Status Report on Plans & Preparations for the 2013 Municipal Election

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on election planning efforts and voter outreach and education initiatives as a follow-up to the report titled _Minneapolis: Your City. Your Vote – 2013_ presented February 2, 2013. While the majority of this report is informational, staff is requesting direction on the following issue:

REQUESTED DIRECTION

[PRECINCTS & POLLING PLACES: _See page 10 for details_]

Authorize and direct staff to make the recommended adjustments in polling place locations to be effective for the 2013 Municipal Election as follows:

- **For Ward 2-Precinct 4, from Coffman Union to the Weisman Museum;**
- **For Ward 2-Precinct 9, from Seward Towers East to Augsburg College Oren Gateway Building;**
- **For Ward 6-Precinct 2, from Seward Square Apartments to Seward Towers East;**
- **For Ward 8-Precinct 5, from Watershed High School to St Joan of Arc Church; and**
- **For Ward 10-Precinct 2, from the Ballentine VFW to Jefferson School.**

Furthermore, in advance of the 2014 Gubernatorial Election, staff is directed to identify additional adjustments or changes in precincts and/or polling places deemed necessary to serve the interests of voters, and to submit those recommendations to the Elections Committee by no later than February 2014.

If there are no further directives or actions desired by the Elections Committee, staff recommends that the report be received and filed.

I. NEW VOTING SYSTEM & EQUIPMENT

A. Election System & Equipment Purchase Update

On April 23, the Hennepin County Board awarded a contract to Election Systems and Software (ES&S) for a new election system and equipment. The contract was finalized June 3. The Minneapolis Elections & Voter Services Unit was engaged in developing the Request for Proposals, including a section on specifications for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV).

ES&S is the supplier of the existing fleet of voting equipment, so there is comfort in the products from an administrative standpoint. More importantly, from the voter's perspective, the new voting equipment—the DS200—is comparable to the existing M100. Procedurally, the voter completes his or her ballot and inserts it into the tabulator—exactly as is done now.

While the physical operation of the DS200 and the M100 is similar, the operating system—which is the core of the Election Management System (EMS)—is significantly improved. The operating system[1] consists of firmware and software that works together to create, program, process, tabulate, and produce results for an election. The operating system Hennepin County has purchased from ES&S is its newest platform, called ElectionWare™.

ElectionWare Version 5.0 was certified by the Election Assistance Commission on May 16, 2013. However, this version was already operational in New York and Florida. These states do not require federal certification; therefore, the base operating system has been tested and deployed in other jurisdictions. ES&S has already developed an upgrade to its ElectionWare platform—which is available in Version 5.1. This upgraded version of the core EMS includes the same operating system and all the same components of the base platform in Version 5.0. However, Version 5.1 was designed with an export utility that can streamline unique RCV processing requirements, an option designed specifically for the City of Minneapolis. ES&S has confirmed that ElectionWare Version 5.1 is in the process of being evaluated and certified by the State of Minnesota (via the Secretary of State). It is anticipated that state certification on this system should be completed by the end of June 2013.

B. Testing & Certification of Election Systems & Equipment

The process of certifying election systems and equipment is complex. Consistent with the decentralized nature of elections administration in the United States, each state has its own rules and requirements for testing and certification.

In Minnesota, voting systems must be certified first by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission[2] (EAC) and then by the Minnesota Secretary of State.[3] Absent those dual certifications, a voting system cannot be used in this state. Other states do not mandate EAC certification. Instead, these states use an independent testing firm to evaluate and certify systems and equipment.

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[1] Software is a set of machine-readable instructions that direct a computer's processor to perform prescribed operations. Firmware is software that has been permanently coded into the non-volatile memory of hardware to define certain core operating system functions that must remain unaltered to preserve the integrity of the system. Firmware thus has qualities of both software and hardware.

[2] The U.S. Election Assistance Commission is an independent, bipartisan commission charged with developing guidance to meet federal requirements established under the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). The EAC adopts voluntary voting system certification standards; accredits testing laboratories; audits the use of HAVA funding; and serves as a national clearinghouse of information on election administration. The EAC also maintains the national mail voter registration form developed in accordance with the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. The EAC consists of four commissioners appointed by the President of the United States and confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

[3] Minn. Stat. § 206.57 – Examination of New Voting Systems.

ES&S's ElectionWare Version 5.0, which forms the basic EMS platform, has been nationally certified. The Version 5.1 upgrade is in the process of being certified by the State of Minnesota. [4] Enhancements specific to Version 5.1—that is, the ability to wirelessly transmit results to the central EMS at Hennepin County and the use of an export utility to generate a report for RCV tabulation purposes—will not be reviewed at federal or state levels. Federal testing is based on standards established in 2005, and those standards do not address a voting system designed to accommodate alternative voting methods like RCV. Similarly, Minnesota election law is silent on RCV; consequently, the Secretary of State has no authority to certify RCV-specific components of a voting system.

This does not mean the new system and equipment purchased by Hennepin County and used in the City of Minneapolis are not tested or certified. All election equipment vendors—including ES&S—perform rigorous tests of their products through a federally-certified Voting System Test Laboratory (VSTL) before submitting any new system, equipment, or version upgrades for certification at the federal or state level. ElectionWare Version 5.1 is currently undergoing testing by Wyle Laboratories[5]. If the VSTL report completed in June confirms the accuracy and functionality of this system upgrade, then Hennepin County should have it available for the 2013 Municipal Election. To address more fully the operability of the export utility and minimize the City's exposure, staff will secure additional testing by an independent firm. At the City's request, Hennepin County included a contract provision allowing for this additional independent testing. The City will work with the county on the scope of the contract and the costs associated with the use of an independent testing firm.

