The 2013 Municipal Election:

An Analysis & Recommendations

MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL
Standing Committee on Elections

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes experiences and lessons learned from the 2013 Municipal Election. Based on these experiences and lessons, staff proposes additional ordinance amendments to clarify certain terms and definitions, to amend the process of determining mathematical elimination and vote transfers using Ranked-Choice Voting, and to increase municipal filing fees (*see pages 33-36 for details*). Additionally, this report highlights a series of process improvements staff recommends in preparation for the regularly-scheduled 2014 Gubernatorial Election (*see page 36 for details*).

II. RCV: SYSTEMS, PROCEDURES & IMPROVEMENTS

In 2006, Minneapolis voters approved the use of Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV) to elect municipal offices. RCV was first used in 2009. Based on experiences and lessons learned in 2009, as well as observations during St. Paul's RCV implementation in 2011, a series of process improvements was implemented for the 2013 Municipal Election. These improvements resulted in a substantial reduction in the time required to release final results in all races: in 2009, final results were available 15 days after the election with a voter turnout of 45,968; in 2013, final results were available 3 days after the election, with an increase in voter turnout to 80,099. Following is a summary of the changes which allowed the City of Minneapolis to achieve those improvements.

A. Ordinance Changes

On May 24, 2013, City Council approved amendments to the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Chapter 167 [*Municipal Elections: Rules of Conduct*]. These amendments included:

❖ USE ELECTION NIGHT TOTALS OF FIRST-CHOICE RESULTS TO DECLARE UNOFFICIAL WINNERS

The original RCV ordinance required a full hand-count of all races, even when Election Night results were sufficient to declare winners based on first-choice results. This required significant time and resulted in unnecessary delays in announcing final results. The 2009 mayoral race best illustrated the need to streamline this process, since a full hand-count was conducted even though the winning candidate received 73.6% of all first-choice votes on Election Night. Unofficial winners could have been declared on Election Night in 2009 in 15 out of 22 races based on first-choice votes alone. The 2013 amendment allowed candidates who met or exceeded the established threshold based on first-choice vote totals on Election Night to be declared winners. As a consequence, in 2013, winners were declared on Election Night in 14 out of 22 races on the ballot—roughly 64 percent of the entire ballot—simply based on first-choice vote totals.

❖ COUNT ONLY DECLARED WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

In 2009, across all races and rankings, a total of 3,221 write-in candidates had to be individually documented, hand-counted, processed, and reported. This consumed a significant amount of time and did not affect the outcome of any race. The 2013 amendment eliminated this requirement, providing identical treatment allowed under state law for write-in candidates in federal, state, and county elections.[1] Specifically, write-in candidates wishing to have their votes tabulated individually (known as "declared write-in candidates") must file a written request no later than 7 days before a general election; all other write-in candidates are reported in aggregate. The cities of St. Paul and Blaine have also adopted this requirement for municipal elections. In 2013, there were no declared write-in candidates for any races on the ballot.

[1] Minn. Stat. §204B.09, Subd. 3.

❖ IMPROVE POLICY GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING VOTER INTENT

In any election, regardless of the system used, it is possible for voters to mark ballots in a manner that does not allow all choices to be automatically tabulated by voting equipment. For example, a voter may circle a candidate's name rather than filling in the oval next to the candidate's name. State law requires election administrators to make every effort to accurately count all votes on a ballot and prohibits the rejection of a ballot when it is possible to determine a voter's intent.[2] To that end, state regulations provide detailed guidance on interpreting and determining voter intent for errors common in plurality voting systems. However, there is no guidance for errors unique to RCV. In RCV, these types of errors include:

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

Therefore, additional policy direction is required to address RCV-specific voter errors in order to provide voters the maximum ability to participate in an election. That policy direction is included in the City's RCV ordinance.

The 2009 RCV ordinance was inconsistent with respect to the treatment of ballots with voter errors. In the case of an overvote, repeat candidate, or multiple skipped rankings, the City's voter intent guidelines did not allow the ballot to count towards any candidate in current or subsequent rounds. In the case of a single skipped ranking, the guidelines allowed the ballot to be counted towards the next highest-ranked continuing candidate, if any. The 2013 amendment eliminated this inconsistent treatment in each instance, requiring that the particular ballot count towards the next highest-ranked, continuing candidate, if any. As a result, all voters received the maximum opportunity of having their ballots count towards a preferred candidate despite any technical error(s), consistent with state law.

For more details, see Section III. Voting Patterns, beginning on page 7.

❖ CHANGE THE THRESHOLD FOR AUTOMATIC RECOUNTS

Recognizing the accuracy of modern voting systems, the State Legislature in 2013 lowered the vote difference triggering an automatic recount in municipal elections.[3] Specifically, in races with more than 50,000 votes cast, the vote difference is now one-fourth of 1 percent instead of one-half of 1 percent. The following chart shows when a recount will be required:

STATUTORY CHANGES RELATED TO ELECTION RECOUNT TRIGGERS	
Total Votes Cast	**Recount Required When Difference Is...**
400 or less	10 votes or less
More than 400, less than 50,000	1/2 of 1% of total votes for office or less
50,000 or more	1/4 of 1% of total votes for office or less

Previously, the City's ordinance stated a flat threshold of 1/2 of 1 percent, which aligned with the state law at the time the original ordinance was passed. The amended ordinance simply references state statute, which

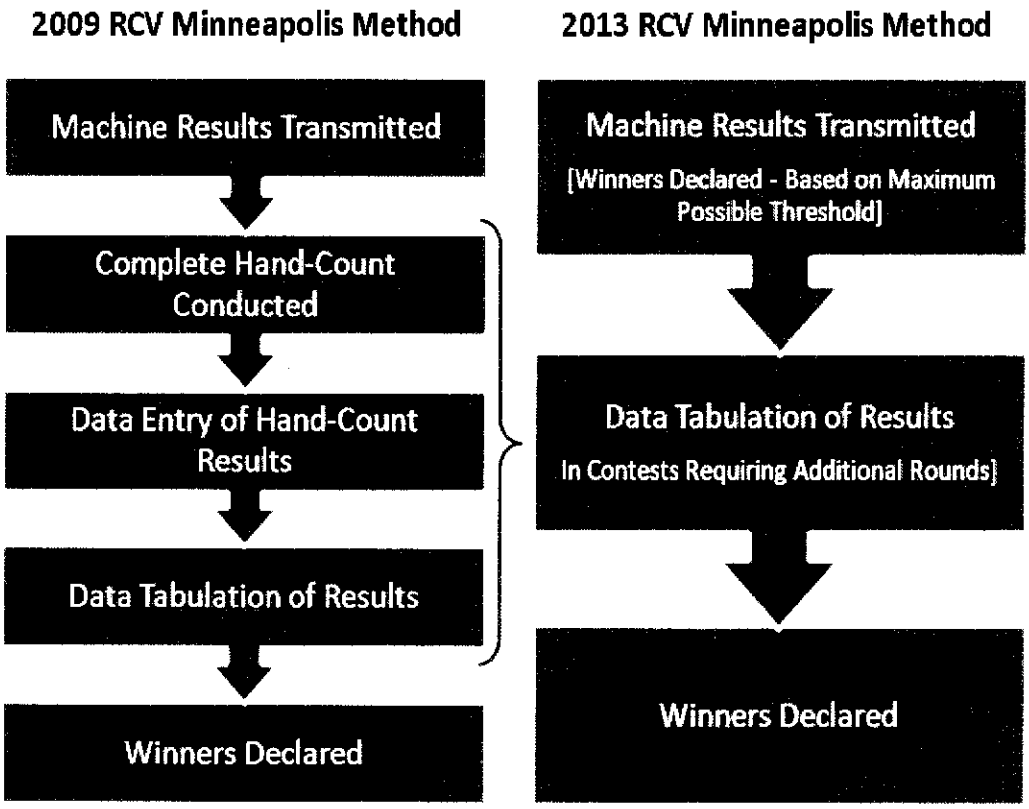
[2] Minn. Stat. § 204C.22.

[3] Minn. Stat. § 204C.36

assures that the recount trigger in the City's ordinance matches state law and eliminates the need for future amendments if the State Legislature changes the law in the future.

B. New Voting System & Equipment

On April 23, 2013, Hennepin County awarded a contract for a new voting system and related equipment to Election Systems & Software, Inc. (ES&S). The new voting system includes an enhancement related to RCV; specifically, it produces a Cast Vote Record which streamlines tabulation processes and eliminates the need for a protracted hand count. In 2009, the voting system did not support any aspect of RCV tabulation, necessitating a full hand-count using the Minneapolis Method.[4] The new voting system and use of the Cast Vote Record exportable file streamlined the tabulation process, as illustrated by the following chart.



As shown, the 2013 process eliminates the hand count and data entry steps used in 2009, which were the most time-consuming and costly components in the original process. By exporting the Cast Vote Record file in Microsoft Excel, the elections team was able to immediately begin data tabulation, thereby achieving substantial time and cost savings.

While this technological enhancement has improved the use of RCV, it is nevertheless important to emphasize that there is no fully automated solution available which tabulates an RCV election.

[4] For a more detailed description of the Minneapolis Method, see *Status Report on Plans & Preparations for the 2013 Municipal Election*, presented to the City Council Elections Committee on June 12, 2013.

In Minnesota, voting systems must be certified by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission[5] (EAC) and by the Minnesota Secretary of State, the State's chief election official.[6] The new voting system and equipment purchased by Hennepin County in 2013 is certified for use in Minnesota. However, neither the EAC nor the State of Minnesota have standards for, nor test for, the vote transfers and tabulation processes unique to Ranked-Choice Voting, and no vendor of voting equipment systems has submitted RCV tabulation software for certification at federal or state levels. In large part, this is due to the lack of a fully functioning EAC. The existing federal standards for system certification were last approved in 2005—four years before the City of Minneapolis first used RCV in its 2009 Municipal Election. As a consequence of political gridlock at the federal level, it has been impossible to appoint new EAC Commissioners; thus, an update to current federal voting system standards has not been possible. The practical consequence to the City of Minneapolis is that, until new federal and state certification standards are adopted which recognize alternative voting systems, RCV elections will require some element of hand-counting to tabulate any race where first-choice Election Night results cannot determine a winner.

The Cast Vote Record files for every race on the 2013 ballot were posted to the City's elections website and were updated, where necessary, at each round of tabulation. All files can be accessed and downloaded from the website at:

http://vote.minneapolismn.gov/results/2013/index.htm

For more information, see sub-section E. Results Tabulation, on page 5.

C. Independent Analysis

Because there are no federal or state standards for the use of the Cast Vote Record (CVR) exportable data file, the City retained the services of Freeman, Craft, McGregor Group, Inc. (FCMG) —a Florida-based corporation with expertise in testing and evaluating election systems—to conduct an independent analysis of the new voting system and equipment, specifically the use of the exportable CVR data file to support the City's tabulation of RCV ballots. Through extensive testing and review, FCMG found the new election system produced accurate CVR data files and verified that the City's tabulation procedures generated accurate results that could be consistently replicated. A full copy of the FCMG analysis was submitted to the City Council's Elections Committee as part of a separate report entitled *"The 2013 Municipal Election: A Report on Final Plans & Preparations"* dated October 30, 2013.

D. Mock Election

To test its revised procedures, in conjunction with the independent analysis conducted by FCMG, the City conducted a mock election from September 5 – 16. The mock election served two purposes: first, it enabled election administrators to fully test all new procedures prior to Election Day; second, as part of voter outreach programming, it allowed voters to learn about RCV and how to properly cast an RCV ballot. In addition to daily mock voting opportunities at City Hall, the City's elections team provided voting opportunities at four community-based locations:

- September 9, 3:30 to 7:30 p.m., at Roosevelt High School cafeteria, 4029 28th Ave. S.

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[5] The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) 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 guidelines with the advice and assistance of a standards board and board of advisors as well as a technical guidelines development committee. It also serves as a national clearinghouse of information on election administration. The EAC also accredits testing laboratories and certifies voting systems as well as audits the use of HAVA funds. Other responsibilities of the EAC include maintaining 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.

[6] Minn. Stat. § 206.57.

- September 10, 3:30 to 7:30 p.m., at Patrick Henry High School cafeteria, 4320 Newton Ave. N.
- September 11, 3:30 to 7:30 p.m., at Washburn High School cafeteria, 201 W. 49th St.
- September 12, 3:30 to 7:30 p.m., at Edison High School small gym, 700 22nd Ave. NE

The mock election allowed participants to rank and vote on various park-themed issues in races designed to mimic the actual 2013 municipal ballot, including single-seat and multi-seat races. The mock ballot also included two ballot questions, mirroring the two charter amendment questions that were submitted as part of the 2013 Municipal Election. The exercise confirmed that proper procedures were in place to securely transfer results to Hennepin County and to receive from Hennepin County the Cast Vote Record data files for each race.

