County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: ASSESSOR-COUNTY CLERK-RECORDER-ELECTIONS
File #: 20-012

Board Meeting Date: 2/11/2020

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Mark Church, Chief Elections Officer & Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

Subject: Secretary of State Approval of San Mateo County's California Voter's Choice Act Election Administration Plan - January 2020 through January 2024

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept this informational report from the Chief Elections Officer regarding approval by the California Secretary of State of the County's Voter's Choice Act Election Administration Plan for the period of January 2020 through January 2024.

BACKGROUND:

On January 17, 2020, the Office of the California Secretary of State approved, with modifications, San Mateo County's Election Administration Plan (EAP) for the conduct of elections under the California Voter's Choice Act (VCA) for the period of January 2020 through January 2024.

The VCA, which was signed into law on September 29, 2016, authorized San Mateo County to conduct elections under the new law beginning in 2018. The VCA modifies the traditional polling place election model to an All-Mailed Ballot - Vote Center election model. San Mateo County was one of the first five counties in the state to conduct elections under the VCA.

Beginning January 2020, all California counties are now eligible to participate in the VCA. Presently 15 of California's 58 counties are committed to implementing the VCA for the upcoming 2020 presidential elections.

The June 5, 2018 Statewide Direct Primary Election, November 6, 2018 Statewide General Election, and November 5, 2019 Consolidated Municipal, School and Special District Elections were the first elections held in our County under the VCA. These three elections reached historical milestones, increasing voter participation amongst all demographics particularly youth and language minority populations.

DISCUSSION:

January 2020 EAP Revisions

Under the provisions of the VCA, the County is required to consider revisions to the EAP within two years after the EAP's initial adoption, which occurred on March 16, 2018.

The January 2020 EAP revision process commenced with a public hearing on December 10, 2019 to receive public comments on proposed revisions to the new EAP. The revised EAP was developed in consultation with the County's Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee, Language Accessibility Advisory Committee, and Voter Education and Outreach Advisory Committee. Upon completion of the public review process and the incorporation of public comments, the newly revised EAP was forwarded to the Secretary of State for approval on January 6, 2020.

Voter Education and Outreach Plan

One of the key statutory requirements of the VCA is the preparation of a comprehensive Voter Education and Outreach Plan. The primary purpose of the Voter Education and Outreach Plan is to outline specific and detailed activities that will educate and communicate the benefits of the VCA to voters and to increase accessibility to the electoral process, particularly for persons with disabilities, seniors, youth and language minorities.

Based on the recommendations received from our public review process, this year's Voter Education and Outreach Plan emphasizes greater use of Community Based Organizations to target voters in selected low-voter turnout precincts. This effort is in addition to our traditional voter education and outreach activities. Our office will continue to use traditional forms of outreach using social media advertising, brochures, postcards, written materials and direct voter contact outreach efforts.

San Mateo County Voter Engagement 2020 Initiative

The Elections Division requested proposals for this targeted outreach effort. Two proposals were received, one from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and the other from the Thrive Alliance. Both organizations proposed similar outreach activities focusing on the use of community-based organizations to target underrepresented voters. The Silicon Valley Community Foundation was selected as the lead organization for this initiative and will be working closely with Thrive Alliance to implement our San Mateo County Voter Engagement 2020 Initiative.

Request for Proposals

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) commenced a Request for Proposal process offering grants to community-based organizations to reach out to voters in low turnout precincts to increase voter awareness and participation in the upcoming election. Funds allocated to the SVCF for the San Mateo County Voter Engagement 2020 Initiative ($150,000) were provided from the County's Voter Education Outreach funding for FY 2019-2020. For the upcoming March Election, $477,000 was budgeted for this purpose.