C.   Mock Election

After the new election system and equipment have been received, and after staff training, the City and County elections teams will collaborate in conducting a mock election. A mock election gives further assurance that the new system and equipment are fully operational, meet all specifications, and perform as required. Plus, it will generate valuable information about the ease of voting on test ballots and will also help the City assess the effectiveness of its voter outreach and education program. The mock election is tentatively scheduled for late August.

II.   RANKED CHOICE VOTING – THE MINNEAPOLIS METHOD: PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

A.   Options for Using New Election Systems & Tabulations Analysis

The 2009 RCV Municipal Election was completed by a hand-count of ballots because certified voting equipment did not exist that could tie together first, second, and third rankings in a race. Through a test election and a week-long LEAN exercise, the Elections & Voter Services Unit was successful in developing the Minneapolis Method for Hand Counting a Ranked Choice Voting Election.[6]

The Minneapolis Method has three phases:

1. Hand Count: A manual count of all ballots is completed and the number of votes cast for each three-candidate combination in each race is recorded.

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[4] The Secretary of State is scheduled to receive ElectionWare Version 5.1 by June 19, 2013 for certification.

[5] Wyle Laboratories is an independent testing and engineering company specializing in engineering, scientific, and technical services based in Huntsville, Alabama. Wyle Laboratories is an EAC-accredited Voting System Test Laboratory (VSTL) and tests voting systems and equipment to the 2002 Voting Systems Standards and the 2005 Voluntary Voting System Guidelines.
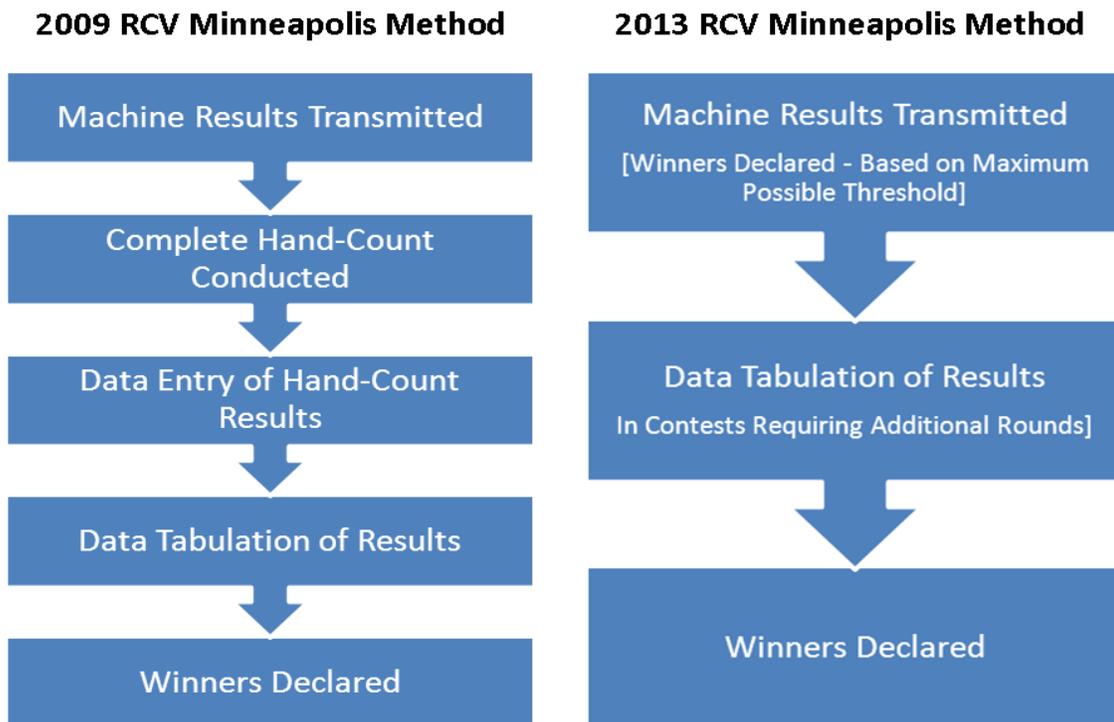
[6] The "Minneapolis Method" developed by the City's Elections & Voter Services Unit was presented the Guardian Award by the National Association of Election Officials (Election Center) for "Exemplifying Our Principles and Standard of Conduct for Hand-Counting a Ranked Choice Voting Election."

2. Data Entry: The data generated is manually entered into an Excel spreadsheet.
3. Tabulation: The data for each race is analyzed to determine the election results and declare winners.

The Minneapolis Method minimizes the handling of each ballot and allows for the simultaneous counting of multiple races, leading to election results being delivered in as short of time as possible. Although the new system cannot calculate the actual vote distribution, it will generate a report that ties together a voter's ranked choices for each race on each ballot. This report essentially eliminates the hand-count and data-entry phases. These technological advancements in the new EMS will be further enhanced by policy-level improvements that streamline the administrative processing of ballots in the following areas:

▪ Using Election Night totals of first choice results to declare unofficial winners;
▪ Recording votes for declared write-in candidates individually, all others in aggregate; and
▪ Modifying voter intent rules to allow greater opportunity for a voter's ballot to remain in play if additional rounds are required.

Consequently, the City anticipates eliminating the need to perform the most time-consuming and most costly phases of the Minneapolis Method in 2013.[7] The following charts illustrate the differences in the 2009 and 2013 processes.

