



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: May 21, 2019

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: City Clerk's Office, Administrative Services Department

SUBJECT: November 2019 Election Plans And Authorization Of City Administrator To Execute Memorandum Of Understanding With Los Angeles County Regarding November 2019 Election

RECOMMENDATION: That Council:

- A. Receive a report regarding planning for the November 5, 2019 City of Santa Barbara General and Special Municipal Election; and
- B. Authorize the City Administrator to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the Los Angeles County Registrar/Recorder's Office regarding administration of elements of November 5, 2019 City of Santa Barbara General and Special Municipal Election.

DISCUSSION:

The City will be holding a Special and Regular Municipal Election on November 5, 2019. At this election, voters of Districts 1, 2 and 3 will be voting for Councilmembers for their respective districts for five year terms in the regular election. These are one-time five year terms, in order to move the City to even year elections. At this same election, voters in District 6 will be voting for a two year term for their Councilmember. This seat is the two years remaining on the term originally held by Councilmember Gregg Hart, who resigned from his position in January, 2019. Additionally, if a pending voter-sponsored ballot measure qualifies for this election, this would become a City-wide election and all voters of the City will be eligible to vote on this measure.

Pursuant to the City voters' approval of Measure B in November, 2018, the City will switch to even-year elections starting in November 2024. The City of Santa Barbara is one of many California cities to change to even year elections in recent years pursuant to state legislation and state Attorney General opinions. Most cities who have switched to even year elections have consolidated their elections with their local counties, with the elections

now administered by the local County elections officials rather than administered by the cities.

The City has traditionally contracted with outside vendors for assistance with the election process. In particular, these vendors provided services including ballot design, ballot and sample ballot printing and mailing, review of signatures on vote by mail ballots, and vote tabulation and canvassing, while City staff would administer the candidate nomination process and contacting members of the public who submitted vote by mail ballots without signatures or with signatures that do not match their voter registration.

However, due to the large number of cities that have switched to consolidating elections with counties, the primary election services vendor, Martin & Chapman, has gone out of business. Additionally, Donna Grindey, an additional election vendor used by the City in the past, has retired from providing this service.

Upon learning of the unavailability of these vendors, City staff reached out to the County of Santa Barbara's County Clerk, Recorder, Assessor and Registrar of Voters to request provision of election services for the November, 2019 election. The Santa Barbara County office declined to provide the services for the 2019 election due to other commitments. City staff also contacted the election officials for Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties; those offices also declined.

City staff, however, found that the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder's office was willing to provide assistance. This office is an expert in election provision, as it administers elections for over one hundred jurisdictions in Los Angeles County. It provides innovative services and is a leader in election outreach and technology.

Scope of Los Angeles County Services

City staff has come to a tentative agreement with Los Angeles County to provide some contracted election administration. Under this agreement, City staff would still conduct the candidate nomination process. City staff would provide final information for Los Angeles County for the County to design, print, and mail the ballot and sample ballot. City staff, with the assistance of outside consultants, would pick up the returned ballots from the Santa Barbara Post Office, verify signatures on vote by mail envelopes, and work with voters to rectify issues with missing or non-matching signatures. Staff would arrange for transport of ballots to Los Angeles County on a regular basis. Los Angeles County staff would then tabulate the ballots and complete the canvass process, with review and oversight by City staff.

Timeline of Results

Election Night results would include votes cast through the end of the week before Election Day, with the possibility of some day-before-Election-Day results included as

well. An election report on Friday, November 8 would include those votes cast on Election Day. It should be noted that due to a change in election law several years ago, all votes postmarked by Election Day are still counted, as long as they are received by that Friday. Accordingly, these Friday tallies have increasingly included larger percentages of votes.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

Staff has budgeted \$374,000 for operation of the election. City staff is currently working with Los Angeles County staff for detailed estimates, but expects the cost to be less than this budgeted amount.

PREPARED BY: Sarah Gorman, City Clerk Services Manager

SUBMITTED BY: Kristy Schmidt, Administrative Services Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office