

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA**

For the Agenda of:
June 6, 2017
Timed: 3:00 P.M.

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Department of Voter Registration and Elections

Subject: Report Back On Vote Center Model Elections and Request for Proposal For Replacement Voting System (Continued from May 24, 2017; Item No. 1)

Supervisory District: All

Contact: Jill LaVine, Registrar of Voters, 875-6060

Overview

On May 24, 2017, the Department of Voter Registration and Elections (VRE) provided a presentation on the Voters Choice Act, which allows VRE to conduct all Vote-by-Mail (VBM) elections. The Board of Supervisors directed staff to provide additional information on implementation of the Voter's Choice Act and return to the Board on June 6, 2017.

Recommendation

That your Board adopt a Resolution to:

1. Authorize the Registrar to implement Vote Center model elections in Sacramento County beginning in 2018 and direct her to perform all activities required in the Voter's Choice Act;
2. Direct the Purchasing Agent or his designee(s) to perform all activities necessary for recommending a vendor for the acquisition of a new voting system for Sacramento County.

Measures/Evaluation

Implementing the Vote Center model and acquiring an approved voting system will provide Sacramento County voters increased options for casting their ballot, beginning with the June 2018 Primary election.

Fiscal Impact

The cost of a new voting system will vary depending on whether the Board approves staff's Vote Center model recommendation or chooses to retain the current polling place voting model. The Vote Center model will require less equipment and cost approximately \$4 million, about half as much as the Polling Place model.

The Department's Fiscal Year 2017-18 Requested Budget includes \$1.1 million in initial funding, which can be off-set with the department's Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds.

Future year costs would be covered by the remaining HAVA funds, County General Fund reserves for technology, and County General Fund allocations.

In addition to the costs for voting system equipment, the Department will also need to replace peripheral equipment estimated at \$633,888 in the next two to three years, which may also require a general fund allocation.

As noted in the May 24, 2017 board report the Secretary of State is promoting Assembly Bill 668, the Voting Modernization Bond Act of 2018, which would provide up to a 75% funding match for voting systems used by Counties implementing the Vote Center model.

The Department will evaluate purchase versus lease costs, upon its request to the board to award a contract for new voting equipment.

BACKGROUND

On May 24, 2017, the Board of Supervisors heard a presentation on the status of the county's voting system and the need for a replacement voting system. The current Optical Scan system, a fill-in-the-bubble ballot voting system, has been in use for more than 13 years and several components of the voting system that need to be replaced, including:

- M650 central count ballot scanners used to count the VBM ballots at the Registrar's Office; and,
- M100 precinct count ballot scanners that are distributed to each polling place on Election Day to scan voted ballot cards. These scanners experienced a high failure rate during the required November 2016 pre-election testing and also during use on Election Day.

The Board was briefed on the results of the voter preference survey, conducted by JD Franz Research, Inc. The survey, conducted to gauge public interest in the Vote Center model, provided information on the public's preference for the Vote Center model especially when cost is taken into consideration.

Staff also presented information on the Voter's Choice Act, a new method for administering elections available to Sacramento County. The Voter's Choice Act includes two major changes for voters: mailing all voters a VBM ballot and establishing regional Vote Centers in place of polling places.

The Act contains specific outreach requirements for extensive community involvement to ensure voters are well informed on the new voting model. The location of the regional Vote Centers will be determined based on public input and consideration of the following demographics:

- Proximity to:
 - low-income communities,
 - geographically isolated communities,
 - communities with historically low rate of VBM usage, and
 - communities with low rates of household vehicle ownership
- Population Centers
- Access to accessible voting equipment

- Access to public transportation
- Access to accessible and free parking
- Traffic patterns near proposed Vote Centers

Staff will also be evaluating each location for accessibility, computer connectivity and building security.

DISCUSSION

The Board of Supervisors requested more detailed information regarding implementation of the Voter's Choice Act, including major street identification on maps, voter survey statistical data, an implementation timeline with important milestones, estimated postage costs, and individual Vote Center site costs, which are further described below.

Maps - Staff was requested to provide both the preliminary demographic proximity map with supervisorial district boundaries and the preliminary permanent vote by mail map with supervisorial district boundaries. These maps are included in the report as Attachment 1 and Attachment 2. The preliminary demographic proximity map will continue to change as the number of the County's voters and their demographics change over time. The final demographic proximity map will be established 88 days prior to each election (as required in the Voter's Choice Act) and will be basis for determining specific vote center sites for the election.

Voter Survey - The department engaged a professional survey company, JD Franz Research, Inc., in March 2017 to assess voter opinions of a possible new Vote Center model voting procedure in the County. The survey of 402 registered voters from across the County focused on determining how voters feel about the proposed new Vote Center model of voting. At the May 24, 2017 meeting, staff was requested to provide the survey's cross-tabulation reports by supervisorial district. This information is included as Attachments 3 through 8. The cross-tabulation results show that respondents from each supervisorial district prefer the Vote Center model over the Polling Place model when cost is considered.

Implementation Timeline - The Voter's Choice Act contains specific activities to be conducted by the election official when administering elections using the Vote Center model. The activities will ensure the county's many communities are provided the opportunity to comment on locations of the Vote Centers. Staff was requested to provide an Implementation Timeline to show key milestone dates required in the Act. The Voter's Choice Act Implementation Timeline is shown in Attachment 9. This timeline also includes a schedule for a voting system Request for Proposal, acquisition and installation of a voting system, staff training activities, and voter education.