E. Results Tabulation

At 8 p.m. on Election Night the polls closed and vote data was wirelessly transmitted from each of the City's 117 polling places to Hennepin County. The County merged this precinct-level vote data with the absentee ballot vote data provided by the City's Elections & Voter Services Division and provided a complete copy of the entire data set for the 2013 Municipal Election results to the City. This complete data set showed the total votes for each candidate in each race by first, second, and third choice rankings; the total number of write-in candidates in each race; and the total number of overvotes and undervotes. This data was used to determine unofficial winners on Election Night. The Cast Vote Record (CVR) featured by the new voting system generates a report in a Microsoft Excel format which ties together each voter's first, second, and third choices in each race. This report was used for tabulation in races that a winner could not be declared.

Using the complete results data provided by Hennepin County, the City's Elections & Voter Services Division first determined if any candidate in any race had met or exceeded the established threshold of votes needed to be elected. In 14 of the 22 races on the ballot, the City was able to declare unofficial winners on Election Night based on first-choice vote totals. In 8 races, a definitive winner could not be identified, and additional rounds of tabulation were required. Tabulation was scheduled to begin the following day, Wednesday, November 6, beginning with the mayoral race.

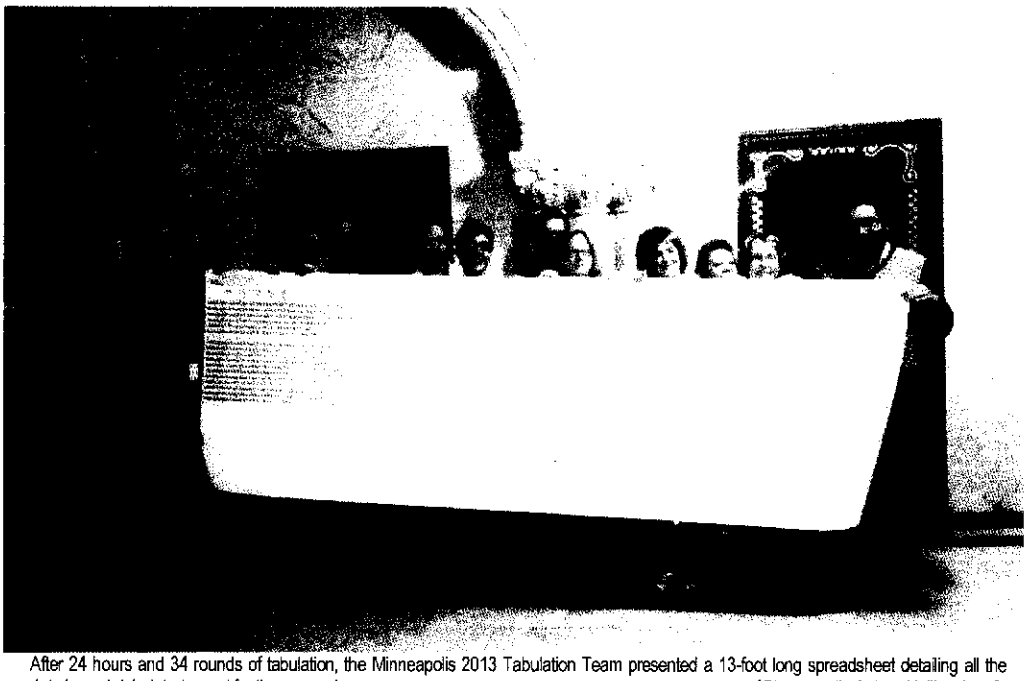
The tabulation team for the 2013 election consisted of six tabulators and one recorder, working under the direction of the Assistant City Clerk/Director of Elections & Voter Services. The recorder observed the process to confirm all procedures were followed and documented potential process improvements for future RCV elections. The six tabulators—working in teams of two—calculated election results: one tabulator operated the computer to sort, copy, and paste data results in Microsoft Excel following detailed instructions; the second tabulator verified each step was followed and ensured no errors were made. A total of two teams (four tabulators) worked simultaneously on each race, proceeding in ballot order. At specified checkpoints, the teams compared results to assure no mistakes had been made. A perfect match of results had to be achieved at each checkpoint before the teams proceeded. This built-in redundancy assured the tabulation was done accurately.

The Microsoft Excel workbook used by tabulators was designed to mimic the physical counting stations which would have been used in a hand-count process of paper ballots, based on the Minneapolis Method. For each race on the ballot, a "workspace" sheet was used to sort and transfer vote data, extracted from the Cast Vote Record file. There was a page for each candidate. A separate results page in the workbook added the vote totals for each candidate in each round and a mathematical elimination page was used to determine which candidate(s) were defeated in each round.

Tabulation occurred in in the training room located in the secure Emergency Communications Department (911 Center), located in the basement of City Hall. This location provided a secure, quiet work environment. A live feed of the tabulation room was broadcast to a monitor located in the City Hall Rotunda to allow public viewing of the tabulation process. At the conclusion of each tabulation round, printed copies of the results were printed

and posted in the City Hall Rotunda and electronic copies of the results were simultaneously posted to the City's website and released via social media tools.

For the mayoral race, tabulation began at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, November 6, the morning after Election Day. After 12 hours of tabulation, 14 rounds had been completed, resulting in the elimination of write in candidates and 13 of the 35 mayoral candidates on the ballot. Another full day (12 hours) was required the following day to complete all tabulation in the mayoral race, ending at approximately 11:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 7, following 34 rounds of tabulation.



After 24 hours and 34 rounds of tabulation, the Minneapolis 2013 Tabulation Team presented a 13-foot long spreadsheet detailing all the data in each tabulated round for the mayoral race. [*Photo credit: Anissa Hollingshead*]

On the third day of tabulation (Nov. 8), the tabulation team took 10 hours to complete the remaining seven races where winners could not declared on Election Night. The entire election was completed within 72 hours after the close of the polls on Election Night.

F. Post-Election Review

A post-election review (PER) involves a hand-count of ballots from randomly selected precincts to verify election equipment accurately counted votes on scanned ballots. Because a full hand-count was done in 2009, the 2013 election marked the first time that a post-election review was required in a Minneapolis RCV election. The PER was conducted on November 21, 2013, and was open to public observation.

The exportable Cast Vote Record (CVR) data file in each race—which ties together voters' first, second, and third choices—was the source information used in the RCV tabulation. Therefore, the PER was designed to verify the CVRs matched what was actually marked on ballots in selected precincts. As specified in the ordinance, the City Council race was counted for two randomly selected precincts and the Board of Estimate & Taxation[7] race was counted for two different randomly selected precincts. Election judges worked in party-balanced pairs sorting ballots by all three rankings and recording the number of ballots cast for each possible

[7] The ordinance specified that a multi-seat race, selected at random, be counted in the PER. Board of Estimate & Taxation was the race selected in 2013.

combination of candidates.[8] This count was compared to the results for each combination in the CVR data file. No discrepancies between the CVR data files and the actual ballots were discovered in any of the four precincts included as part of the PER.

III. VOTING PATTERNS

A. Voter Errors

The issue of voter errors has attracted much attention, both prior to and in the wake of the 2013 Municipal Election. There are three primary types of errors a voter may make that are specific to an RCV election: overvoting, skipped rankings, and repeat candidates.

"Overvoting" occurs when a voter chooses more than one candidate at a single ranking. In 2013, overvotes occurred on 0.19% of the races voted.[9] Overvoting was higher in multiple-seat races (0.25%) than in single-seat races (0.16%). This can perhaps be explained by the fact that in multiple-seat races in non-RCV elections voters are used to voting for multiple candidates for the office. It is possible that the issue of overvoting could be addressed through changes in ballot design which would eliminate the need to repeat candidate names in multiple columns. This is an issue the City should explore prior to the next regularly-scheduled municipal election in 2017. The new ballot counters can alert a voter to an overvote, thereby allowing the voter a chance to correct the error. The ballot counter does not alert voters to the other two types of errors unique to RCV.

A "skipped ranking" occurs when a voter skips a ranking but goes on to choose a candidate at a lower ranking on the ballot. For example, if a voter chooses a first-choice candidate and a third-choice candidate but does not select a candidate as a second choice, that would be a skipped ranking. Skipped rankings occurred on 0.35% of the races voted. About half of this total consisted of voters who skipped the first ranking (0.17%), with the remainder evenly split between voters who skipped the second ranking only and voters who skipped both the first and second rankings (0.09% each). It is possible voters misunderstood how to mark an RCV ballot correctly, or that voters believed they were voting strategically in favor of a preferred candidate by skipping rankings. In either case, the City should be prepared to address this issue as part of voter outreach and education plans in advance of the next regularly-scheduled municipal election in 2017.

A "repeat candidate" occurs when a voter chooses the same candidate at multiple rankings in the same race on the ballot. For example, in a single race, if a voter ranked a candidate as his or her first, second, and third choice (or any combination of multiple rankings), that would be a repeat candidate. Repeat candidate errors occurred on 3.28% of the races voted. This error occurred on 2.26% of races where there were three or more candidates, and on 6.84% of races in which there were two or fewer candidates in a race. This discrepancy perhaps indicates that some voters felt the need, and perhaps believed it was a requirement, to complete all three rankings on the ballot, despite clear instructions to the contrary—both printed on the ballot and issued orally by election judges in the polling place. Again, this highlights the need for voter education efforts to explain how to properly mark an RCV ballot.

Also noteworthy is the fact that repeat candidate errors were experienced at a much higher rate than either overvoting or skipped rankings. This reflects a common theme identified during voter outreach efforts, where many voters expressed the belief that "bullet voting" would help a preferred candidate to advance in a race where additional rounds of tabulation were required. "Bullet voting" is another term for the repeat candidate error; however, it generally refers to a ballot error in which a voter selects the same candidate in all rankings in a given race (e.g., first, second, and third choices). The City lacks further data which would determine if repeat

[8] This process was identical to the Minneapolis Method hand count developed to tabulate results in 2009.

[9] There were five races on each ballot, so each ballot is considered five instances to make an error or vote correctly. However, if a voter decided not to vote in a particular contest, that race was disregarded in this analysis.

candidate errors occur at a higher rate than the other two types of RCV-specific errors specifically because voters intentionally chose to repeat a candidate despite knowing this is not the correct way to mark an RCV ballot or if voters misunderstood this particular aspect of casting an RCV ballot. In reality, bullet voting weakens a voter's ballot and decreases his or her ability to affect the outcome in a particular race. Where bullet voting is encountered, the first-choice ranking for a preferred candidate is processed, and the repeat rankings for the same candidate are eliminated. Regardless of the reason behind the higher levels for repeat candidate errors, the City must be prepared to address this issue when designing future RCV ballots and developing voter education initiatives.

The following table summarizes the RCV-specific errors occurring in the 2013 Municipal Election.

SUMMARY OF RCV BALLOT ERRORS		
Type of Error	Type of Race	Percentage
Overvote	Single-seat	0.16%
Overvote	Multi-seat	0.25%
Overvote	All races	0.19%
Skipped Ranking	All races	0.35%
Repeat Candidate	1-2 candidates	6.84%
Repeat Candidate	3+ candidates	2.26%
Repeat Candidate	All races	3.28%

B. Choice Drop-off

Another issue which has received attention is the question of how many choices—that is, the total number of rankings—should be available to voters as part of the ballot. Because of limitations with the new voting system purchased in 2013, the decision was made to retain the minimum required number of rankings provided under the City's ordinance, which is three rankings per race. Additionally, due to vendor limitations, the City opted to retain a portrait-orientation for the ballot, which impacted the layout and design of the ballot while still complying with statutory requirements related to font size, spacing, and pagination. There were a total of 22 races on the ballot to elect a total of 25 municipal officers. Of that total, 9 races had two or fewer candidates (3 council/ward races and 6 park/district races). At the opposite end of the spectrum, the mayoral race had a total of 35 candidates. The City was able to keep all 22 races on the ballot to a single 17-inch page, front and back, for the 2013 Municipal Election. It was one of the longest municipal ballots produced in the City's history.

The 2013 election data show that few voters used more rankings than there were candidates in a specific race on the ballot. Voters could have done this by repeating a candidate (an RCV error) or by choosing a write-in candidate for one or more choices (not a voting error). The data show that the majority of voters chose to use all three ranking opportunities in only 6 of the 22 races — that is less than one-third of the total number of races on the ballot. Those races in which all three rankings were used by a majority of voters included: Mayor (35 candidates); City Council Ward Five (4 candidates); Ward Nine (6 candidates); Ward Twelve (5 candidates); Ward Thirteen (5 candidates); and Park Board At-Large (10 candidates). In all of the remaining 16 races, the majority of voters chose not to use all three rankings.

Of course, caution should be used in drawing conclusions based on the experiences of one election. Still, the data seem to suggest two general conclusions.

First, voters appear to understand how to use the ranking process and are much more likely to take advantage of ranking opportunities in races with a large number of candidates. Ballot position did not appear to negatively impact voters' decisions to take advantage of ranking opportunities. For example, the number of voters choosing all three rankings for the Park Board At-Large race (with 10 candidates and displayed as the fourth race on the ballot) was higher than all but one City Council race (all of which had six or fewer candidates and was displayed second on the ballot) and the Board of Estimate & Taxation race (which had four candidates and was listed third on the ballot, immediately before the Park Board At-Large race).