2009 RCV Minneapolis Method

Machine Results Transmitted

⬇

Complete Hand-Count Conducted

⬇

Data Entry of Hand-Count Results

⬇

Data Tabulation of Results

⬇

Winners Declared

2013 RCV Minneapolis Method

Machine Results Transmitted
[Winners Declared - Based on Maximum Possible Threshold]

⬇

Data Tabulation of Results
In Contests Requiring Additional Rounds]

⬇

Winners Declared

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[7] In the 2009 Municipal Election, Minneapolis lacked voting equipment that could tabulate RCV ballots; consequently, a full hand-count of all ballots was required. This necessitated the employment of approximately 100 (full time equivalent) election judges to complete the sorting and hand-counting of ballots before the tabulation team could begin its work. This process required a total of 15 days (18 calendar days). Labor, materials, and facilities expenditures totaled $135,441, as reported to City Council on April 26, 2010. From its analysis, staff believes that the 2013 improvements (described above) will eliminate the need for a full hand-count process. The use of the Excel report produced by the export utility available in ElectionWare Version 5.1 is anticipated to eliminate two distinct phases from the 2009 Minneapolis Method, saving an estimated 1 full working day for each 5 percentage points of voter turnout. Additional process improvements achieved through ordinance amendments are anticipated to achieve significant time savings in the tabulation phase. These procedural modifications assure a high probability that results for all races in 2013 could be available by the Friday following Election Day, for races where additional rounds must be conducted in multiple races.

B.   Election Night Results

The new voting equipment will count the votes for each candidate at each ranking. Therefore, by using the results of first-choice machine counts, the City will be able to determine unofficial winners in races where a second round is unnecessary to fill all seats for a particular office. Winners declared on Election Night will be calculated against a "maximum possible threshold."

The maximum possible threshold is based on the total number of ballots cast in a race, rather than just the number of votes that are tabulated. By focusing on the total number of ballots—and not votes—the threshold will encompass all overvotes and undervotes in a particular race. This has the effect of raising the bar to declare a winner because it accounts for all voters regardless of whether their preferred candidate ultimately is selected in the first-choice machine count. By doing so, staff is able to declare a winner that has a sufficient number of votes necessary to win the race even if all the overvoted and undervoted first choice ballots were valid votes cast for a different candidate. By using this option, there is no possibility for the outcome to be different if completed by machine count or by a round-by-round tabulation. It provides a winner who is mathematically impossible to defeat. Thus, the use of the maximum possible threshold assures that the winners declared from the machine counts will be the same as if the race had been hand-tabulated.

If this process improvement had been in place for the 2009 Municipal Election, the winners of 15 of the 20 single-seat offices on the ballot that year could have been declared on Election Night.[8] In those races, the first-choice votes showed that a candidate had exceeded the maximum possible threshold, meaning additional rounds of RCV tabulation were not necessary to determine the winner. However, under the 2009 ordinance all three columns of ranked choices had to be hand-counted, data entered, and tabulated before a winner could be declared. The amount of time needed to have results for all races would have been cut in half in 2009, from 15 working days to approximately 8 working days. This process improvement will allow all results to be known many days earlier than they otherwise would.

C.   Count Only Declared Write-In Candidates

The amended ordinance calls for changes in the way votes for write-in candidates are recoded.

Individuals who want their write-in votes individually tabulated must now become declared write-in candidates by filing a request with the Elections office no later than 7 days before a general election. This matches how results are recorded for write-in candidates for federal, state, and county offices.[9] Votes for undeclared write-in candidates will be reported in aggregate, rather than by individual name. In addition to Minneapolis, the cities of Blaine and Saint Paul have adopted this requirement for municipal elections.

In 2009, documenting and counting write-in names consumed a significant amount of time during all phases of the Minneapolis Method. Sorters/counters had to fill out a separate form for each write-in on a ballot, which in turn created additional data entry. This delayed the start of the tabulation phase. The tabulation phase itself also took much longer. Across the 22 municipal races on the ballots, the need to process every write-in as a separate candidate delayed completing the tabulation by several days. The following chart summarizes the magnitude of the challenge.

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[8] Winners could not have been determined for either of the multiple-seat races on the ballot.

[9] Minn. Stat. § 204B.09, subd. 3

2009 RCV Minneapolis Method: Total Write-In Candidates
[Listed by race and rank]

OFFICE	FIRST RANKING	SECOND RANKING	THIRD RANKING	TOTAL
Mayor	215	186	234	635
Board of Estimate & Taxation	225	111	158	494
Park Board (At-large seats)	193	107	111	411
City Council (13 races combined)	130	255	401	786
Park Board District (6 races combined)	313	274	308	895
TOTALS	1076	933	1212	3221

The 2009 mayoral contest illustrates how the public is better served by using the same write-in recording process used for federal, state, and county offices. For example, in 2009, the tabulation phase for the mayoral race took 4 hours to complete. Most of that time was spent recording the votes for hundreds of individual write-in candidates. A recent analysis of the 2009 mayoral data revealed that tabulation could have been completed in well under 1 hour if the undeclared write-in candidates had been recorded in aggregate rather than individually.

Substantial time savings would likewise have been realized in the other city-wide races, such as the Board of Estimate & Taxation and the at-large seats on the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. In 2009, tabulation took over 8 hours for each of those races, but could have been completed in 1 to 3 hours. Considering all 22 municipal races, the election results could have been released days earlier if undeclared write-ins could have been tabulated in aggregate rather than individually. The public deserves accurate election results reported without unnecessary delay. Tabulating undeclared write-ins as a group supports this goal.

D. Voter Intent

Voter intent is a ballot evaluation process identified and regulated by Minnesota election law.[10] In any election, there exists the possibility that voters will inadvertently complete ballots in a manner that does not allow all votes to be automatically counted.

As applied in Ranked Choice Voting, these types of errors include:

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[10] Minn. Stat. § 204C.22, provides that ballots must be deemed valid if a voter's intent is determinable, despite technical errors that might otherwise cause rejection. The statute provides rules on how to determine intent in traditional (plurality) elections. The policy intent behind these statutory protections was to preserve as many ballots as possible in any election, regardless of the type of election process (traditional or alternative) that may be used. Because of this legal requirement, the City of Minneapolis had to create policy rules related to the unique tabulation process for Ranked Choice Voting prior to its first use in 2009. These policy rules provide consistent guidance on handling any potential marking errors on RCV ballots so that as many ballots as possible may be preserved and included in the election process.