Vote By Mail postage - The Voter's Choice Act does not require counties to provide for return postage on voted ballots. However, Sacramento County could choose to pay return postage for all voters. The county would incur an additional \$318,000 in costs for each statewide election, based on the current percentage (60%) of VBM voters that opt to return their ballot by mail. Currently, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties pay the postage for return of a

voter's VBM ballots. Santa Clara and Santa Cruz commented that providing for postage did not increase voter turnout.

Currently Sacramento County does pay the insufficient postage costs on return ballots that do not have enough postage, in accordance with a statewide agreement with USPS. This guarantees the prompt delivery of the ballots to our office. The cost for insufficient postage is approximately \$500 to \$1,000 for each election.

Costs Per Vote Center - Staff was requested to provide cost of an additional voting site. The main cost components for a voting site are staffing, location rental, and equipment. The approximate cost for each additional site is \$14,000 to \$17,000 per election.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS:

The cost of a new voting system will vary depending on whether the Board approves staff's Vote Center model recommendation or chooses to retain the current polling place voting model. The Vote Center model will require less equipment and cost approximately \$4 million, about half as much as the Polling Place model. Below is a comparison of the estimated costs to purchase or lease a voting system for both the Vote Center model and Polling Place model. The Purchase option includes the estimated cost of annual licensing and warranties. The Lease option is inclusive of all estimated costs, with no additional costs for annual software licensing and hardware warranties.

**Comparison of Estimated Costs
Vote Center or Polling Places
Purchase or Lease**

Years:	Vote Centers		Polling Place	
	Purchase & Support	Lease	Purchase & Support	Lease
1	\$4,435,000	\$1,100,000	\$ 8,435,000	\$ 1,560,000
2	\$ 435,000	\$1,100,000	\$ 435,000	\$ 1,560,000
3	\$ 435,000	\$1,100,000	\$ 435,000	\$ 1,560,000
4	\$ 435,000	\$1,100,000	\$ 435,000	\$ 1,560,000
5	\$ 435,000	\$1,100,000	\$ 435,000	\$ 1,560,000
6	\$ 435,000	\$1,100,000	\$ 435,000	\$ 1,560,000
7	\$ 435,000	\$1,100,000	\$ 435,000	\$ 1,560,000
8	\$ 435,000	\$1,100,000	\$ 435,000	\$ 1,560,000
Total	\$7,480,000	\$8,800,000	\$11,480,000	\$12,480,000

The department's Fiscal Year 2017-18 Requested Budget includes \$1.1 million in initial funding, which can be off-set by using the department's Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds. Future year costs would be covered by the remaining HAVA funds, County General Fund reserves for technology, and County General Fund allocations. The table below shows a funding plan using an 8-year lease option, using these funding sources.

Vote Center Model Estimated Yearly Funding Costs Using 8-Year Lease Option

Fiscal Year	Payment	HAVA	Technology Reserve	General Fund
17-18	\$ 1,100,000	\$ 1,100,000	\$ -	\$ -
18-19	\$ 1,100,000	\$ 143,000	\$ 957,000	\$ -
19-20	\$ 1,100,000	\$ -	\$ 1,100,000	\$ -
20-21	\$ 1,100,000	\$ -	\$ 943,000	\$ 157,000
21-22	\$ 1,100,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,100,000
22-23	\$ 1,100,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,100,000
23-24	\$ 1,100,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,100,000
24-25	\$ 1,100,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,100,000
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$ 8,800,000</i>	<i>\$ 1,243,000</i>	<i>\$ 3,000,000</i>	<i>\$ 4,557,000</i>

In addition to the costs for voting system equipment, the Department will also need to replace peripheral equipment estimated at \$633,888 in the next two to three years, which may also require a general fund allocation. As noted in the May 24, 2017 board report the Secretary of State is promoting Assembly Bill 668, the Voting Modernization Bond Act of 2018, which would provide up to a 75% funding match for voting systems used by counties implementing the Vote Center model.

The Department will evaluate purchase versus lease costs, upon its request to the Board to award a contract for new voting equipment.

Respectfully submitted,

APPROVED:
NAVDEEP S. GILL
County Executive

JILL LAVINE, Registrar of Voters
Voter Registration and Elections

By: _____
DAVID VILLANUEVA
Deputy County Executive

Resolution

- Attachment 1 Preliminary Demographic Proximity Map with Supervisorial District Boundaries
- Attachment 2 Preliminary Permanent Vote By Mail Map with Supervisorial District Boundaries
- Attachment 3 Voter Preference Survey Combined Cross-Tabulations
- Attachment 4 Voter Preference Survey Cross-Tabulations - Supervisorial District 1
- Attachment 5 Voter Preference Survey Cross-Tabulations - Supervisorial District 2
- Attachment 6 Voter Preference Survey Cross-Tabulations - Supervisorial District 3
- Attachment 7 Voter Preference Survey Cross-Tabulations - Supervisorial District 4
- Attachment 8 Voter Preference Survey Cross-Tabulations - Supervisorial District 5
- Attachment 9 Voter's Choice Act Implementation Timeline