Second, the data suggest that providing three rankings may be sufficient for the majority of voters to express their preferences. In 16 of the 22 races on the ballot in 2013, a majority of voters chose to rank fewer than three candidates—opting not to take advantage of opportunities to rank additional candidates in those races. Furthermore, in the other six races, a substantial number of voters chose to rank fewer than three candidates. Further supporting this hypothesis is the fact that 42% (6,495 of 15,573) of the exhausted ballots in the mayoral race had fewer than three different candidates ranked. In the mayoral race, the number of exhausted ballots was 19.6% of the total vote. But if the ballots with unused choices are excluded the exhausted ballot rate would have been 11.4%. In essence, the data suggest that additional rankings were not of value to at least 8 out of 9 voters, despite 35 candidates to choose from in the 2013 mayoral race.

The chart below shows how frequently voters chose to use all three choices, two choices, or only one choice.

Summary of Choice Drop-off			
Race	3 Choices	2 Choices	1 Choice
Mayor (35 candidates)	76.3%	11.1%	12.6%
City Council w/ 1 candidate	2.3%	1.5%	96.1%
City Council w/ 2 candidates	3.9%	26.7%	69.4%
City Council w/ 3+ candidates	44.5%	22.1%	33.4%
Board of Estimate (4 candidates)	42.6%	29.2%	28.2%
Park At Large (10 candidates)	60.6%	15.0%	24.4%
Park District w/ 1 candidate	1.6%	1.0%	97.4%
Park District w/ 2 candidates	3.1%	36.9%	59.9%

Although allowed for under the ordinance, providing more than three choices has some significant drawbacks for both the voter and election administrators. Producing a ballot with more than three choices in each race could require additional ballot pages. We know from past experience that multiple-page ballots reduce voter participation in races on the second (and any succeeding) page, and leads to an increase in the number of abandoned ballots in the polling place. Finally, the decision to retain a three-choice ballot design was due to technical limitations within the new voting system software. Staff proposes the formation of a workgroup of elections administrators and key stakeholders to evaluate and make recommendations on improved ballot designs and options prior to the next regularly-scheduled municipal election.

IV. Precincts & Polling Places

A. Changes in 2013

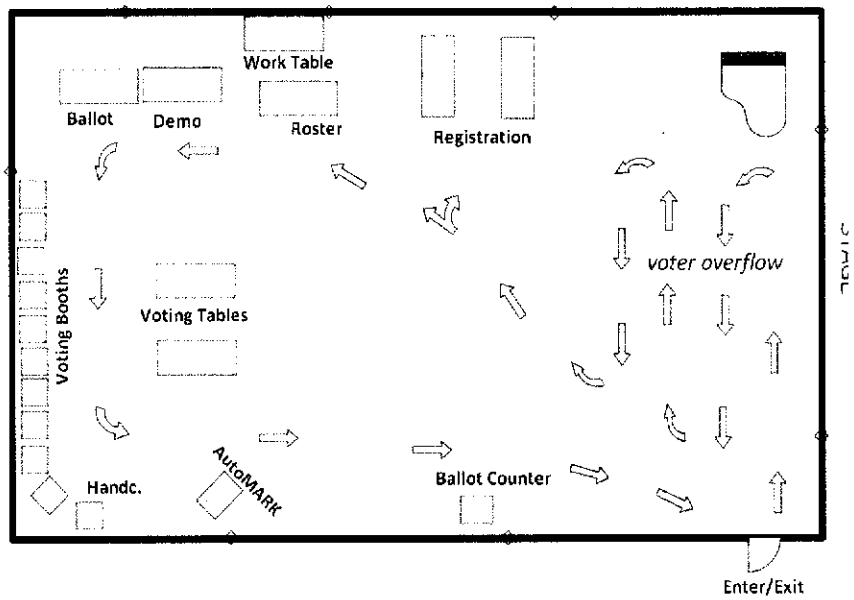
A handful of polling place locations were changed in 2013, largely in response to experiences in the 2012 Presidential General Election. Those changes are reflected in the following chart.

Ward-Precinct	Old Location	New Location
2-4	Coffman Union	Weisman Museum
2-9	Seward Towers East	Augsburg College Oren Gateway Bldg.
6-2	Seward Square Apartments	Seward Towers East
8-2	Painter Park	Lyndale Community School
8-5	Watershed High Charter School	St. Joan of Arc Church (also serves 8-4)
10-2	Ballentine VFW Post	Jefferson School (also serves 10-1)

B. Polling Place Assessments & Accessibility Issues

In response to a directive from City Council, the Elections & Voter Services Division convened a Polling Place Work Group to engage community stakeholders in a comprehensive assessment of the City's polling places and the development of a *Polling Place Assessment Guide*. This guide identified a number of desirable characteristics and specific recommendations to inform the selection of polling place locations, which complemented the legal mandates addressing overall accessibility. In advance of the 2013 election, staff used this guide to conduct on-site assessments of all 117 polling place locations to identify and address potential accessibility barriers or challenges and to identify potential new polling place locations, including the option of using one polling place to serve multiple precincts. As a result, polling places in a handful of precincts were changed prior to the 2013 election (*see above*). Additionally, staff prepared site-specific polling place layouts for all 117 locations.

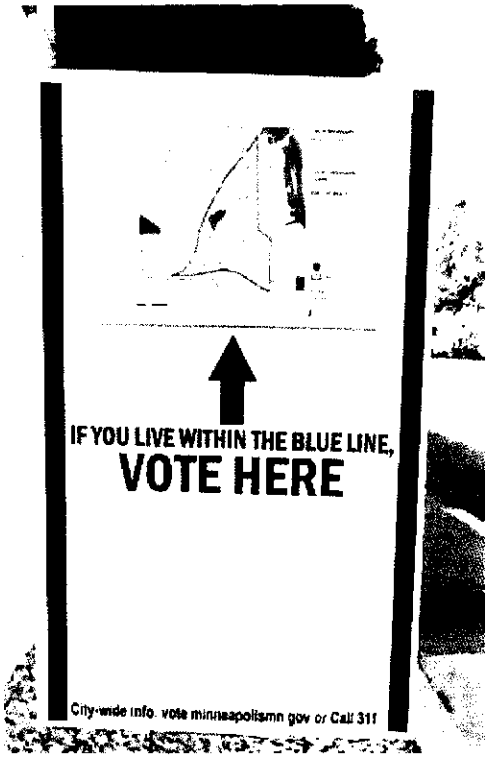
7-6 Westminster Church



An example of a site-specific polling place layout (Ward 7 – Precinct 6).

These customized layouts were intended to maximize the best use of space in each unique polling place. Staff is incorporating feedback from election judges in the layout designs to reflect their hands-on knowledge about specific sites. These site-specific layouts will streamline the organization and set-up of polling places in the early morning hours on Election Day and enable the teams of election judges to serve voters effectively and in a timely manner, while minimizing long lines and wait times, and allowing most voters to wait to vote inside the polling place rather that outdoors in possibly inclement weather.

The Elections Division expanded efforts to assist voters with Election Day parking. Partnering with the Public Works Department, hundreds of **VOTER PARKING ONLY** signs were deployed across the city at more than 40 polling locations, where parking had been identified as a critical issue following the 2012 Presidential Election. Existing signs were modified to serve this purpose in 2013. New black-on-yellow, election-specific signage has been purchased and will be used in 2014 and beyond, including both staked **VOTER PARKING** signs as well as meter hoods for both voter and election judge parking purposes (*shown right*).



Also new in 2013, Elections staff designed a series of signs to be used at polling places to better assist voters. In 40 precincts, large-scale signs were deployed with the tag **IF YOU LIVE WITHIN THE BLUE LINE, VOTE HERE** (*shown left*). These signs were placed in outdoor areas leading up to the polling place to help voters confirm that they were in the right precinct and polling place before getting in line and waiting to vote. An oversized map of the specific precinct clearly outlining the territory served by the polling place was attached to the sign. Within designated polling places, **START HERE** signs were also deployed to help manage voter flows and to direct voters toward the registration/roster area, especially in larger-sized polling places (e.g., gyms and auditoriums) where the queuing area may not be immediately visible or obvious. In precincts known to have larger voter populations with limited English proficiency, all directional and voter assistance signs were translated into the primary non-English language(s) spoken in that precinct (e.g., Spanish, Hmong, and/or Somali), as well as information about how to access translation assistance or language support. The Elections & Voter Services Division plans to supply all polling places with this signage for the 2014 Gubernatorial Election.

C. Precinct & Polling Place Recommendations for 2014

Minneapolis currently has 117 precincts, with a total of 28 sites serving more than 2,500 registered voters. The result is that several precincts are simply too large, and this contributes to long lines and wait times, especially in elections with high turnout, like the 2012 Presidential Election.

In 1990, Minneapolis had a total of 182 precincts with a median of 1,237 registered voters. In contrast, the current median is 2,088 registered voters. The overall downward trend in the number of precincts over the intervening years reflects cost-savings efforts aimed at preserving critical operating resources (staff, election judges, equipment and supplies, the warehouse, etc.) which are required to plan, organize, and conduct elections during the regular, four-year cycle of federal, state, and local elections. As part of the City's Fiscal Year 2012 Budget, the number of precincts was further reduced from 131 to 117. The City has reached a tipping point with respect to the number of its precincts. In light of strategic goals to grow the city and increase its population over the next several years, it is imperative that additional (new) precincts as well as changes in polling place locations be pursued.

Staff estimates that the "average polling place" costs approximately $7,400 per year to operate. This reflects ballot production and printing; expenses related to recruiting, training, and staffing the polling place with election judges; supplies and materials; additional voting booths and signage; maintenance, storage, programming, and transport of equipment and supplies to and from the warehouse; facility rental and ancillary facility-related costs; and costs for postage and a variety of mailings. This estimate does not include additional "start-up" costs for new ballot tabulators and AutoMARK equipment which would be required for each new precinct/polling place.

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 204B.14, changes in polling places must be completed no less than 90 days prior to an election. The Elections & Voter Services Division plans to submit recommendations on the potential for new precincts and/or changes in polling place locations for 2014 at a later date, following preparations for the 2014 Special Election for the Hennepin County Commissioner, District 3 seat.

V. Election Judges

A. Recruitment and Deployment

A successful Election Day cannot be accomplished without the citizens willing to staff the polls as election judges. Staffing needs are primarily based on the rubric of one election judge per 150 voters, in addition to the following variables:

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

Moreover, based on experiences from the 2012 election, the basic staffing model was changed to separate head and assistant head judges from the required number of team judges per precinct. [10] In the past, the head and assistant head judges were included in the base formula and were expected to perform team judge duties. The analysis of the 2012 election revealed that expecting these leadership positions to perform team judge duties compromised their ability to manage the polling place—which reduced service to voters, resulted in inefficiencies, contributed to long lines and wait times, and increased the potential for errors. By accounting for head and assistant head judges separate from the base number of team judges per precinct, the City was able to empower these leadership positions to focus exclusively on their management responsibilities: they were accessible at all times to team judges; they were able to supervise activities throughout the polling place; they were able to handle situations requiring more expertise; and they were able to focus on managing voter queuing lines and provide better voter service.

[10] The statutory minimum coverage is four judges per polling place. Minn. Stat. § 204B.22. Five is the practical minimum to allow for election judges to take breaks.

Taking into consideration the foregoing basic formula and variables, staffing for the 2013 Municipal Election was calculated based on a potential turnout of 60% of registered voters. Staff justified the use of that higher potential turnout for several reasons:

1. The 2013 election was the first in two decades to have an open seat in the mayoral race;
2. There were two charter amendments included on the ballot, both pertaining to the proposed Plain Language Charter Revision, and the Minneapolis Charter Commission had mounted a strong outreach and get-out-the-vote campaign in support of those questions;
3. It was only the City's second experience with RCV, with an increased number of competitive races compared to 2009;
4. Prior municipal elections had achieved higher-than-average turnouts, as seen in 1993 (47% turnout), which was also the last year in which no incumbent mayor was on the ballot, and 1997 (48%); and
5. In the aftermath of an historic 81% turnout in the 2012 Presidential Election, staff believed it was prudent to set the bar higher than in past municipal years in terms of expected voter participation.

Given all of these factors, and in planning for a 60% turnout, staff calculated that 1,137 team election judges would be required in addition to 234 head and assistant head judges to properly staff the City's 117 polling places. That equated to a total of 1,371 election judges.[11]

The table below summarizes polling place staffing levels according to the number of pre-registered voters as of February 4, 2013.