- Overvoting, which is choosing more than one candidate at a single ranking;
- Repeating a candidate in multiple rankings; and
- Skipping a ranking, but choosing a candidate at a lower ranking.

Because voter intent with respect to RCV is not addressed in state law, the City must adopt policies about how to interpret voter intent. These policy choices are codified by staff in the form of Voter Intent Guidelines which provide consistent direction on how to process RCV ballots when technical errors are found.

The 2009 guidelines were inconsistent with respect to the treatment of ballots with technical errors. In the case of an overvote, repeat candidate, or multiple skipped rankings, the ballot did not count towards any candidate in the current or subsequent rounds; in the case of a single skipped ranking the ballot counted towards the next highest ranked continuing candidate, if any. The amended ordinance removes this inconsistency and provides for equal treatment in each instance where a technical error is discovered on an RCV ballot during tabulation, providing that the particular ballot will count towards the next highest-ranked, continuing candidate.

This approach gives the voter the greatest chance of having his or her ballot counted towards a preferred candidate, despite a technical error. In RCV, this is an important consideration. Except for an overvote, the voting equipment cannot detect and warn a voter of a ballot error. Without that warning and the chance to correct the ballot at the polling place, it is reasonable to keep as many voter choices involved in the tabulation process as long as possible, when additional rounds are required. The modified guidelines related to voter intent achieve this goal.

E.   Recount Trigger

In recognition of the accuracy of modern voting equipment, the legislature decreased the vote difference that triggers a recount in municipal election.[11] Specifically, in races with more than 50,000 votes cast, the vote difference is now 1/4 percent instead of 1/2 percent. The following chart shows when a recount will be required:

Statutory Changes Related to Election Recount Triggers	
TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTES CAST FOR THE OFFICE	**A recount is required if the vote difference between candidates is...**
400 or less	10 votes
More than 400 but less than 50,000	1/2% of the total votes for that office
50,000 or more	1/4% of the total votes for that office

The amended ordinance no longer references a specific percentage to trigger a recount, but instead references the state statute. This change assures the recount trigger in the ordinance matches state law and eliminates the need to amend the ordinance again if the legislature changes the law at a future date.

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[11] Minn. Stat. § 204C.36

III. PRECINCTS & POLLING PLACES

A. Evaluation of Precincts & Polling Places

As directed by City Council,[12] the Elections team continues to perform detailed on-site assessments of all 117 polling places. In addition, staff is conducting inspections of sites for near-term and future changes. At the time of this report, 53 of the 117 sites have been assessed. The remaining site visits will be completed by August. Staff prioritized the site assessments, focusing first on the 11 polling places identified as potentially problematic in the February 27 report, as well as any polling places serving a registered voter count close to or exceeding 2,500.

During these in-person, on-site inspections, staff is utilizing an assessment guide to assist in confirming certain mandated requirements, such as ADA-compatible entrances and pathways, as well as a number of desired elements for both election judges and voters. This list of mandated criteria and other assessment factors, which includes suggestions and feedback collected from the Polling Place Work Group (see next section), is provided for reference in Exhibit A – Polling Place Assessment Guide.

In addition to the assessment guide, photographs of each polling place are being taken to provide a visual record of each location. An iPad, outfitted with specialized software, is being used to capture the measurements of each site to prepare a customized, to-scale layout for each polling place. These layouts will identify the preferred site configuration, including furniture and voting equipment, efficient voter pathways, and the location of election judges to maximize the use of space at each site. These refined layouts will assist in facilitating improved line management techniques and in accommodating same-day registration activities.

By standardizing the setup of each polling place, staff will have streamlined a time-consuming process and eliminated guesswork so that election judges can quickly get each polling place organized according to a pre-set layout and be ready to serve voters. (See Exhibit B – Polling Place Layout Example and see Section III. C for more details related to Polling Place Management.)

Going forward, site assessments will be performed on an annual basis to ensure there have been no significant changes that could affect Election Day functionality, or that would eliminate the site as a viable location. Annual visits are also an opportune time to collect additional information, ideas, and suggestions from the staff at the sites themselves. During the site visits already performed this year numerous park, school, and church staff members, among others, have contributed valuable insights into how the City could best utilize their facilities or ways to improve voter service at that particular site.

Many existing polling places have performed well in the past, and are expected to continue performing well in the future. Nevertheless, some sites have endemic problems and need to be relocated. In other cases, the polling site itself may be acceptable but cannot handle the number of voters assigned to it. Of the 117 current polling locations, 25 are serving a registered population of 2,500 voters or more (see Exhibit C – 2012 High Election Day Registrations and Registered Voters Map). In a previous report, staff had also identified 11 sites following the 2012 Presidential Election which received complaints or had known issues in terms of capacity, accessibility, functionality and overall voter service. Proposed 2013 and 2014 recommendations for these sites are provided in Exhibit D – 2013 & 2014 Polling Site Recommendations.

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[12] At its regular meeting on December 7, 2012, the City Council directed staff to work with Council Members and key community stakeholder groups, as part of a proposed Elections Accessibility Plan, to review all polling place locations to identify and address potential barriers and challenges and to identify potential new locations, including the option of using one polling place to serve multiple precincts.

Staff recommends changing a small number of polling place sites for the 2013 Municipal Election—changes for which an immediate solution is needed and for which a viable alternative is available and has been requested by or vetted with the community. The following sites are recommended to be changed in 2013(for a full list of 2013 proposed polling sites see Exhibit E – Proposed List of 2013 Polling Places):

- **Ward 2-Precinct 4:** Coffman Union — moves to Weisman Museum
- **Ward 2-Precinct 9:** Seward Towers East — moves to Augsburg College Oren Gateway Building
- **Ward 6-Precinct 2:** Seward Square Apts. — moves to Seward Towers East
- **Ward 8-Precinct 5:** Watershed High School — moves to St Joan of Arc Church (which will serve two precincts—Ward 8-Precinct 4 and Ward 8-Precinct 5)
- **Ward 10-Precinct 2:** Ballentine VFW — moves to Jefferson School (which will serve two precincts—Ward 10-Precinct 1 and Ward 10-Precinct 2)

Staff anticipates that the remaining sites that have not been assessed at the time of this report will function adequately in 2013, particularly because voter turnout is traditionally lower in municipal elections compared to presidential elections.[13] Furthermore, all polling place sites will benefit from new approaches to polling place management that will be implemented this year.

