing of vote-by-mail ballots, the Department opened its Accessible Vote-by-Mail system at [sfelections.org/access](https://sfelections.org/access) through which voters can mark, download, and print their vote-by-mail ballots.
  - C. The Department has begun processing returned vote-by-mail ballots. (The recent passage of Assembly Bill 860 permits the Department to begin processing vote-by-mail ballots 29 days before Election Day.) This processing includes conducting the comparison of the signatures on return envelopes to the signature images from the voters' registration records, opening accepted vote-by-mail ballot return envelopes, removing ballots, and scanning ballots in preparation for tabulation.
    - i. Ballot processing is open to public observation in person at the Department's main office in Room 48 of City Hall and the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium (this site hosts some ballot processing activities that in previous elections were conducted in City Hall) or via live stream on [sfelections.org/observe](https://sfelections.org/observe).
    - ii. The United States Postal Service (USPS) delivers ballots returned by voters to the Department of Elections on a daily basis. As of October 17, the USPS delivered nearly 100,000 ballots to the Department.

- D. The Department has opened its outdoor Voting Center in front of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium at 99 Grove St. All City residents can visit the Voting Center to vote in person, drop off their vote-by-mail ballots, register to vote, or update their registration. The Voting Center features nearly 75 ballot-issuing stations and 200 voting booths. Since the number of voters tends to increase in the later days of the voting period, the Department has implemented a staggered approach to opening ballot-issuing stations, with 14 stations being available on the first day of opening, 10 additional stations opening two weeks later, 12 additional stations opening a week before Election Day, and 28 more stations opening four days before Election Day.
- i. In compliance with current health guidance, the Voting Center has been set up to maintain 6 foot distances between voters in line, computer workstations, voting booths, and ballot return boxes. The Department offers hand sanitizer, gloves, and facemasks to all voters and has posted notices asking voters to observe health guidelines. The Department has also implemented new sanitation and disinfection protocols for voting supplies, equipment, and high-touch surfaces in the Voting Center.
  - ii. To minimize congestion in the Voting Center and for voter convenience, the Department has set up several ballot drop-off stations outside the Voting Center. The Voting Center and ballot drop-off stations will be open every weekday through Election Day, and the next three weekends, Oct 17-18, Oct 24-25, and Oct 31-Nov 1, from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
  - iii. Starting October 31, the Department will open 11 additional auxiliary ballot drop-off stations in the City, one in each Supervisorial District. In Supervisorial Districts 1-2, 4-5, and 7-11, the drop-off stations will be located outside public library branches, in District 3 at Portsmouth Square, and in District 6 at Chase Center. A list of official San Francisco ballot drop-off stations can be accessed at [sfelections.org/balлотdropofflocations](https://sfelections.org/balлотdropofflocations).
- E. To date, the Department recruited over 5,000 poll workers to assist voters at the polls and launched online poll worker training to prepare volunteers for their service on Election Day. To date, approximately 3,500 poll workers have completed their training.
- i. To supplement voting equipment operating instructions in the online course, the Department has made available optional small group in-person training labs where poll workers have the opportunity to practice working with the voting equipment. The Department has also established weekly conference calls with Department trainers during which poll workers can call in with any questions.
  - ii. The Poll Worker Training Manual has been provided to all poll workers in digital format at [https://sfelections.sfgov.org/sites/default/files/Documents/PW%20Manual\\_110320\\_Online.pdf](https://sfelections.sfgov.org/sites/default/files/Documents/PW%20Manual_110320_Online.pdf), and mailed to poll workers on request.
- F. In collaboration with the San Francisco Department of Public Health, the Department has finalized health and safety procedures for emergency ballot deliveries that will be conducted the week before Election Day and are intended for voters experiencing unexpected illness, including COVID-19, or disability, who have not received their ballots for any reason and are not able to vote in person or authorize someone else to pick up a ballot. The Department is working on assembling a group of drivers to facilitate emergency ballot deliveries.
- G. The Department has secured 588 facilities to serve as polling places on Election Day. The Department is preparing to mail "Polling Place Change" cards to voters who have not yet returned their November 3 election ballots and whose polling places changed since last election or after the mailing of VIPs.
- H. In preparation for deployment of voting equipment to polling places, the Department has completed Logic and Accuracy testing and is now finalizing the logistical details of equipment delivery, scheduled to begin on October 26.