After an extensive Request for Proposal process, the SVCF selected the following community-based organizations to participate in this year's program:

San Mateo County Voter Engagement 2020 Initiative

Community Based Organization Funding

Organization	Primary Area Served	Amount Awarded

SIREN	Countywide	$ 20,000
League of Women Voters - Southern San Mateo County	Belle Haven, Redwood City, North Fair Oaks	$ 14,000
Daly City Youth Health Center	Daly City	$ 12,000
One East Palo Alto	East Palo Alto	$ 14,000
Daly City Peninsula Partnership Collaborative	Daly City	$ 14,000
Pilipino Bayanihan Resource Center	Daly City	$ 10,000
Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center	Countywide	$ 12,000
Boys and Girls Club of Northern San Mateo	South San Francisco	$ 8,000
Nuestra Casa de East Palo Alto	East Palo Alto	$ 8,000
South San Francisco Public Library	South San Francisco	$ 8,000
	Total	$120,000

SVCF also awarded a $24,000 grant to the Thrive Alliance to assist in the administrative coordination of the program, with $12,000 of these funds allocated from SVCF's discretionary funding sources.

These community-based organizations will provide voter awareness and engagement services to voters in lower turnout precincts within San Mateo County. These groups include, but are not limited to, people of color, immigrants, low-income communities, and non-fluent English speakers.

SVCF will administer these contracts and provide training and oversight of the program. Upon completion of the project, SVCF will provide a comprehensive report on the successes and challenges of this year's Voter Engagement 2020 Initiative.

March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election - EAP Roadmap and Statistics

An important objective of the EAP is the preparation of a detailed roadmap for the administration of the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election and the compilation of related election statistics and data.

The March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election will be the largest Presidential Primary election held in our County in terms of voter registration, ballot types, Vote Centers and ballot drop-off locations. There will be over 413,000 registered voters participating in this election.

Additionally, there will be 37 ballot types, each with ten partisan variants and in three languages, for a total of 1,110 ballot types. Each party-specific ballot will have a color specific to that party. There will be 42 Vote Centers located throughout the County, 33 Drop Box locations, with 8 of these as outdoor locations open 24/7.

The convergence of the California Voter Participation Rights Act (SB-415), Conditional Voter Registration Law (AB-1436), the California New Motor Voter Program (AB-1461), the California Voter's Choice Act (SB-450) and the movement of jurisdictions to district elections have exponentially increased the complexity of conducting elections in San Mateo County. These new laws will continue to impact the administration of elections into the future.

March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election Statistical Highlights

The following is a brief statistical overview of the March 3, 2020 election:

- Eligible Voters: 506,762
- Registered Voters: 413,000
- Vote Centers: 42
- Drop Box Locations: 33, including 8 outdoor Drop Box locations open and available to the public 24/7
- Ballot Styles: 370 (37 ballot styles X 10 parties = 370)
- Ballot Styles Including All Languages: 1110
- Total Reporting Precincts: 341
- Total Split Precincts: 23
- Total Precincts: 364

Additional information on the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election may be found in the attached EAP. We have also provided attachments to this report on the previous VCA elections--the November 5, 2019 Consolidated Municipal, School and Special District Election and the June 5, 2018 Statewide Direct Primary Election.

Elections Technology

The Dominion Democracy Suite Platform

Commencing with the November 5, 2019 Consolidated Municipal, School and Special District Election, San Mateo County adopted the Democracy Suite Voting System from Dominion Voting Systems.

Dominion's Democracy Suite Platform 5.10 voting system is a paper ballot system with a digital audit log providing the highest level of security, accuracy and auditability of elections.

The system allows for the efficient construction of the Official Ballot, provides user-friendly accessible touchscreen ICX Ballot Marking Tablets (BMTs), the printing of complex ballot styles at Vote Centers and the quick tabulation of the results through the use of high-speed scanners and sophisticated electronic tally systems.

Tenex

Tenex is one of our newest vendors, offering several innovative solutions and updates to our election technology. Tenex technology will be deployed through the use of Electronic Pollbooks (ePollbooks), Election Results Reporting and Help Desk/Call Center.

ePollbooks - Enables Vote Center workers to look up voter information and issue a ballot faster and more efficiently than the current laptop system. This device assists in line management and issue tracking at Vote Centers, allowing us to serve voters quickly and efficiently.