Staffing Needs Based on Projected Voter Turnout				
60% Registered Voters (2/4/13)	No. of Precincts	Team EJs (FTE = 16 hours)	Head & Asst. Head Judges	Total Staffing
<625	11	5	2	7
626-775	13	6-7	2	8-9
776-900	13	8	2	10
901-1,025	16	9	2	11
1,026-1,150	16	10	2	12
1,151-1,275	13	11	2	13
1,276-1,400	22	12	2	14
>1,400	13	13-16	2	15-18

B. Language Support & Translation

One in five Minneapolis residents speaks a language other than English at home.[12] Consequently, in addition to assuring a sufficient numbers of team election judges, there is an increasing need for the City to recruit, train,

[11] Figures refer to full time equivalents

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

and deploy workers to provide language support for voters at the polls. In the past, the City relied primarily on the services of Minneapolis 311 to assist voters with translation needs. And while that practice continues and meets needs in many instances, relying solely upon that agency for translation support can be a time-consuming and frustrating task because over-the-phone interpretation requires both the election judge and the voter to interact with the off-site interpreter in an alternating pattern. Efforts to engage bilingual election judges over the past few years have had varying levels of success, and have primarily been hampered by a lack of permanent resources to identify, recruit, and train potential translators to serve as election judges.

Recognizing these challenges, and with full support from the City Council, the Elections & Voter Services Division identified precincts where at least 15% (or more) of the registered voting population speaks one (or more) of the top three foreign languages that are spoken in Minneapolis; specifically, Hmong, Spanish, and Somali. Those identified precincts were targeted to receive additional language support in the form of 588 bilingual election judges during the 2013 Municipal Election. These bilingual election judges provided on-site interpretation and translation services, in addition to regular team election judge duties. In addition, 24 qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters were deployed in those precincts with a demonstrated need for such support. Additional translation support was provided by 35 bilingual student election judges.

All judges providing language support and translation assistance in the polls were identified with special nametags that included the judge's name and the second language that he or she spoke. In total, 647 bilingual election judges served in the 2013 election, as reflected in the following chart.

Language Skills Among Elections Judges		
Language	Regular EJs	Student EJs
American Sign Language	24	0
Hmong	58	11
Oromo	18	0
Somali	172	17
Spanish	340	7

In addition to on-site personnel, the Elections & Voter Services Division, working in conjunction with the Neighborhood & Community Relations Department, assured that key signage and other election-related materials in polling places were available in English, Hmong, Spanish, and Somali.

An ongoing initiative to increase polling place language support includes the **ADOPT-A-POLLING PLACE** program, which ran as a successful pilot in the 2013 election. The Adopt-A-Polling Place program is an election judge recruitment strategy in which a local organization or business "adopts" a specific precinct by finding volunteers to staff a particular voting location on Election Day. Their recruits then donate their pay back to the organization. The Minneapolis Adopt-a-Polling Place program gives local, community-based organizations and businesses the opportunity to be civically active, engage the community, and enrich Minneapolis voters' experience at the polls, while helping Minneapolis achieve recruitment targets for election judges. The Adopt-a-Polling Place program is a unique, donation-based fundraising opportunity and an occasion to build a lasting relationship with a specific community in Minneapolis. Participants benefit from a hands-on, interactive experience and real-life exposure to the electoral process.

C. Student Election Judges

The 2013 Student Election Judge Program was a highly successful endeavor that engaged 162 students from seven local schools. In addition to regular election judge duties, a large number of students provided language support and translation assistance in the polling place (*see above*). Last year, the following improvements to the program were instituted, designed to enhance the quality and commitment of participating students:

- Recruitment re-focused on students seeking community service credit. Paid service was still available, but was de-emphasized in recruitment and training strategies. This increased the percentage of students serving who were actively engaged and saw the opportunity to be an election judge as more than just a paycheck.
- Student shifts were changed to match those of regular election judges (6 a.m. – 2 p.m. or 2 – 8 p.m.), creating more continuity in the polling place. Previously, all student election judges started at 8 a.m. Having all election judges begin at the same time assured a smoother start on Election Day. Students who wished to remain after the polls closed were allowed to do so, but were not allowed to work past 10 p.m.
- Students with desired second-language skills were given priority placement in scheduling to better support those identified precincts where language support was critical.

In 2014, student election judges will be invited to work in both the primary and the general election. This will help the City secure a sufficient number of election judges for both events, and also provide more continuity and an experienced workforce for the primary as well as the general election. Student election judges will also receive equal opportunities to perform all functions allowed by law as other team judges. This provides student election judges with on-the-job training and experience, builds self confidence in performance, and respects the contributions and capability of all election judges.

D. Election Judge Training

In order to further develop the leadership skills of the City's cadre of head and assistant head election judges and precinct support judges, the Elections & Voter Services Division created a specific manual and training class in 2013. Previously, separate training classes were provided to team election judges, to head and assistant head judges, and to precinct support judges. Beginning in 2013, head and assistant head judges and precinct support judges were all required to attend the same basic team judge training class.[13] In addition, these individuals—who serve in critical leadership positions—were also required to attend a new class focused on leadership, polling place management, and team supervision. A new *Head & Assistant Head Election Judge Manual* was prepared that included information, tips and tools, and supplemental resources specifically for head and assistant head election judges, such as step-by-step instructions, voter flow and line management techniques, and guidelines for monitoring and mentoring team election judges.

In preparation for the regularly-scheduled 2014 Gubernatorial Election, the Elections & Voter Services Division intends to include all student election judges in the basic judge training class. This further supports the goal of building a unified corps of election judges, rather than treating student judges differently. Previously student judges attended a separate, abbreviated training session. Including student election judges in regular training classes alongside other judges will allow for informal interaction, cross-training, and team-building opportunities that will be beneficial for the entire Election Day team.

Building on the success of the new *Head & Assistant Head Election Judge Manual*, the Elections & Voter Services Division intends to create a customized manual for team election judges in 2014. This new manual will consolidate many informational resources into a single binder addressing topics such as polling place

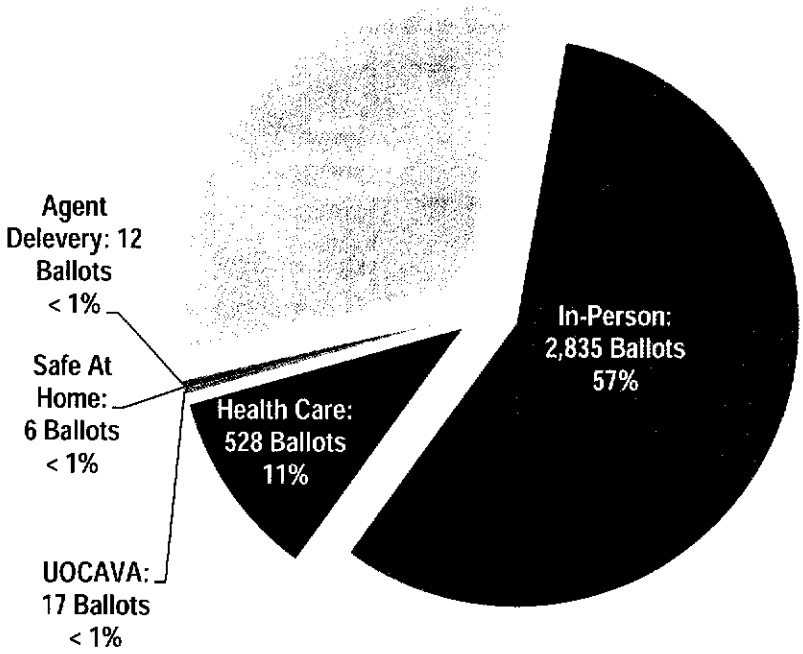
[13] Minn. Stat. § 204B.25 and Minn. Rule 8240.1350

organization and set-up, core responsibilities during voting hours, vouching, curbside voting, and emergency situations, as well as various policies and procedures which team judges may need to reference quickly during the hectic hours that so often characterize Election Day.

VI. ABSENTEE VOTING

A. Overview of 2103

The period for absentee voting begins 46 days before Election Day. In 2013, absentee voting began September 20 and continued through November 4. During that period, a total of 4,954 absentee ballots were accepted—setting a new record for the number of absentee ballots in a municipal election. The following chart provides a breakdown of the total number of absentee ballots among the different types of absentee balloting.



Type	Number
In-person	2,835
Mail	1,556
Health Care[14]	528
UOCAVA[15]	17
Agent Delivery	12
Safe At Home[16]	6

On the first day of in-person absentee voting (September 20), more than 100 voters arrived at City Hall to cast absentee ballots. The Elections Division responded to assure all in-person absentee voters were treated to a pleasant, fair, and efficient process, using the rotunda space in conjunction with the existing office (Room 1B) as an on-site polling place. Due to the unanticipated high in-person turnout during the absentee voting period, additional resources had to be recruited and trained to serve these voters. Working with partners in the Information Technology and Finance & Property Services departments and the Municipal Building Commission,

[14] Residents of certain health care facilities are visited by specially trained election judges to do absentee voting in their residence (Minn. Stat. § 203B.11)

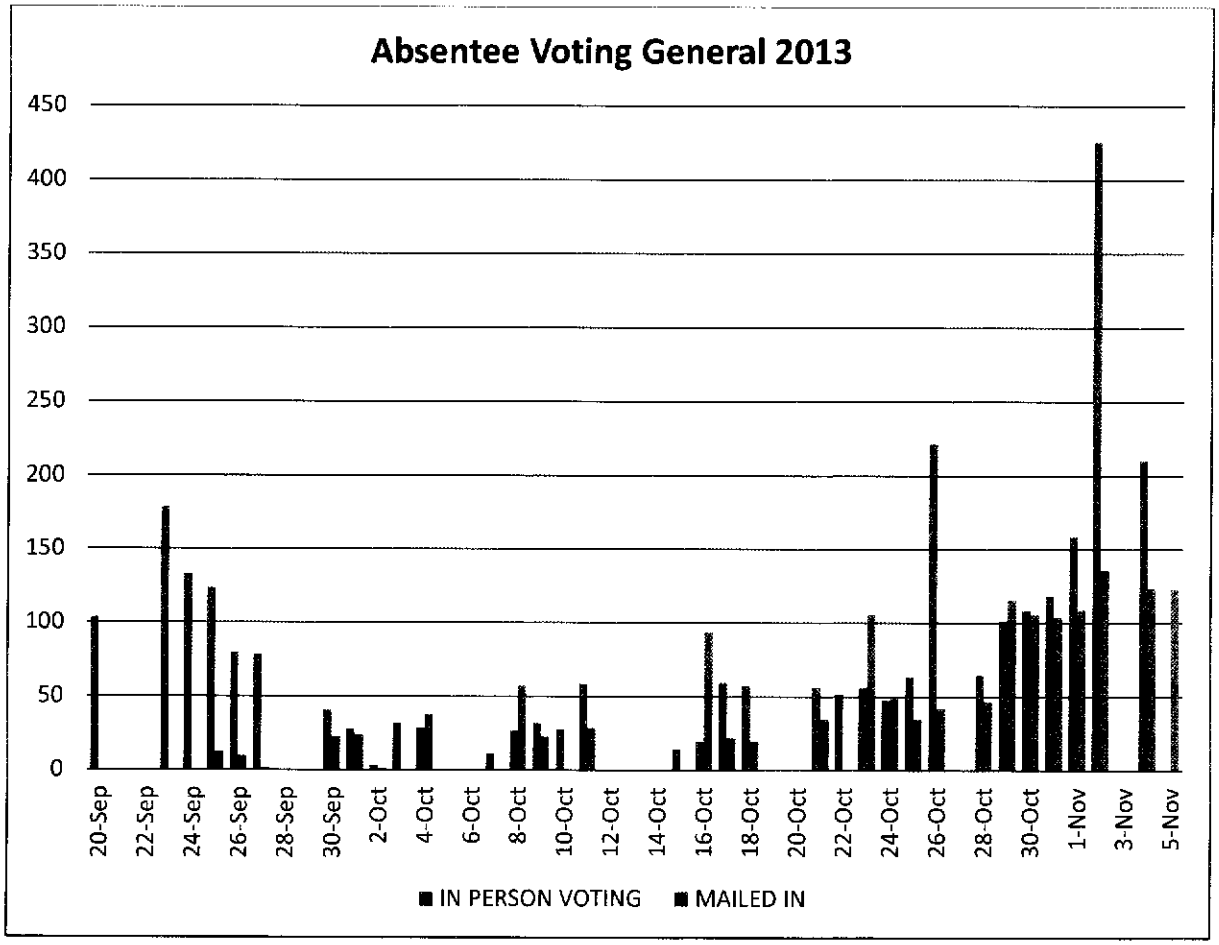
[15] Overseas voters

[16] Safe At Home voters vote by an anonymous absentee process through the Office of the Secretary of State which keeps their voting history out of the public record.

the Elections & Voters Services Division staged a full-scale polling place at City Hall to better serve in-person absentee voters throughout the advance voting period.

Election staff also engaged with community liaisons to plan and coordinate the timing of group arrivals during the in-person absentee voting period. This allowed staff adequate time to assure sufficient resources (including election judges) were available to serve large groups of in-person voters. Frequently, the existing personnel resources were enhanced by "borrowing" employees from other departments to act as interpreters. A Somali-speaking seasonal employee was also recruited to ensure language support was available. Finally, working with community liaisons provided an opportunity for the Elections team to educate those organizing get-out-the-vote campaigns about voter assistance and permissible activities under Minnesota election law, which assured the voter independence and fairness of the election.

