



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence

DATE: March 23, 2015
BOARD MEETING DATE: March 31, 2015

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Mark Church, Chief Elections Office & Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

SUBJECT: Impact Analysis of Holding Even-Numbered Year Elections for the Montara Water & Sanitary District

BACKGROUND:

On February 5, 2015, the Montara Water & Sanitary District approved a resolution pursuant to California Elections Code §10404 requesting that election dates for future board elections be moved from odd-numbered years to even-numbered years. The resolution would move the scheduled election for November 2015 to November 2016. Current board members who face reelection in 2015 would have their terms extended to the next election.

On February 6, 2015, Montara Water & Sanitary District submitted a request to the Board of Supervisors to move forward with the proposed change. Under California Elections Code §10404(d) the Chief Elections Officer is required to submit to the Board of Supervisors an impact analysis of a proposed consolidation of special district governing board members election to the same day as statewide general elections.

The San Mateo County Registration & Elections Division has reviewed the impact on cost and voter turnout on moving Montara Water & Sanitary District election from odd-numbered year November elections ("General District Elections") to even-numbered year November elections ("Statewide General Elections") as required by law.

IMPACT ANALYSIS ON COST AND VOTER TURNOUT:

In terms of cost considerations, cost allocations for elections are proportionally distributed based on two key factors: the number of registered voters within each entity's jurisdiction, and the number of entities participating in the given election. Generally, odd-numbered year General District Elections have higher costs for Cities,

Schools, and Special Districts because contests scheduled for these elections are borne fully by each entity, and the number of entities with elections during odd-numbered years is fewer, resulting in less cost sharing. Even-numbered year Statewide General Elections include federal, state, and county contests whose costs are borne solely by the County, and these elections constitute a substantial portion of the total cost for Statewide General Elections. When Cities, Schools, and Special Districts participate in Statewide General Elections, they accordingly benefit from a lesser portion of the total costs as a result of the County payment for federal, state, and county contests.

The Montara Water & Sanitary District spent \$7,794.58 for the November 2013 General District Election on their Board contest. The cost per registered voter was \$2.07. The Montara Water & Sanitary District has not recently held an election in an even-numbered year Statewide General Election. The closest special district by number of registered voters is the Coastside Fire Protection District which has nearly four times as many registered voters (although election costs are not solely tied to the number of voters). The Coastside Fire Protection District held a special recall election in consolidation with the November 2014 Statewide Election and spent \$20,573.85. The cost per registered voter for that election was \$1.45. Given the relative costs per registered voter, it appears that the Montara Water & Sanitary District would experience savings if they change from participating in General District Elections to Statewide General Elections, and the savings may be in the general realm of \$2,300 per election, although this is just an estimate.

However, there is one complicating factor to this analysis. Assembly Bill 2028 authorized San Mateo County to conduct a series of all-mailed ballot pilot elections through December 31, 2017, for local and special district elections (but not for the Statewide General Election in 2016). If the jurisdictions having an election in November 2015 or November 2017 agree to participate in the pilot program, those local jurisdictions will likely realize estimated cost savings of one-third to one-half in total costs compared to typical General District Elections. The savings from the pilot all-mailed ballot program, if it occurs, may exceed the savings the Montara Water & Sanitary District may enjoy by changing to Statewide General Elections during this period. But due to the limited duration of the pilot program authorization and the fact that it is uncertain whether the jurisdictions having elections in November 2015 or November 2017 will decide to authorize the all-mailed ballot pilot election to occur, a move to Statewide General Elections is at least likely to reduce the cost of elections for the Montara Water & Sanitary District compared to the cost of past General District Elections.

In terms of turnout, voter participation in General District Elections generally falls between 25% to 29%. Voter turnout in the two previous Presidential Statewide General Elections (2008 and 2012) was over 79%. Voter turnout for the two previous Gubernatorial Statewide General Elections was 65% in 2010, and 46% (a historical low) in 2014. For the past seven elections, voter turnout for Statewide General Elections has been at least 20% higher than for General District Elections, so a move to Statewide General Elections is likely to substantially increase voter participation for future Montara Water & Sanitary District.

CONCLUSION:

Moving Montara Water & Sanitary District Board Member elections to even-numbered years will reduce its costs compared to past odd-numbered year costs and allow for more voters to determine the outcome of contests in the district.

The relative small size of Montara Water & Sanitary District will not impact the Registration & Elections Division in its conduct of elections. If, however, more local jurisdictions decide to move their elections away from odd-numbered years to even-numbered year elections, General Elections will become more complex. Additionally, significant financial burdens will be placed onto the remaining districts who continue to hold elections in odd-numbered years.