Staff recommends additional changes in polling places in early 2014, prior to the planned gubernatorial election. These changes will necessitate modifications to precinct lines or the addition of new precincts. Due to timing constraints, staff does not recommend making changes for these polling places at this time. Staff will use the additional time prior to 2014 to investigate alternative locations and solicit community input on those alternatives.

B.   Polling Place Work Group

The Elections & Voters Services Unit convened a Polling Place Work Group[14]—representing various community stakeholders, interest groups, and neighborhoods—to discuss issues at polling sites, identify critical elements for assessing polling locations, and identify ways to enhance, alter, or improve upon current practices in the management of the polls on Election Day. The Work Group included representatives from the Minneapolis Public Schools, the Minneapolis Parks & Recreation District, the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities, and the Minneapolis Neighborhood & Community Relations Department, along with several election judges and neighborhood organization and/or community members, totaling twenty-one participants.

During meetings on April 2, 5, 29 and 30, the Work Group discussed a wide array of items and issues, from very specific problems at particular polling sites to suggestions on how best to reach communities with limited English proficiencies (LEP). A compilation of the Work Group's notes and findings are attached as Exhibit F – Polling Place Work Group's Findings. The Work Group reviewed the draft Polling Place Assessment Guide, which was revised to incorporate many of the recommendations put forth by members. Group discussion also produced many ideas related to training and Election Day site management, which are reflected in other sections of this report (See Polling Place Management, Section III. C).

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[13] Staff anticipates a higher percentage voter turnout in 2013, and has planned accordingly. The most recent open mayoral election with no incumbent on the ballot was in 1993, and voter turnout at that time was 47%, which is well within the planning margin that can be served by the majority of the 117 existing polling places in Minneapolis. Comparatively, in the 2012 Presidential Election, the City achieved a record 82% voter turnout, which highlighted the necessity to re-examine the number and boundaries of precincts and the location and facility capacity and/or restrictions of the designated polling places.

[14] At its regular meeting March 7, 2013, the City Council authorized the formation of a Polling Place Work Group to participate in a comprehensive assessment of the City's polling places and the development of a Polling Place Assessment Guide.

Some of the recurring themes throughout the meetings included:

- Proactive, continuous line management at the polls:
  - Ensuring voters are in the correct location to vote
  - Assisting the elderly or anyone having discomfort standing in line
  - Providing materials to voters in line, such as registration materials or a sample ballot
  - Facilitating an expedited line for pre-registered voters

- Expanded, in-person, voter outreach and education via neighborhood meetings:
  - Utilizing the languages of the community
  - Teaching voting basics, where to vote, and Ranked Choice Voting

- Basic signage & direction within polling sites:
  - Providing easily-recognized entry/starting points for voters within the room
  - Where and how to queue, for registered and non-registered voters

These meetings provided valuable information, and staff believes future meetings would be useful. Staff anticipates continuing the type of dialog begun in the Work Group, with some returning and some new participants. With help from the Neighborhood & Community Relations Department and others, staff solicited representation from under-represented populations including communities of color, immigrant communities, and youth. While some success was achieved in reaching certain segments of these populations, future meetings would provide additional opportunities to reach these voters and to find ways to best facilitate expanded engagement and participation.

C.   Polling Place Management

Many Minneapolis voters experienced long wait times to vote in 2012. Challenges with ballot tabulators, defective ballots, faulty pens, and a historic turnout were all contributing factors. In the wake of those challenges, the Elections & Voter Services Unit considered strategies to reduce or eliminate similar lines and wait times in future elections, record-setting or otherwise.

In addition to partnering with Hennepin County on the purchase of a new voting system and equipment and advocating for election reforms,[15] staff focused on enhancements and updates to existing procedures with respect to polling place management. Toward this objective, staff utilized election judge surveys, direct feedback from voters and election judges, and input from the Polling Place Work Group, professional associations[16] and contacts within the industry, and numerous school, park, and public housing staffers who contributed ideas and impressions.

To achieve shorter lines a variety of projects have been undertaken. First, staff is developing more robust precinct profiles. Understanding the population of each precinct is vital to providing optimum voter service and support. Mobility trends in the precinct population, primary languages spoken, and historical voter turnout data are all extremely valuable in determining service and staffing levels. While much of this data has already been gathered, it had not been merged into a single, easily digestible source. The increased polling place visits together with data culled from existing sources will help create a more robust, fully-formed profile for each precinct and the community it serves. This profile will help the Election & Voter

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[15] The City's 2013 State Legislative Agenda supported reforms to Minnesota election laws which included, among other things, authorization for early voting, expanded vote-by-mail (VBM) options, vote centers and electronic poll books, and no-excuse in-person absentee balloting. The City Clerk testified in support of these reforms on January 17, 2013, before the House Elections Committee.

[16] The National Association of Election Officials conducted a member conference in Bloomington April 25-27, 2013. Among the workshops was a presentation and discussion about the Association's member survey following the 2012 Presidential Election and the associated challenges experienced across all states. One of the prominent findings from that national survey was the need for stronger polling place management.

Services Unit better prepare for Election Day registrations and also aid in ongoing efforts in terms of voter outreach and education.