During the first full week of absentee balloting, 75-175 in-person voters were served each day. The volume of in-person absentee voters dropped after that first week, but picked back up in the final days prior to Election Day, with more than 100 voters in 7 of the last 8 days of the in-person absentee voting period. More than 400 in-person absentee voters were served on Saturday, November 2, 2013, which was significantly higher than the total volume of in-person absentee voters served on the corresponding day in the 2012 Presidential Election. The following chart provides a breakdown of the volume of in-person absentee voters served each day during the advance voting period.



B. Absentee Balloting Initiatives in 2014

❖ "NO EXCUSE" ABSENTEE BALLOTING

In 2014, "no excuse" absentee balloting will become effective.[17] Previously, a voter had to identify one of five statutory reasons to justify his or her eligibility to cast an absentee ballot. In 2013, the State Legislature authorized the use of "no excuse" absentee balloting which eliminates the requirement for a voter to select one of the five statutory reasons; instead, beginning with the August 2013 Primary, any eligible voter may choose to vote absentee for any reason—and need not specify that reason to election administrators. While this is an important benefit to voters, it is anticipated to result in an increase in the overall number of absentee ballots that must be received, processed, and included in final election results. The Minneapolis Elections & Voter Services Division is planning for up to a 40% increase in the volume of absentee ballots for 2014. This will also have a significant budgetary impact on the City since absentee voting depends on three things: people, paper, and postage.

Absentee balloting is a paper-intensive process. Absentee ballots (specific to a voter's ward and precinct), ballot instructions, and a series of envelopes must be gathered in response to each absentee ballot request. These materials must be mailed to the voter and includes a postage-paid, return envelope. Absentee ballots returned to the City must be processed by the Absentee Ballot Board, which is charged with:

1. Verifying the accuracy and completeness of the data provided by the voter, or accepting the ballot.
2. Updating the State Voter Registration System (SVRS) to acknowledge receipt of the voted ballot.
3. Opening the series of enclosed envelopes.
4. Preparing the ballot for tabulation (unfolding, flattening, and duplicating as needed)
5. Securing voted ballots to ensure accuracy and chain of custody in the delivery of the voted ballots to the county for tabulation.

Of course, ballots, papers, envelopes, postage, and workers all cost money.

Elections staff are working with the Hennepin County elections team to ensure the central count of absentee ballots goes smoothly. In Minnesota, counties are responsible for tabulating absentee ballots. This requires close coordination with cities, since cities accept and process absentee ballots and must submit all absentee ballots to the county-administered central count center where they run through a high-speed ballot counter. Hennepin County and its cities are partnering to improve the efficiency of this centralized process with the goal of handling the expected higher volume of absentee ballots in 2014 with no delays in releasing results on Election Night. Fortunately, the State Legislature authorized local jurisdictions to begin processing absentee ballots earlier in the process. Previously, cities and counties could not begin to process absentee ballots until 3 days before the election. With the passage of "no excuse" absentee balloting, that timeframe was increased to 7 days prior to the election. This additional time should alleviate some bottlenecks in the process of tabulating thousands of absentee ballots.

❖ ELECTION DAY RUNNERS

In 2014, the Elections & Voter Services Division plans to use "runners" to update polling place rosters on Election Day. These rosters—which are produced by the Secretary of State's office and sent to polling places the day before Election Day—must be manually updated to reflect voters who have cast an absentee ballot after the rosters have been printed and, therefore, are ineligible to cast a ballot at the polls. It is an arduous task,

[17] Minn. Stat. § 203B

made more difficult by the fact that state law requires election administrators to accept absentee ballots as late as 3 p.m. on Election Day.[18] In the past, phone calls were made from election headquarters to the head judge in each polling place to update and confirm these details; however, that took valuable time and created delays in serving voters in the polls.

In 2013, the Elections Division experimented with using runners to physically go to each polling place with an updated list of absentee voters to update rosters. Feedback from election judges showed a strong preference to continue this new practice as it was less disruptive to the polls, saved time, reduced mistakes, and did not interfere with service to voters. Beginning in 2014, this practice will be standardized and a team of runners will be recruited specifically to handle roster updates. It is expected that this will help address administrative challenges posed by the increased in expected absentee voters.

VII. VOTER OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

A. Plan Development

The Voter Outreach & Education Plan was a key component of the preparations for and conduct of the 2013 Municipal Election. With little in the way of existing outreach and education resources, the team had to create the entire campaign from scratch. To begin, staff reviewed plans and preparations for the first RCV election in 2009, when an outside contractor was hired to handle all outreach and education. Staff also conferred with members of the City's 2010 Census Complete Count Committee to learn more about its outreach work, researched best practices in election engagement work across the country, and sought to build strong internal partnerships with other City departments. The primary goal was to assure all voters were "election ready," which focused message development on three key elements:

1. *FOCUS*: The basics of the 2013 Municipal Election.
   CORE MESSAGE(S): The 2013 Municipal Election is November 5. Polls will be open to serve voters from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Verify your polling place location (there are 117 locations, and some have changed). Build awareness about ballot content, including specific races and questions.

2. *FOCUS*: How to vote in an RCV election.
   CORE MESSAGE(S): Verify registration status, and register in advance if possible. If necessary, register on Election Day (with details on how to do so). Instructions on properly marking an RCV ballot reflecting voter preferences.

3. *FOCUS*: Voting in the municipal election matters.
   CORE MESSAGE: Every vote counts—both on Election Day as well as for the next four years, and will affect the governance and direction of the community and the quality of life enjoyed by residents of the City of Minneapolis.

The 2013 Class of Urban Scholars contributed to the success of the Voter Outreach & Education Plan. The entire class participated in a group project which aimed at developing various components of the full plan, including targeted campaigns focused on specific populations: college students, immigrant and new American communities, and youth. Several of the recommendations developed by the Urban Scholars were implemented in 2013, and plans are in place to deploy additional strategies in future years.

[18] If the voter had been found to have voted in person, their absentee ballot would be rejected.

B. Internal Partnerships

The Elections team partnered with colleagues in the Communications, Neighborhood & Community Relations, Information Technology, 311, and other departments to ensure it was possible to make a significant and meaningful impact in this first formal foray into voter outreach and education.

In collaboration with the Communications Department, a comprehensive communications plan was designed as part of the Voter Outreach & Education Plan, including a new "brand" for the municipal election:

YOUR CITY. YOUR VOTE.

MINNEAPOLIS
YourCity.
YourVote.
NOVEMBER 5

As part of this plan, the Communications Department provided expertise in the design and creation of a variety of educational materials in a variety of media and formats, helped identify multiple channels for distributing key messaging, and facilitated media contacts.

Working with the Neighborhood & Community Relations Department supported voter outreach and education work in two main facets. First, NCR facilitated the translation of educational materials. Then, Elections staff worked with both Access & Outreach and Neighborhood Support divisions within NCR to gain insight, develop strategies, and access networks of contacts through these partners.

Other significant internal partners included Minneapolis 311 and Information Technology. 311 is a long-time partner to the Elections & Voter Services Division. In 2013, 311 added an elections component to its successful mobile application helping provide voters with timely access to election information and support. The IT Department provided instrumental support in the development and maintenance of the new election website. All of these internal partners played a crucial role in the successful deployment of voter outreach in 2013. Just as importantly, Elections staff gained additional insight into capacity throughout the organization that will enable increasingly effective internal collaboration going forward.

C. Outreach Strategies

Building on the City's core education messages, specific strategies were developed to maximize outreach to as many potential voters as possible. This work was primarily carried out by Elections staff and an Urban Scholar assigned full-time to the Elections & Voter Services Division. Additionally, in partnership with the University of Minnesota's Service Learning program, two U of M students participated in a fall internship focusing on outreach with university students. The Elections team also collaborated with FairVote Minnesota on outreach and education efforts to ensure consistent messaging.

❖ **WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

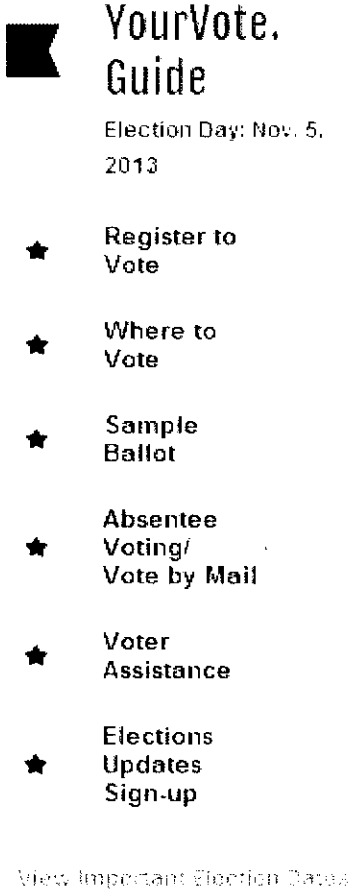
NEW ELECTION WEBSITE: A new election website was designed to provide a single portal to accurate, up-to-date information about the current election. As the site was developed, content was focused on the 2013 Municipal Election and, for ease of navigation by users, was centered around key "audiences," including voters, candidates, election judges, volunteers, and students. There was also a prominent section featuring information

vote.minneapolismn.gov

about the Ranked Choice Voting process, featuring both a dynamic video explaining how RCV works and an interactive ballot allowing voters to practice ranking three candidates in a sample race, and then demonstrating how those rankings are tallied.

Other key components and areas of content accessible through the website included (but were not limited to):

1. **YOUR VOTE.GUIDE** toolkit of quick links (*pictured at right*) to key content areas found on each page of the website;
2. Precinct-specific sample ballots voters could use to determine first, second, and third choices in each race and use for reference in the polls on Election Day;
3. Basic voting instructions, fact sheets, an interactive practice ballot, and a multitude of instructional videos, brochures, and fliers demonstrating RCV ranking and tabulation processes;
4. PDF copies of each candidate's affidavit of candidacy, which provided the candidate's name, party affiliation or political principle, and campaign contact details;
5. Tools to look-up or confirm assigned polling places, pre-register or verify registration status, and request and track the status of absentee ballots;
6. An all-inclusive calendar of non-partisan, election-related community events, including information about ambassador and election judge trainings; and
7. Voter resource information, including rideshare information for those who needed assistance getting to the polls, details about curbside voting options, proper vouching procedures, and information about rights for all voters under Minnesota election law.



This site has been updated for the 2014 Gubernatorial Election, and will be updated annually, so that is can continue to serve as an invaluable resource for both the most up-to-date election information and important historical information.

SOCIAL MEDIA: In addition to the new website, the Elections & Voter Services Division launched an aggressive campaign in 2013 using social media outlets to capitalize on additional outreach avenues. In addition to working with Communications staff to utilize the City's primary social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter to share key election information, the Elections and Voter Services Division developed its own distinct Facebook and Twitter identities. These social media sites helped inform the electorate in a timely, user-friendly, efficient manner. Staff also used these social media sites on Election Day and through Election Night on November 5 as well as the following days during tabulation in order to provide instant updates and access to results data.

Twitter – **www.twitter.com/votempls**

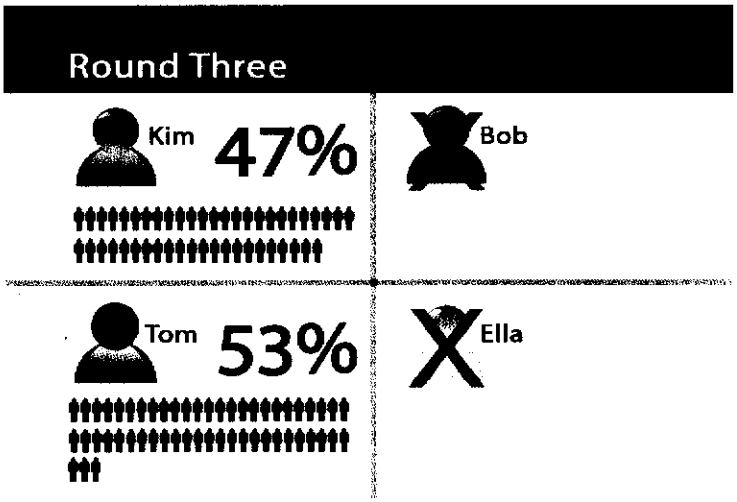
Facebook – **www.facebook.com/votempls**

INTERNET CHAT: As part of the communications plan, over the lunch hour on Thursday, October 31, the Communications Department helped deploy the City's first ever election-focused web chat session. Voters had an opportunity to log on and ask questions of Elections staffers and gain immediate responses. Although a

relatively small number of people participated in the chat session, it was another exciting foray into different options for interaction and information exchange with residents.