Election Results Reporting - We also are planning on upgrading our election results reporting software to Tenex. The new results reporting software provides a user-friendly graphical interface to find elections results.

Help Desk / Call Center - This software enables us to better log calls from voters and from Vote Centers to determine what and where issues are occurring. It also allows us to deploy workers to locations quickly and easily track their locations on a map.

Other New Technology

BlueCrest Vantage Mail Sorter - The new Vantage mail sorter can scan envelopes and signatures at almost twice the speed of our previous 10-year-old sorter, allowing us to process the Vote by Mail ballots faster.

OPEX Corporation Mail Desks - These new machines cut an opening on our VBM envelopes, allowing our VBM staff to extract the ballots from the envelopes quickly. This process was much faster than our previous process, which was done by hand.

New Voter Lookup - The new voter lookup through Digital Deployment will take the place of the 13-year-old voter lookup tool in the November Presidential General Election. This new system will provide a streamlined experience for the voter to look up their registration, voting history, ballot status, nearest Drop Box or Vote Center, ability to see their districts and the ability to opt-in to receive a greener electronic sample ballot via email.

Elections Facility Security

All voting equipment and databases are secured in multiple locations and regularly replicated. These facilities have security systems with cameras. Access to the voting equipment warehouse, the Vote by Mail area and voter registration database servers are restricted with secured fencing and to staff with card-key access. There is role-based access control for every staff member, limiting access to physical areas of the building based on work duties. The voter registration servers are located behind locked doors with very limited access. The card keys create audit trails. In addition, ACRE has implemented a Disaster Recovery capability at a secured location in the event of a disaster occurring at the Elections Division building. All visitors must sign in at the front counter and are escorted at all times by a staff member.

Cybersecurity

The Elections Division's systems are protected in a multi-layered cyber and physical infrastructure environment. Our election systems and infrastructure are protected with the highest levels of security that bring together federal, state, local and private sector resources to bolster our cybersecurity defenses. The Division's contingency planning incorporates preventative and rapid-response measures to ensure the continuation of election services in the event of a disruption.

The Elections Division has established a Cyber Security Defense Team (CSDT) Comprised of Elections / IT staff, ISD, external vendors and cybersecurity consultants. The primary purpose of CSDT is to provide an emergency rapid response team able to respond to cyber threats immediately.

CSDT is a member of the Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC) and the Multi-State Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC). These partnerships provide immediate and accurate updates on cyber incidents and mitigative measures that can be implemented to neutralize all forms of cyberattacks.

The Elections Division's website vendor, Digital Deployment, hosting provider Pantheon, and Drupal, the County's website platform vendor, are also members of EI-ISAC and MS-ISAC. These systems are FEDRAMP-certified, meeting the highest federal security standards used by the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, NASA, Department of Homeland Security and other high-level federal security agencies. They are among the securest systems in the nation.

The Elections Division has implemented several proactive measures to harden its cybersecurity

defenses. The San Mateo County Elections Division was one of the first elections offices in the state to retain the services of an independent cybersecurity consultant to conduct an extensive security audit and “trusted hack” of the County’s voter registration system. The Division is in the process of preparing tabletop exercises to combat attacks on our websites and elections misinformation on social media websites.

Additionally, our office works closely with the Secretary of State’s Office of Election Cybersecurity and Enterprise Risk Management to defend and combat malicious attacks on our websites and immediately report social media misinformation.

San Mateo County residents, employees and voters aware of any misinformation on social media platforms and election websites should immediately report malicious activity to the Elections Division and the Secretary of State’s Office of Election Cybersecurity and Enterprise Risk Management at https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/vote-sure/.

FISCAL IMPACT:
There is no Net County Cost associated with acceptance of this report.