A key lesson learned from the 2012 Presidential Election is that voters are frustrated if required to wait in line more than 30 minutes. To provide better line management and voter service at the polls, more judges will be deployed. Greeter judges will be assigned to work the lines to assist in:

- Verifying voters are in the correct precinct, and are either pre-registered or not;
- Providing same-day registration materials when needed so voters can complete forms while waiting;
- Verifying voters planning to same-day register have the proper identification required by law;
- Identifying voters requiring translation assistance, and working to locate that assistance;
- Assisting voters experiencing physical discomfort or who may be physically unable to wait in line and therefore may require curb-side assistance; and
- Distributing sample ballots so voters can familiarize themselves with ballot issues to expedite time in the voting booth.

To better assist voters who are new to their voting site, or new to voting in general, staff will begin an expansion and modification of poll signage; for example:

- In outdoor areas where voters would be approaching the poll, posting a larger sign with an accompanying precinct map that reads "IF YOU LIVE HERE, VOTE HERE" with the precinct outline clearly marked on the map;
- In communities with larger known populations of voters with limited English proficiency, including a sign that indicates how to access translation assistance or language support in the main languages that are spoken in that particular precinct;
- Within the polling place, adding large signage (in multiple languages, as necessary) that says "VOTE HERE" to better direct voters towards the registration area, especially in larger-sized polling place locations where the start of the queuing area may not be immediately visible or obvious to inexperienced voters; and
- For any directional signs or voter-assistance signage, posting the same message(s) in any non-English languages known to be prevalent in the precinct.

For all precincts, staff will work to provide the necessary support and supplies at each site, based on phone interviews with precinct support judges, public comments, Work Group input, and known data from each precinct profile.

IV. ELECTION JUDGE RECRUITMENT

A. Recruiting Judges with Second Language Skills

One in five Minneapolis residents speaks a language other than English in their homes.[17] Therefore, it is imperative to recruit election judges who speak the languages reflective of the various communities within the city. Currently, the Elections Unit relies on the language support page on the Elections website and the Minneapolis 311 language translation vendor. Using the Minneapolis 311 vendor to translate can be a time-consuming task requiring both the election judge and voter to speak with the interpreter in an alternating pattern. This additional challenge leads to an increased wait time for all voters. Therefore, precincts identified with over 15% of the population speaking one of the top three foreign languages spoken in Minneapolis (Hmong, Somali, and Spanish) will have election judges deployed who can assist

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[17] *Minneapolis in Any Language: Policies and Procedures to Ensure Equal Access to City Services for People with Limited English Proficiency*. City of Minneapolis: Neighborhood and Community Relations Department. 2012. Print. www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@ncr/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-098636.pdf

those LEP voters, see attached Exhibit G – High Percentage Hmong, Somali, and Spanish Speaking Populations Map. Signage written in these languages will also be placed at the entrance of each polling location indicating which languages are supported. Additionally, the Election & Voter Services Unit is partnering with the Neighborhood & Community Relations Department to secure written translation of election related materials to assist voters. NCR will also be engaged in recruiting qualified election judges who speak a second language.

B.   Recruiting the Next Generation of Election Judges

The 2012 Student Election Judge Program was a highly successful endeavor in which 260 students participated. Additionally, a large number of those students were able to provide language support in the polling places. In 2013, the following improvements are being instituted to enhance the quality and commitment of the participating students:

- Emphasizing recruitment of students interested in community service rather than paid service;
- Standardizing 2 shift options for work: 6 a.m. – 2 p.m. or 2 p.m. – 8 p.m.; and
- Prioritizing recruitment and placement of students with second language skills.

Staff is also engaging with social media to reach younger participants on sites like Twitter and Facebook. In conjunction with these efforts, connections are being developed with the seven local colleges and universities through posting election judge and seasonal employment applications on career services websites and social media. Staff is creating an internship connection with the University of Minnesota Community Engagement Scholar Program.[18] The goal of these recruitment efforts is to foster a new and lasting relationship with a brand new pool of passionate election judges and seasonal employees.

V.   ELECTION JUDGE DEPLOYMENT

A successful election cannot be conducted without the corps of election judges who staff the polls. Staffing needs are based on three variables that drive coverage:

1. Voter turnout analysis from previous comparable elections;
2. Type of election cycle: local, state or federal and primary or general; and
3. Ballot content: offices, candidate(s) and ballot question(s).

For the 2013 Municipal Election, preparations are based on a projected 60% turnout of registered voters. This is based on historical voter participation rates in municipal elections[19], as well as public interest created by the open mayoral race and several competitive council races. Given these factors—and to achieve optimal coverage at the polling places—staff estimates the need for at least 1,137 election judges to operate the polls.

Staffing needs are determined by the following rubric: Each precinct is required by statute to have at least 3 election judges, and staff plans to add 1 additional judge to ensure adequate coverage throughout the

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[18] The University of Minnesota Community Engagement Scholars Program integrates public service with educational projects. Participants in the program are required to complete 400 hours of community engagement work throughout their 4 years at the University. Students are required to work a minimum of 20 hours with an organization, ensuring consistency and quality of work for the organizations and students. There are two ways students can complete their 400 hours. Students either take service-learning courses that integrate volunteering or simply volunteer outside of school. Before graduating, students create a final project, called the Integrative Community Engagement Project that benefits an organization they have worked for while enrolled in the program.

[19] Previous high municipal voter turnout thresholds date back to 1993 when there was 47% voter turnout and in 1997 with 48%.

day.[20] This results in at least 4 election judges per precinct. Additional coverage is based on the percentage of estimated voter turnout and generally calculating 1 election judge per 150 registered voters.