❖ **RESOURCES: VIDEOS, HANDOUTS, AND VOTER GUIDE**

VIDEOS: The Communications Department produced an excellent video that publicized the 2013 Municipal Election, reflecting several key messages and highlighting the new election website for additional details. Moreover, in less than 2 minutes, the video (*screenshot at right*) gave a clear, easy-to-understand graphic synopsis of how Ranked-Choice Voting works by following the results of a mock election involving Kim, Bob, Tom, and Ella. With assistance from the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department, this video was also translated and produced in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali. In addition to prominent placement on the election website, DVD copies of this video were distributed widely to community groups and organizations.



Screen shot of the Ranked-Choice Voting Video that was produced by the Minneapolis Communications Department.

An additional video was produced by several members of the 2013 Urban Scholar class demonstrating what voters can expect at the polling place. This video was also placed on the election website, and both videos were shared through the City's YouTube channel, on social media, and via broadcast on Channel 79.

HANDOUTS: Printed materials were a key tool for voter education. The core handout developed was a one-page flier outlining how RCV works. This document was translated into Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Oromo, Vietnamese, and Lao, while most other materials were translated into Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. With assistance from FairVote Minnesota, a double-sided half sheet flier was also developed as an additional option for ease of handing out in a variety of settings. This flier featured content about how to vote using RCV on the front side, and a brief explanation of how RCV ballots are counted on the back side. Other handouts developed included an RCV FAQ, a Roadmap to Voting explaining the three steps to getting ready to vote, a double-sided 11x17 inch polling place list and map, a one-page handout explaining how to complete an RCV ballot that was also distributed at polling places, and a more in-depth flier explaining how a Ranked-Choice Voting election is counted. In addition to placing all materials produced on the election website for download, color copies of materials were also available and provided to organizations and groups wishing to distribute or share them.

VOTER INFORMATION GUIDE MAILING: The Elections & Voter Services Division sent a mailer to every Minneapolis household. The mailer included three 11 x 17 inch double sided sheets: a Voter Information Guide, a map of all polling places, and a sample ballot specific to the home's assigned precinct. The Voter Information Guide described the offices and questions on the ballot, provided details on how to register to vote—both in advance or on Election Day, explained how Ranked-Choice Voting works, provided information about absentee voting, and included details about voter assistance and other resources. The inclusion of the site-specific sample ballot ensured that all potential voters had the opportunity to preview their ballot before Election Day. The Elections & Voter Services Division received significant positive feedback on the Voter Information Guide, which was identified in surveys as the single most effective outreach tool in 2013. In fact, the post-election survey commissioned by the City of Minneapolis found that nearly two-thirds of all residents—consistent among those

residents who did and did not vote—indicated the guide was the primary source of how they learned about RCV.

❖ MINNEAPOLIS VOTER AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

At the heart of the 2013 Voter Outreach & Education Plan was the Voter Ambassador Program, a grassroots initiative to engage community-based leaders in the work of publicizing the 2013 Municipal Election and ensuring all voters were "election ready." The genesis for this program is the recognition that community-based leaders have a significant impact in their civic circles and can, through person-to-person contacts, maximize the City's capacity to reach likely and potential voters. Using a train-the-trainer approach, ambassadors were given a basic education in election law as well as the procedures unique to Ranked-Choice Voting and supplied with polling place location maps; a variety of handouts, instructions, and other resources; demonstration and sample ballots; videos; and RCV-specific guides addressing frequently asked questions and common concerns. All materials were translated in multiple languages to facilitate effective outreach to all voters.[19]

Thirty-six individual ambassadors were part of this inaugural effort. A total of eight trainings were held in locations throughout the city, at afternoon, evening, and Saturday times. Candidates were also invited to have their campaign staff participate in these trainings, an offer taken up by a handful of campaigns. In addition, several community organizations allowed Elections staff to provide training and materials to their members and staff to then share with others, including the Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council, Project for Pride in Living, and the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation. Moving forward, the intent is to strengthen and enhance the capacity of the ambassador program by both refining the strategies used to build the base of community-based leaders who are involved as individual ambassadors and increasing the number of organizations that are engaged through a train-the-trainer model.

❖ DIRECT CONTACT OPPORTUNITIES

Creating opportunities for face-to-face contact with voters was a key strategy of voter outreach and education work in 2013. Elections staff sought to strategically identify opportunities with the potential to reach a range of residents throughout the city and allocated internal resources to those opportunities where possible. In addition, both Ambassador program volunteers and the partnership with FairVote Minnesota were utilized to further extend that reach.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT: In 2013, National Night Out occurred on Tuesday, August 6. Working with CCP/Safe staff, Elections staff provided RCV informational fliers to all registered block parties. Spreading the word about the upcoming municipal election and its use of RCV was one of the key information points the Communications Department highlighted to encourage all event organizers to share. FairVote Minnesota also had a number of volunteers out at events to talk to residents about RCV and to distribute fliers supplied by Elections and Voter Services.

EDUCATION SESSIONS: Elections staff conducted a number of information sessions with a variety of groups and organizations. Staff went where connections could be established and there was an interest in holding sessions. Two particular areas of focus in developing connections included organizations serving senior citizens and connecting with churches and faith communities. Working with the Senior Community Specialist in the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department, staff was able to make contact with a number of senior-focused organizations, and presented educational sessions at senior centers, senior living facilities, and through Community Education groups. The results of the post-election survey conducted on behalf of the City of

[19] With assistance from the City's Neighborhood & Community Relations Department, most voter education materials were provided in English, Hmong, Spanish, and Somali. Select materials were also translated into Lao, Oromo, Russian, and Vietnamese. Materials were available in printed form and also posted electronically for public access (or download) via the election website at: http://vote.minneapolismn.gov/voters/language-support.

Minneapolis show older residents who voted indicated a lower level of understanding of how Ranked Choice Voting functions than other age groups, and among non-voters, were more likely to indicate a belief that the Ranked Choice Voting system is difficult. These findings point to the need to continue to target voter education efforts around RCV to seniors. Churches and faith communities were another area of focus in developing contacts for conducting education sessions in order to reach more otherwise hard to reach residents. A connection was established with a formal group of African American ministers in Minneapolis, and staff was able to make two separate presentations to that group as a whole. Handouts and information were provided to the ministers for them to share within their congregations, and staff also conducted education sessions at individual churches as requested.

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND FESTIVALS: Creating a presence at community events to raise awareness about the 2013 election was very much a collaborative endeavor. Elections staff lacked the capacity to directly participate in more than a handful of such events, and thus worked closely with both volunteer Ambassadors and FairVote Minnesota. In many cases, a presence at events and festivals was accomplished through tabling and the distribution of printed materials, which the Elections and Voter Services division supplied to Ambassadors and FairVote volunteers at events they participated in. Where possible, tabling was accompanied by other measures for engaging visitors. For instance, at the Minneapolis Urban League's Family Day event on August 31, announcements from the live entertainment stage were made throughout the day to let people know there was a table at the event with more information about the upcoming election and an opportunity to register to vote.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS: By working closely with both the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department and FairVote Minnesota, every neighborhood association was contacted about the opportunity to have a speaker from either the City or FairVote share information about the election and RCV at a meeting. Elections staff also prepared articles suitable for sharing on neighborhood group websites or in newsletters.

NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY: September 23, 2013, was the second annual National Voter Registration Day sponsored by Nonprofit VOTE. Information about this day was included on the election website, including details about how to conduct a voter registration drive on this or any other day for interested groups. The Elections and Voter Services Division also partnered with Hennepin County Elections to staff a voter registration table on the skyway level of the Government Center to conduct our own registration drive on that day.

❖ YOUTH INITIATIVES

In developing the Voter Outreach and Education Plan, Elections staff sought to include provisions focused on young people. This was done in recognition of two facts: first, that children are an excellent conduit of information to the adults in their lives, and second, that voting and political participation are patterned behaviors that have the greatest opportunity to become engrained when started early.

To reach out to elementary school students, Elections staff utilized the Vote Minneapolis Activity Book developed as part of the Urban Scholar group project. Copies were distributed to the 13 Hennepin County libraries open in Minneapolis in the fall of 2013 for library patrons to pick up. Elections staff also worked with five MPS elementary schools to provide these activity books to students. These schools were Andersen United Community School in Phillips, Lyndale Community School in the Lyndale neighborhood, and Elizabeth Hall International, Pierre Bottineau French Immersion, and Hmong International Academy all in north Minneapolis.

Elections staff was able to visit three high schools in the city to talk about the municipal elections and how Ranked Choice Voting works. At South High School, staff visited all junior and senior level social studies classrooms, sharing the RCV video, and spending about 15 minutes talking about the upcoming election. At

both Washburn High School and the Blake School, staff spent a full class period with all senior-level government classes explaining RCV and talking more in depth about the role of municipal government and elections. In every classroom visit, information was shared about how students could get involved in the election by sharing information about the election with others, registering to vote if they would be eligible, and serving as student election judges. Elections staff also communicated with the contractor working with Kids Voting Minneapolis in 2013 who was doing similar outreach work in high schools. That individual was able to visit classrooms at Henry and Roosevelt High Schools, and shared coordinated information about the opportunities for students to become involved with elections.

In ongoing voter outreach and education work, youth should continue to be an area of focus for the same reasons this aspect of work was included in the 2013 plan. The post-election survey showed non-voters in the 2013 election were significantly younger on average than voters, indicating a strong need to continue to engage young people around the importance of voting. Particularly in terms of municipal elections, voter outreach and education work needs to also include building awareness around the role of municipal government and the importance of voting for all residents. The Office of the City Clerk, encompassing both the Elections and Voter Services Division and legislative support to the City Council, is in an ideal role to work with high school classes and in other settings to help convey this information.

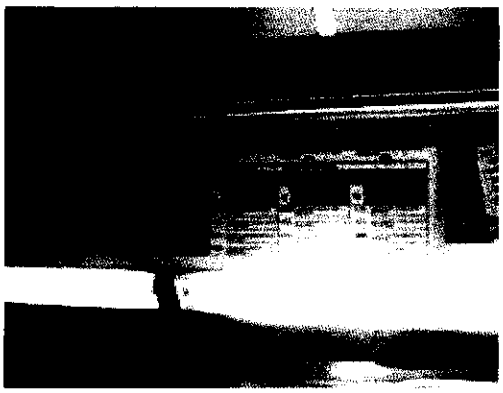
❖ COLLEGE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

During fall 2013, two interns from the University of Minnesota joined the Elections staff in voter outreach work. Their main focus was to recruit University students utilizing the Voter Ambassador program and to expand the program at the University of Minnesota.

They were able to reach out to many organizations using a student organization database created with Elections staff. In addition, the interns reached out within their own networks to promote and share information about the municipal election and RCV. They were able to assist students who lived on campus to register to vote with the University address and directed students to the Vote Minneapolis website to find further information. Utilizing the many skills and talents of these interns allowed for tailoring the Voter Ambassador program to fit the needs of student organizations at the University of Minnesota while maintaining the goals of the Election division. They were able to creatively present current and local issues to University students and also demonstrated the importance of voting in local elections.

During their internship, these students created original content relevant to university students and also created content focused on individuals who did not have a permanent residence or address. The content that was created during their internship has enriched the Voter Ambassador program by giving the Elections division a useful tool for attracting and targeting university students for future elections.

❖ ADVERTISING



Voter outreach and education efforts included three especially notable no or very low cost advertising opportunities in the weeks leading up to the election. First, bus cards (*pictured at left*) were designed and produced to be placed in the interior of Metro Transit routes running through Minneapolis. Approximately 50 cards were placed by Metro Transit without cost beyond the production of the physical materials. Second, available space on Clear Channel digital billboards was donated to display election-related messaging. Finally, the Communications Department put together a 30-second public service announcement about the election and RCV which was aired during donated broadcast time on

Comcast.

❖ CANDIDATE & PUBLIC INFORMATION FORUMS

New in 2013, the Elections & Voter Services Division conducted a total of three informational forums: two specifically geared toward candidates and campaign representatives (August 14 and September 25, both at City Hall), and one for the community at-large, including candidates and campaign representatives, the news media, and the general public (October 29, at Central Library). At the first forum, staff provided information about required candidate filings and disclosures, City resources, an overview of Ranked-Choice Voting, and responded to candidate/campaign questions. At the second forum, staff demonstrated the RCV tabulation process and responded to candidate/campaign questions. At the public forum on October 29, staff provided an overview of Ranked-Choice Voting and again demonstrated the RCV tabulation process, reviewed various voter resources provided by the City, and outlined what candidates, voters, and the news media could expect on Election Day and the following days as tabulations were completed.