**III. The Department continues to provide information to City residents about registration and voting options for safely participating in the upcoming election.**

- A. The Department produced and mailed the Voter Information Pamphlet (VIP) to nearly 500,000 voters. Inside the VIP, voters will find a sample ballot, as well as information about voting, candidates running for local offices, and local ballot measures. In addition to print VIP, the Department produced the pamphlet in multiple accessible formats: HTML, XML, MP3, and large print.
- B. The Department has expanded its phone and email assistance staff with a 25-member team tasked specifically with answering telephone inquiries and managing email correspondence through Election Day. The Department's telephone lines will be open during regular business hours as well as the three weekends before Election Day.
- C. In September, shortly before vote-by-mail ballot packets were mailed out, the Department sent a second quadrilingual notice to all 376,482 households in San Francisco. This second notice focused mainly on key information about voting by mail and provided answers to nine frequently asked questions. The Department also sent digital versions of the notice to nearly 250,000 voters with email addresses on file.
  - i. In October, shortly after the registration deadline, the Department will mail a third notice to every household. This third notice will advise San Franciscans who missed the registration deadline that it is not too late to participate in the upcoming election, remind those who have not yet returned their vote-by-mail ballots of the many return options available, and provide information about in-person voting on Election Day.
- D. The Department launched a Voting Site Wait Times Lookup Tool, a digital self-help tool that allows voters to confirm their assigned polling place location, including the type of facility (such as school or public library), cross streets, accessibility information (such as slope at the entrance) and to check the last reported wait time at the Voting Center and polling places across the City. This tool can be accessed from the Department's homepage or by visiting [sfelections.org/myvotinglocation](https://sfelections.org/myvotinglocation).
- E. In collaboration with the Prisoner Legal Services unit of the San Francisco Sheriff's Department, the Department has been providing election-related services, such as voter registration and delivery of Voter Information Pamphlets and ballot packets to eligible voters in the City's jail.
- F. The Department's outreach team continues to organize and participate in neighborhood events throughout the City to provide information about registration and safe voting options. In the last month, the outreach team conducted over 80 events with community-based organizations, many of which provide direct services to underserved communities and vulnerable populations.
  - i. The Department has partnered with the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs to provide election resources to San Francisco's LEP and monolingual communities in Chinatown, the Mission, and Visitacion Valley through merchant walks, food distribution facilities, and direct outreach at COVID-19 testing sites.
  - ii. The Department has been collaborating with the Latino Task Force to host voter registration opportunities for citizens and non-citizens, and to provide election information at the Mission Food Hub. The Department has also been disseminating information about non-citizen registration and voting through partnership with the San Francisco Chinatown Visitor Information Center.
  - iii. The Department has been coordinating with staff at shelter-in-place hotels to inform guests of the upcoming election and facilitate registration opportunities.
- G. The Department hosted virtual meetings with the members of the Language Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Voting Accessibility Advisory and Voting Accessibility Advisory Committees as well as virtual presentations with local organizations and agencies. One of the primary focuses of such meetings and presentations is to provide

information about voting options and measures the Department has implemented to ensure every San Franciscans can safely participate in the upcoming election.

**IV. The Department continues to conduct voter file maintenance activities and prepare replacement vote-by-mail ballot packets to voters who have recently updated their information.**

- A. The Department continues to conduct all voter file maintenance activities in a timely manner, including processing registration affidavits, voter forms, and change of address notices, contacting voters who have registered to vote or updated their information, as well as registrants who have submitted incomplete applications, and reviewing and processing potential duplicate voter records in the local and statewide registration databases.
- B. The Department has begun transmitting supplemental voter extracts to its ballot printing and assembly vendor on a daily basis. These extracts contain records of new registrants, as well as voters who have moved within the county, updated their mailing address or language preference on file, or submitted a request for a replacement vote-by-mail ballot packet to the Department.
- C. Since October 12, the Department has been processing requests for replacement vote-by-mail ballot packets submitted by voters who have spoiled or mismarked their ballots, would like to receive a ballot in a different language format, or prefer to be mailed a second ballot to a different temporary address than the address on file.