Staffing Needs Based on Projected Voter Turnout				
60% Registered Voters as of Feb. 4, 2013	No. of Precincts	Team Election Judges (FTE=16 hrs.)	Head & Asst. Head Judge	Total Polling Place staffing
<625	11	5	2	7
626-775	13	6-7	2	8-9
776-900	13	8	2	10
901-1025	16	9	2	11
1026-1150	16	10	2	12
1151-1275	13	11	2	13
1276-1400	22	12	2	14
>1400	13	13-16	2	15-18
TOTALS	117	1137	234	Avg. = 11.7

One of the key lessons from the 2012 Presidential Election was the need for dedicated management in the polling place on Election Day. Consequently, head and assistant head judges are not included in the base coverage formula. Beginning in 2013, the head and assistant head judges are additional requirements for each precinct. Previously, these judges were expected to perform normal election judge duties, which limited their ability to manage the general operation of the poll. This change will allow election judge leaders to be accessible at all times, to supervise activities, interact with and respond to voters who need assistance or information, and make necessary changes to ensure a positive voting experience for all participants. Separate training specifically focusing on these management expectations for head and assistant head judges will be conducted to enable them to meet these new, more expanded responsibilities in the polls.

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[20] Minn. Stat. § 204B.22, subdivision 1

VI.   VOTER OUTREACH & EDUCATION PLAN

In preparation for the 2013 election, a comprehensive Voter Outreach & Education Plan is being developed. The goal of this plan is to ensure all Minneapolis voters are "election ready." That is, voters are aware of the election on November 5th, including how to vote using Ranked Choice Voting, and the importance of engaging in the election process. Highlights of the plan are described in this section. Significant engagement of outside partners and stakeholders is also a key element of the plan. For the full plan see Exhibit H - 2013 Minneapolis Voter Outreach & Education Plan.

A.   Minneapolis Voter Ambassador Program

At the heart of the outreach and education plans is a new initiative this year—the Voter Ambassador Program. Staff intends to recruit community leaders who will advocate for the importance of voting by educating target communities on the "how, where, when, and why" to vote. This year, Ambassadors will also provide hands-on training and information throughout the community on how to cast an RCV ballot.

The genesis for this program is the belief[21] that leaders who are recognized by their friends, neighbors, and associates have a more significant impact and more influence within their circles, and can, therefore, have greater levels of credibility among their network, which includes likely and potential voters. This can increase the City's capacity to reach effectively into all segments of the community—including those target populations that have been historically under-represented in elections in Minneapolis.

As envisioned, staff will seek to identify, recruit, and train recognized leaders from throughout the various constituencies and communities that, collectively, are the City of Minneapolis. Input and suggestions from the Mayor and Council Members will be critical to the success of this program, as well as engagement by the Neighborhood & Community Relations Department, neighborhood organizations, diverse stakeholder groups, local businesses, community partners, election advocates, and others. Staff hopes to develop lists of potential candidates for the Ambassador program throughout June with a planned kick-off event in July.

Using a train-the-trainer approach, staff will provide a detailed orientation in election law and processes and Ranked Choice Voting. Each Ambassador will be supplied with polling place location maps, pamphlets and other explanatory materials, demonstration RCV sample ballots, and RCV-specific guides to answer frequently asked questions and common concerns. In addition, Ambassadors will be given demonstration videos that will provide an easy-to-follow visual demonstration of how to vote using RCV. These materials will be made available in multiple languages to facilitate effective outreach to all voters. Finally, Ambassadors will receive regular updates from the Elections team about the 2013 Municipal Election, including regular "briefings," such as instructions on how to pre-register and confirm registration status and the associated deadlines; how to vote by absentee ballot; how to register on Election Day and how to vouch for other voters; and similar issues.

Ambassadors will be asked to commit to a prescribed minimum number of presentations within the community.

B.   Internal Partners

The Elections & Voter Services Unit has engaged several internal partners in its planning efforts for the 2013 Municipal Election. The work of these partners has been significant; some of the initiatives are highlighted below to provide a flavor of work that is already underway by this group of allies.

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[21] The conceptual plan for the Minneapolis Voter Ambassador Program is based on research and conclusions presented in the book *The Influentials: One American in Ten Tells the Other Nine How to Vote, Where to Eat, and What To Buy* by Ed Keller and Jon Berry [Simon and Schuster - 2003].

The Communications Department has prepared a dynamic communications strategy based on the overarching Voter Outreach & Education Plan and this year's election calendar. The communications strategy includes an integrated framework of owned, earned, donated or paid, and shared communications channels and leverages existing enterprise communications channels to support the City's efforts to ensure all Minneapolis voters are "election ready." The Communications team has also provided significant input and assistance in the design and development of content for media releases, public announcements, print materials, and other information outlets. As a first step, the Communications Department produced this year's election brand: **|YOUR CITY. YOUR VOTE|**.
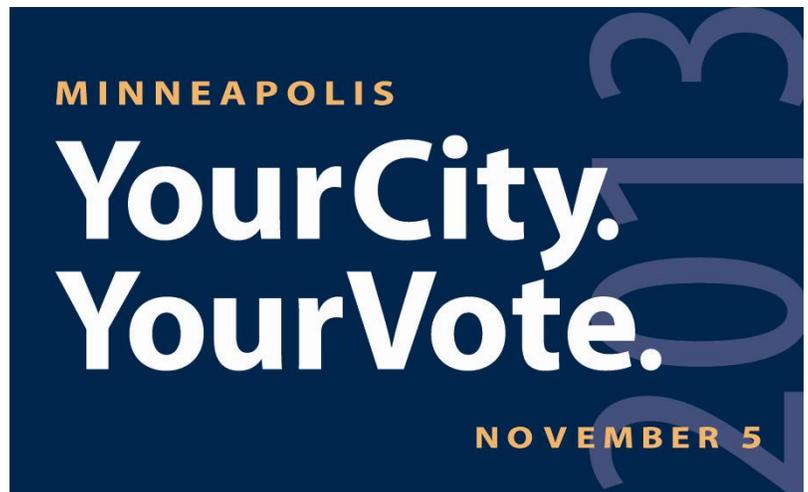
The Neighborhood & Community Relations Department has contributed their knowledge, expertise, and wide range of community contacts in support of outreach initiatives, particularly those targeting selected populations that have historically been under-represented in elections in previous years. NCR has also committed to playing a significant role in the development of the Voter Ambassador Program, including help in identifying and recruiting community-based leaders. In addition, NCR staff is assisting in the translation of election materials to ensure key messages are accessible to all Minneapolis residents.