VIII. POST-ELECTION SURVEY

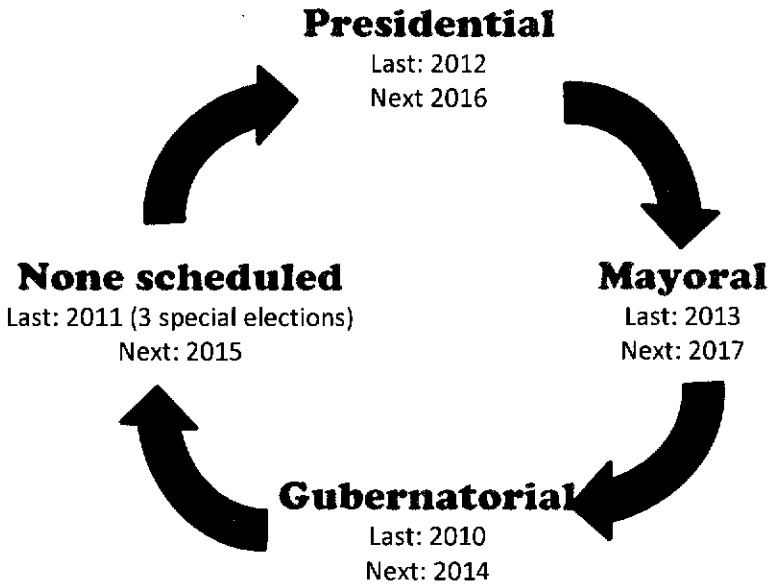
A robust post-election survey was conducted of voters, non-voters, election judges, and candidates in the 2013 municipal election. The objective was to mirror to the degree possible the post-election survey conducted in 2009, in order to provide an apples-to-apples comparison of the experiences of stakeholders in the first two municipal elections using Ranked-Choice Voting.

The 2009 survey was conducted by The SCSU Survey, a survey research center of St. Cloud State University. Elections staff contacted SCSU about conducting the 2013 survey; however, SCSU lacked the necessary resources to conduct the survey in 2013. Other potential vendors were identified, and the Elections & Voter Services Division contracted with The Morris Leatherman Company, a Minneapolis-based, full-service market and research firm, to conduct the 2013 survey, replicating the 2009 survey to the greatest extent possible.

The report presented by The Morris Leatherman Company is included in this report as Exhibit A. The report includes summary results of: the telephone survey conducted of 800 residents who voted in the 2013 election and 500 residents who did not vote, the written surveys completed by election judges who served in polling places on Election Day, and written surveys completed by candidates on the 2013 municipal ballot. Cross tabulations of the voter survey results against demographic data collected are also included, as is the analysis of these results completed by the investigator for this study.

IX. FINANCIALS

In 2013, the Elections Division, at the direction of the City Council's Elections Committee, developed budget recommendations projected against the regular, four-year election cycle. More so than other municipal functions, the cost of elections varies dramatically from year to year, influenced by many factors, including the type of election, ballot races and questions, voter engagement and turnout, among others. Thus, most jurisdictions have learned to budget according to the election cycle; in Minneapolis, this includes the presidential – mayoral – gubernatorial – and unplanned (none scheduled), as shown in the graphic below.



A. 2013 Municipal Election Budget

The following chart provides a breakdown of the requested funding, approved operating budget, and the actual expenditures associated with the 2013 Municipal Election.

ACTUAL, REQUESTED AND BUDGETED 2013			
EXPENSE CATEGORIES	REQUESTED	APPROVED	ACTUAL
CORE BUDGET	$700,000	$700,000	$636,934
SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS	$385,800	$100,000	$346,732
ELECTION EXPENSES	$598,646	$498,464	$773,272

This chart shows actual expenditures were slightly above the original budget request, by approximately 4%. However, actual expenditures were significantly higher than the approved operating budget, by approximately 35%. Given this significant difference in approved budget versus actual expenditures, it is worth examining some of the major factors which contributed to this overage (*detailed in the following pages*).

B. Significant 2013 Budgetary Impacts

1) VOTER GUIDE MAILED TO EVERY MINNEAPOLIS HOUSEHOLD ($97,536)

The full Voter Outreach & Education Plan (*described elsewhere in this report*) was a key component of—and a contributing factor to—the preparations for and conduct of the successful 2013 Municipal Election. Indeed, the success of the City's multi-pronged outreach and education plan can be measured by the high percentage of voters (81%) who reported that they understood Ranked-Choice Voting "perfectly well" or "fairly well" before reaching the polling place. More importantly, nearly two-thirds of all voters indicated they learned about RCV through just one component of the voter outreach campaign—the voter guide that was mailed to every household in the city.

Voting is one of the most significant ways for citizens to engage and participate in their community, to influence important policy decisions, and to select individuals to represent and give voice to their needs, priorities, and concerns at national, state, and local levels. Consequently, a substantial investment in voter outreach and education should be considered a core component of every election. The experiences associated with the 2013 Municipal Election, however, emphasize the need for dedicated education funds since voters only use RCV once in each four-year election cycle. Plus, during the intervening four years, new voters from the ranks of new residents and first-time voters will increase the number of potential voters needing to be educated about Ranked-Choice Voting and its unique processes. Because the mailer to every household was demonstrably the most effective single piece of outreach work done by the City in 2013, Elections staff recommends that it be repeated in future municipal election years, requiring additional funding be allocated for this in those years.

2) RANKED-CHOICE VOTING SURVEY ($48,000 = $32,000 IN 2013 AND $16,000 TO BE BILLED IN 2014)

As in 2009, the Elections & Voter Services Division contracted with an outside agency to survey voters, non-voters, election judges, and candidates about their experiences in the 2013 Municipal Election. The insights gained from that survey will help inform future improvements, especially in regards to refinements in voter outreach, engagement, and education strategies as well as to adapt election judge training to better address voters' needs. Comparing survey results from year-to-year will also help identify trends in these areas.

3) CONNIE SCHMIDT, CONSULTANT ($48,591)

Schmidt worked closely with the City's Elections & Voter Services Division throughout the year, providing input in several aspects of election administration. For detail on her work and observations, see Section X: November 2013 Municipal Election Analysis and Exhibit B.

4) INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS OF NEW VOTING SYSTEM TECHNOLOGY FOR RANKED-CHOICE VOTING FREEMAN, CRAFT, MCGREGOR GROUP, CONSULTANT ($38,202)

The City engaged Freeman, Craft, McGregor Group, Inc. (FCMG), to conduct an independent analysis of the export utility feature of the new voting system purchased by Hennepin County which produced the Cast Vote Record (CVR) data file. This data file was essential in streamlining the City's tabulation processes; however, because no standards exist related to that utility, it was not possible for the City to secure federal or state certification for that particular component. Having tested the system's export utility and audited the City's entire tabulation process, FCMG found that "[t]he procedures used by the City to tabulate results using the RCV export file are adequate to the task. These procedures are preferable to hand tabulation in that Excel's ability to sort data eliminates the need to continually sort and resort the actual ballots as required by a hand count. When the process is complete, the Excel worksheet also provides an entirely transparent audit trail."

FCMG's full report was appended as an exhibit to the reported entitled *The 2013 Municipal Election: A Report on Final Plans & Preparations*, presented to the City Council's Elections Committee on October 30, 2013.

5) TECHNOLOGY-RELATED COSTS ($29,100)

The Elections Division incurred higher-than-usual technology-related expenses in 2013. Charges for RCV-specific requirements included: set-up and maintenance of secure network storage for RCV tabulation files; set-up and technical support for the operation of the tabulation center (in the 911 Call Center training room), including computer rental and support for live streaming video; on-site support for immediate results publication to the elections website; and computer rental for RCV training for the tabulation team. Additional technology costs not directly related to RCV included: set-up and technical support for computers in the City Hall rotunda to accommodate high volumes of in-person absentee voters; technical improvements to the Elections Management System database; an expanded Election Day call center to enhance headquarters operations, including connectivity and communications with all 117 polling places and precinct support judges; and GIS support to provide voters clearer information related to the location of their polling place and precinct boundaries. While the RCV-related expenses incurred in 2013 can be expected to occur only in municipal election years, the non-RCV technology costs should be considered on-going expenses required to improve service levels to voters and improve administrative efficiency in conducting elections.

6) CONTRACT LABOR AND LABOR FROM OTHER DIVISIONS ($77,723)

The Elections Division has only 5 permanent, full-time employees (including the director position), which is less than the average for similar-sized municipalities. Minneapolis is the largest and most-populated city in the state which boasts the highest voter engagement in the nation. In fact, Minneapolis accounts for 1 of every 13 registered voters in Minnesota. The Elections Division already makes heavy use of seasonal/temporary workers; however, some tasks are better handled by permanent employees. Consequently, the Elections & Voter Services Division relies upon the contributions of employees from other departments. In 2013, significant engagement from employees in the City Clerk's Office (not in the Elections Division) and the Communications, Information Technology, and Neighborhood & Community Relations departments, as well as a number of contractual employees, were needed to ensure a successful election. The hours spent by these employees outside the Elections Division was charged against the Elections budget. While much of this additional help was driven by the goal of providing excellent service to voters in a municipal election, including the need to educate voters about RCV, a significant portion of the work performed should be considered on-going requirements in any election year.

7) PUBLICATION OF PROPOSED CHARTER AMENDMENT – PLAIN LANGUAGE REVISION ($69,545)

In the 2013 election, voters were presented with two related ballot questions, both pertaining to a proposed Plain Language Revision submitted by the Minneapolis Charter Commission. Under state law[20], such amendments must be published in full in the official newspaper of the municipality. The statute goes on to require that cities of the first class must publish such amendments in a newspaper having an aggregate, regular-paid circulation of at least 25,000 copies. Thus, the City of Minneapolis was required—by law—to publish the entire text of the Plain Language Charter Revision in both its official newspaper, *Finance & Commerce*, and the *Star Tribune*, a paper having an aggregate, regular-paid circulation of at least 25,000 copies. Publication of the entire text is mandated for two consecutive weeks prior to the date of the election. The notices were published in *Finance & Commerce* on October 22 and October 29, and in the *Star Tribune* on October 21and October 28.

[20] Minn. Stat. § 410.10, subd. 2

The total fiscal impact for legal publication of the Plain Language Charter Revision in both *Finance & Commerce* and the *Star Tribune* was $69,545.

8) NEW ELECTION WEBSITE ($8,960)

A new elections website was designed and launched for the 2013 Municipal Election with the help of an outside contractor, Lynn Brun, of Brun Winter Reese Communications (BWR Communications). The new website has a modern look and is visually appealing, in more intuitively organized according to the type of user (candidate, voter, election judge, media, etc.), and incorporates new social media tools that were used for the first time last year. According to the voter survey commissioned by the City, nearly one-quarter of respondents said they learned about Ranked-Choice Voting through the City's new elections website. Additionally, Minneapolis 311 makes extensive use of the elections website to answer questions. Having an up-to-date website serves the public and reduces the number of public inquiries staff must handle.

9) POLLING PLACE SUPPLY TOTES ($19,876)

With the new voting equipment purchased in 2013 came a change in how supplies are shipped to polling places. The old ballot boxes were fabricated with a heavy metal that was strong enough to hold the 75 pounds of supplies (including ballots) that must be distributed to each polling place in advance of Election Day. The new ballot boxes are fabricated from thick plastic and have a much lower weight capacity. Consequently, the Elections Division was challenged to come up with a creative way to package and deliver polling place supplies. New supply totes were purchased to meet this need. While these new supply totes do not constitute an on-going expense, they will need to be replaced at some future date due to normal wear and tear.

The foregoing unplanned expenditures represent a total fiscal impact of $410,194. If these expenditures were eliminated, the actual costs for the 2013 Municipal Election would have been $1,346,744, which is significantly closer to the approved operating budget. Obviously, some of these expenses were outside the division's control, such as the publication costs associated with the Plain Language Charter Revision; some were necessitated by outside factors, such as the need to purchase new polling place supply totes because of a change in the manufacture of new voting equipment. As noted above, however, many of these expenses reflect investments in improved voter service and administration of a core government function—free and fair elections that enable all voters to participate in their communities.

C. Financing Elections

In response to previous direction from the Elections Committee, staff had proposed dividing the elections budget into three broad categories:[21]

1. Core Expenses;
2. Election Expenses; and
3. Supplemental Expenses.

"*Core expenses*" encompass fixed operating costs required to maintain a stable Elections unit. This includes the permanent staff, office equipment and supplies, warehouse, technology and operating systems, voting equipment leases, self-insurance fund, etc. Core expenses are generally stable from year to year.

"*Election expenses*" are those which directly result from and can be attributed back to the requirements of planning and conducting a specific election. This category of expenditures would include such items as the cost of temporary/seasonal labor and election judges, administering absentee balloting, rental agreements for

[21] This proposal was outlined in a report to the Elections Committee dated February 27, 2013.

polling places and polling place supplies, and any other expense incurred as the result of a regular or special election.

"Supplemental expenses" offset the financial impact of unplanned events, or planned events that are not the direct result of a regular or special election and not otherwise budgeted as part of the core expense budget. Although the exact event or item funded by this expenditure category may not be known at the beginning of the year, the City has a history of using contingency funds for election-related purposes. The chart below demonstrates this trend over the past seven years, in which supplemental funds have been required.

Need for Supplemental Funds 2008-present	
Year	**Event(s)**
2008	U.S. Senate recount
2009	Ranked-Choice Voting (implementation and voter education)
2010	Gubernatorial recount
2011	3 Special Elections: Senate District 59, Senate District 61, and House District 61B
2012	Presidential: hand-count of three precincts
2013	Ranked-Choice Voting (equipment, training, and voter education)
2014	Special election - County Commissioner District 3

Based on the staff's recommended budget formula, the projected four-year operating budget for the Elections & Voter Services Division (2014-2017) is shown below.

PROJECTED MULTI-YEAR ELECTION OPERATING BUDGET (2014-2017)				
ELECTION YEAR/CYCLE →	2014	2015	2016	2017
EXPENSE CATEGORIES ↓	GUBERNATORIAL	UNSCHEDULED	PRESIDENTIAL	MAYORAL
CORE BUDGET	$700,000	$700,000	$700,000	$700,000
ELECTION EXPENSES	$525,000	$50,000[22]	$700,000	$700,000
SUPPLEMENTAL EXPENSES	$200,000	$200,000	$200,000	$200,000

(All figures in constant 2013 dollars)

[22] The budget year that does not have a scheduled regular election has a base election specific cost of $50,000. The election unit's primary function during this year is preparation of the next four-year cycle, including strategic planning for voter education and outreach, evaluating and enhancing training materials, logistical analyses of all aspects of deploying an election, evaluation of precincts and polling places, and staff professional development and training.

X. NOVEMBER 2013 MUNICIPAL ELECTION ANALYSIS

As an additional effort to secure outside expertise for the 2013 election preparations, the Elections & Voter Services Division contracted with Connie Schmidt to consult on business processes, systems, and potential improvements during the year-long planning period. Schmidt is an associate and adjunct faculty member with the National Association of Election Officials (Election Center), a non-profit organization that provides training and professional certification for election administrators throughout the United States. She also works for the United States Election Assistance Commission, an independent, bipartisan federal commission charged with developing standards and guidance for complying with requirements under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002, including voluntary voting system guidelines. The US EAC serves as a national clearinghouse for information, industry best practices, and professional support on elections 25 administration, and is the federal accrediting agency for election system testing laboratories which certify voting systems. Schmidt received the National Association of Secretaries of State Medallion Award for Outstanding Service to American Democracy and was inducted into the Election Center's Hall of Fame for election administrators.

Schmidt has worked closely with the City's Elections team throughout the year, providing input on several process improvements, including the ordinance amendments which were approved by City Council, and the acquisition of the new voting equipment, as well as initiatives associated with the City's Voter Outreach & Education Program, election judge recruitment and training, and vote tabulation and reporting. She also has been involved in workflow design (and re-design) and documentation, plans related to polling place management improvements, absentee balloting processes, and post-election auditing.

Schmidt has submitted a report (Exhibit B) of her findings and observations of the Elections & Voter Services Division's performance in operating efficiently and effectively and in compliance with legal and policy requirements. This comprehensive report also identifies areas in need of further improvements with recommendations for council consideration.

The recommendations include:

- A minimum increase of two full time staff and one assistant to the Director of Elections , together with revised position descriptions and required skill sets for all election team positions
- A consolidation of all Election Division functions (public service, administration, training, and warehousing) into one physical location.
- A four year budget that reflects the financial needs of the election cycle including a contingency fund to cover special election or other unique situations such as legislative changes that arise in election administration.

Schmidt's report mentions a stated goal of the Division in 2013 to become the "Gold Standard" in the execution of a ranked choice voting election, a goal Schmidt believes was reached. This standard can be maintained in all elections by seizing opportunities for reinvestment in election administration.

As the recent Report of the Presidential Election Commission details, "[t]he electorate seeks above all modern, efficient, and responsive administrative performance in the conduct of elections...". Serving Minneapolis voters requires a sufficient number of skilled staff with adequate financial, technological, and physical resources.

XI. SUMMARY OF NEW INITIATIVES & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. RCV Recommendations for 2017

❖ CLARIFY THE DEFINITION OF "TABULATION CENTER" IN THE ORDINANCE

It is standard practice, and required by law, that when ballots are being counted in a hand count or recount that the counting process be observable by the public.[23] The City's RCV ordinance includes a similar requirement, but does so in an overly broad way. As written, the RCV tabulation center "must be accessible to the public for the purpose of observing the vote tabulation."[24] This language, while applicable to a full hand-count, as done in 2009, does not address the improved process of RCV tabulation used in 2013, which did not involve the handling of ballots. In 2013, vote data was extracted and processed using an Excel spreadsheet which mirrored the hand-count process. Elections staff recommends this language be amended to specify that the tabulation center be open for public observation only when paper ballots are actually being handled.

The tabulation process in Excel is an extraordinarily detailed procedure that must be precisely followed to ensure that accurate results are obtained. A secure, quiet workspace free from distractions is essential to allow tabulators to complete their work in an accurate and timely way. The procedures implemented in 2013 are akin to the administrative processing of vote data which occurs in other (non-RCV) elections; in those cases, a substantial amount of data entry is required despite automated ballot counters, and the work is conducted in a secured (non-public) environment. Staff contends that the RCV tabulation processes, as implemented in 2013, should be treated in the same manner to ensure the accuracy of the results released. Public viewing should be restricted to full hand counts when ballots are being counted.[25]

❖ AMEND THE PROCESS OF MATHEMATICAL ELIMINATION

In Ranked-Choice Voting, mathematical elimination of a candidate is the process of comparing a candidate's potential vote total to the actual vote total of the candidate with the next greater number of votes. This process is carried out in each round and determines if it is possible for multiple candidates to be defeated in a single round. The current ordinance specifies the potential vote total of a candidate in such a way that does not take advantage of all the ballot information available from the voting equipment; the language still reflects the manual process from 2009 that addressed a full hand-count of actual ballots. In an RCV hand count, a vote is assigned to each ballot's first-choice candidate. Lower rankings on a ballot are examined only if the first choice candidate is defeated. Using the new voting equipment and the exportable Cast Vote Record (CVR) data file, it is possible to more thoroughly examine the full range of voter preferences on all ballots.

The table on the next page provides an example of how the process works under the language of the existing RCV ordinance.

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[23] Minn. Stat. §

[24] Minneapolis Code of Ordinances 167.40

[25] To assure transparency, round-by-round results would still be made available as each round is completed for public viewing on web and posted in City Hall.

Candidate	Actual Vote Total	Potential Vote Total	Round status
Frank	147	--	Continuing
Ina	93	433	Continuing
Edna	79	340	Continuing
Agatha	65	261	Continuing
Jethro	54	196	Continuing
Howard	38	142	Continuing
Becky	37	104	Continuing
Gladys	34	67	Continuing
Cynthia	20	33	Defeated
Delmont	13	--	Defeated

As the candidate with the lowest number of votes, Delmont is defeated. To determine if the next lowest candidate, Cynthia, can be defeated we calculate her potential vote total. Because it is theoretically possible that all the ballots that have Delmont as a first choice have Cynthia as a second choice we add the 13 votes from Delmont to the 20 Cynthia already has. This gives her a potential vote total of 33. We then compare Cynthia's potential vote total (33) to the actual vote total of the next highest candidate, Gladys, who has 34. Because Cynthia's best case scenario doesn't allow her to pass the candidate in front of her, Cynthia is defeated in this round with Delmont.

Moving up the chart, Gladys could possibly receive all 33 votes from the defeated candidates below her, giving her a potential vote total of 67. Gladys's potential vote total is higher than the next ranked candidate's vote total (Becky, 37), so Gladys is not defeated in this round. These steps are repeated all the way up the chart in each round to determine which candidate(s) are defeated.

Under the existing tabulation process, each of these steps—in sequence—are necessary because the ordinance assumes that no further data is known about a voter's second and third-choice candidates and does not address the impact of lower rankings on defeated candidates until those ballots are sorted, as in a full hand-count process. This was an oversight in process improvements that were recommended in advance of the 2013 Municipal Election, largely due to the fact that the City had no prior experience with the new voting equipment and was, therefore, unfamiliar with the capabilities the new equipment had for more rapidly tabulating results.

With the new voting equipment, it is possible to consider first, second, and third-choice rankings in a more holistic manner, rather than focusing exclusively on specific choices at each round of tabulation to determine if one or more candidates can be eliminated based on the mathematical formula. So, when the new ballot counters are used, it is possible to quickly determine how many votes were cast for each candidate at each available ranking. Considering the previous example again, but with additional ranking information provided by new tabulators, it is possible to expedite the tabulation process to determine a winner.

Candidate	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	Sum All Choices	Round Status
Frank	147	81	37	265	Continuing
Ina	93	87	67	247	Continuing
Edna	79	55	49	183	Continuing
Agatha	65	67	35	167	Continuing
Jethro	54	50	58	162	Continuing
Howard	38	17	16	71	Defeated
Becky	37	20	22	79	Defeated
Gladys	34	33	37	104	Defeated
Cynthia	20	26	25	71	Defeated
Delmont	13	13	15	41	Defeated

In this example, Frank received a total of 147 first-choice votes—the highest number of all the candidates. In examining all votes across first, second, and third choice rankings, it is clear that the four lowest-ranked candidates—Becky, Gladys, Cynthia, and Delmont—cannot possibly meet or exceed the total number of first-choice votes for Frank, even with all rankings summed across the three choices. Given this additional level of data, it is possible to determine that Becky, Gladys, Cynthia, and Delmont can all be mathematically eliminated in a single round of tabulation. Because the new voting equipment can provide this fuller understanding of voter preferences—which was not available in the 2009 hand-count process—it is possible to further streamline the tabulation process, produce results in less time, and still achieve an accurate final outcome.

If this process improvement had been in place for the 2013 Municipal Election, 32 of the 35 mayoral candidates (91%) could have been defeated in the first round of tabulation. Staff estimates that the complete results for mayoral race could have been available in the early afternoon the next day after Election Day (Wednesday, November 6). Instead, as was heavily reported in the news media, the mayoral race was tabulated over two 12-hour days and final results were not released until late in the second day following the election (Thursday, November 7). While mathematically sound, this improved method cannot currently be used because the hand-count method described earlier is specified in the ordinance. Therefore, staff recommends an amendment to allow for the faster tabulation process using new voting equipment whenever possible.

❖ INCREASE THE FILING FEE TO BE ON THE BALLOT

A record 35 mayoral candidates appeared on the 2013 ballot. Having so many candidates for one race on the ballot is deleterious, both for voters and for election administrators. The top complaint in the weeks leading up to Election Day in 2013 was the large number of mayoral candidates. Some problems that result from this high number of candidates include:

1. A ballot printed in smaller type in order to fit all candidates on same page, affecting voters with less than perfect eyesight;
2. Anecdotal reports of voters considering not voting in the election due to difficultly researching all the candidates; and
3. A significant increase in the time needed to obtain final results.

Lowering the bar and making access to the ballot too easy does not necessarily serve voters' needs or interests. As an example, 26 of the 35 mayoral candidates on the 2013 ballot received less than 1% of all first-choice votes, out of more than 80,000 ballots cast. Yet, tabulation of that single race required 25 rounds (in 17 hours) before a candidate with more than 1% of the first choice votes was ultimately defeated. Conversely, the top five vote-getters in the mayoral race received more than 85% of first-choice votes.

The public reasonably expects candidates to display a certain level of public support in order to appear on the ballot. Requiring a candidate to pay a filing fee higher than the current fee of $20 (or allowing ballot access if they reach a certain number of signatures on a candidacy petition[26]) achieves this goal. Consequently, the Elections & Voter Services Division supports the proposal offered by the Minneapolis Charter Commission to increase municipal filing fees.

B. Process Improvement Recommendations: 2014 & Beyond

In addition to the proposed Ranked-Choice Voting ordinance amendments outlined above, and in anticipation of the next four-year election cycle and beyond, the Elections & Voter Services is planning or recommending additional process improvements, summarized below. Those items highlighted in blue text would require formal authorization by the City Council.

1. **Clarify the definition of "tabulation center" in the RCV ordinance.**
2. **Amend the process of mathematical elimination as described in the RCV ordinance.**
3. **Increase the municipal filing fee(s).**
4. **Authorize additional precincts and polling places, or changes in polling places, as recommended by staff (at a future date).**
5. Cross-train and seek to develop all leadership, team, and student election judge to enhance the performance of all serving in the City's corps of election judges.
6. Continue and expand efforts to diversify the City's corps of election judges, including efforts to identify, recruit, and train bilingual (multi-lingual) election judges and expand the Adopt-A-Polling Place program.
7. Develop a Minneapolis-specific Election Judge Manual.
8. Finalize plans to implement and prepare for the first use of "no-excuse" absentee voting in the 2014 Gubernatorial Election, including improved service to absentee voters in the new office space (City Hall, Room 201) and the City Hall Rotunda as an in-person absentee polling place.
9. Continue and expand the Voter Outreach & Education Program for all election types in the four-year cycle, not just the municipal election. In particular, focus on engaging populations that have historically had lower voter participation rates. For municipal elections, focus on emphasizing the importance of city elections and their direct impact on the quality of life standards and governance of the community.
10. Form a Ballot Design Workgroup to identify and address ballot design, layout, and formatting issues specific to Ranked-Choice Voting in order to provide greater options and flexibility in future municipal elections.

[26] Minn. Stat. § 204B.11, subd. 2

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