Minneapolis 311, a long-time elections partner, is providing phone support by answering general election calls throughout the year and on Election Day. There are also potential opportunities being explored to integrate an elections-related mobile application within the current 311 application, potentially providing mobile capabilities for voters checking their registration status or finding their polling place location.

The Information Technology Department has been instrumental in developing a new, dedicated website designed specifically for the 2013 Municipal Election. This new website will serve as a clearinghouse for accurate, timely information about this year's election and about Ranked Choice Voting. It will offer a fresh, intuitive design focused on the end user, with content on the site oriented and arranged according to specific audience types: voters, candidates, volunteers, and students. This new website will be launched in early July, tied to the first meeting of the inaugural class of Voter Ambassadors.

Throughout the enterprise, the Elections & Voter Services Unit is encouraging all departments to partner in delivering key messages to potential voters. As part of the Ambassador program, staff is seeking to engage departments with a service-reach to provide information to the residents they serve.

Again, this is based on the premise that direct, person-to-person contacts will be the best way to engage and educate the community about the upcoming election and about Ranked Choice Voting, which has proven to be most effective in informing and motivating potential voters.[22] Staff also reviewed the City's

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[22] Pillsbury, George. "Serving Democracy: Nonprofits Promote Voter Engagement in 2012." The Nonprofit Quarterly Fall 2012: p. 16.

2010 Census participation plan and met with leaders who administered that project to get suggestions on how to duplicate the success of that city-wide initiative.[23]

C.   External Partnerships

The Voter Outreach & Education Plan calls for the development of a comprehensive network of external partners who can assist in connecting with target populations in settings that are already part of people's regular daily routines. One of the City's key allies in this regard is FairVote Minnesota—an organization that promotes better democracy through public education and advocacy with an emphasis on progressive voting systems. FairVote and other external partners can play a variety of roles, with each organization having the flexibility and support to define how best it can serve the twin goals of voter education and engagement based on its needs, capabilities, and interests.

The Elections & Voter Services Unit will support these external partners in the following ways:

▪ Sharing facts about Ranked Choice Voting, answers to frequently asked questions, and sample RCV ballots that can be shared and redistributed through websites, newsletters, and other communications that can be posted or exchanged in multiple formats;
▪ Providing featured speakers and presentations for information forums and special events about the 2013 Municipal Election and Ranked Choice Voting;
▪ Preparing and distributing educational materials in traditional/print and alternative media;
▪ Making voter registration applications available at partner locations and events; and
▪ Conducting (or helping conduct) voter registration drives.

Working with these external partner agencies, the City's Elections team hopes to ensure a strong presence at numerous events that will be held in the next five months leading into the election.

D.   Social Media

The City's Elections & Voter Services Unit will make use of social media outlets to help promote the 2013 Municipal Election. Social media tools like Facebook and Twitter provide additional avenues to engage voters and provide election-related information (see Exhibit I – Election's Twitter Page and Exhibit J – Election's Facebook Page for examples of the Elections Unit's social media presence). These sites will work alongside traditional methods of communication, including the new RCV-specific website, to ensure that the City is making use of every possible outlet to inform the electorate in a timely, user-friendly, and efficient manner.

In addition to providing basic election information, a social media presence will help expedite messaging to Minneapolis voters. Ultimately, this new communication method will enable voters to more readily share insights, suggestions, kudos, and complaints with the Elections team during each election season.

Find the Elections Unit at:

Twitter – www.twitter.com/votempls
Facebook – www.facebook.com/votempls

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[23] At its regular meeting March 7, 2013, the City Council directed staff to update a plan for targeting outreach resources to precincts with historically lower than average voter turnout, high percentages of communities of color, and those that had a larger than average number of ballots that required normalization in 2009. In doing so, the City Council specifically instructed the Elections & Voter Services Unit to evaluate strategies used in the 2010 Census project for potential applicability and replication with respect to the 2013 Municipal Election.

E. Urban Scholars

The Elections & Voter Services Unit has the privilege of including 17 Urban Scholars in its ranks this summer. These college students will function as field marshals in planning, preparing for, and conducting the bulk of the outreach and education initiatives described in this report. The Elections Unit has 3 full-time Urban Scholars. In addition, a group project was approved for this year's class of Urban Scholars, centered on the 2013 Municipal Election—and all 17 of these young men and women will be involved. The Scholars are focusing on creating specific outreach plans for targeted hard-to-reach populations, and will develop plans in partnership with internal and external partners. The Urban Scholars will report on their projects at the end of summer.

F. Building for Future Elections

Multiple new channels of education and outreach are being developed and deployed for 2013. In some instances, these initiatives will serve as pilot projects for future elections. Staff is committed to maintaining and building upon the accomplishments of this year's Voter Outreach & Education Plan.

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Report presented to:
Minneapolis City Council
Standing Committee on Elections – The Hon. Cam Gordon, Chair
Wednesday, June 12, 2013

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Recognitions
The Elections & Voter Services Unit gratefully acknowledges the participation and contribution of several partners who are engaged in preparations for a successful 2013 Municipal Election:

- The Hon. Mark Ritchie, Secretary of State
- Secretary of State's Elections Division
- Hennepin County Elections Team
- Connie J. Schmidt, election consultant
- The City of Minneapolis Urban Scholars – Class of 2013
- FairVote Minnesota (Jeanne Massey, executive director)
- Election Systems and Software
- Minneapolis City Departments:
  - Communications
  - Community Planning & Economic Development
  - Finance & Property Services
  - Information Technology
  - Minneapolis 311
  - Neighborhood & Community Relations