



Memorandum

To: Honorable Gavin Newsom, Mayor

Honorable Members, Board of Supervisors

From: John Arntz, Director of Elections

Date: October 6, 2006

RE: Preparations for the November 7, 2006 Consolidated General Election

For the past several years the Department of Elections (Department) has issued memoranda detailing the Department's handling and processing of ballots. This memorandum continues the Department's efforts to keep the election process as open as possible and will provide an overview of the Department of Elections' plans for receiving, distributing, transporting, and processing ballots for the November 7, 2006 Consolidated General Election.

OVERVIEW

BALLOTS

All San Francisco voters will receive five ballot cards for the upcoming election. This is the first time that an election in San Francisco has consisted of five cards. The Department has received nearly all of the ballot cards for the election and has begun the testing of the voting equipment and the testing will continue until the end of October.

VOTER INFORMATION PAMPHLET

Nearly all versions of the Voter Information Pamphlet (VIP) are complete and mailing began on Thursday, October 5. The Department seeks to have all voter guides in the mail by the 28th day before the election, October 10, but delivery may continue for a day or two beyond this target date.

PERMANENT ABSENTEE BALLOTS

On October 10, the Department of Elections will begin mailing absentee ballots to the permanent absentee voters, as well as make ballots available for early voting at City Hall. There are nearly 125,000 voters with permanent absentee status, and nearly 4000 "overseas" voters requesting absentee ballots.

EARLY VOTING IN CITY HALL

Early voting will begin on October 10 and take place each weekday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. outside of the Department's office in City Hall Room 48., and will continue through Election Day. Weekend voting will be made available from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. in City Hall the two

weekends prior to the election (October 28 and 29; November 4 and 5). On Election Day, voting will begin in City Hall at 7 a.m. and continue until 8:00 p.m.

REPORTING ELECTION RESULTS

The Department will begin tabulating results from the absentee ballots received prior to Election Day after the polls close at 8 p.m. The first release of results will occur at approximately 8:30 p.m. and will represent the absentee ballots the Department has processed prior to Election Day. After this initial report, around 9 p.m., the Department will be able to include results from the City's polling places.

The Department will post all results reports on its website. We will also provide results to SFGTV, and will have results projected onto a large screen in City Hall's North Light Court. The results posted on our website and SFGTV will be updated approximately every half-hour, and the projected results in the North Light Court will be updated approximately every 20 -- 30 minutes.

OBSERVING THE ELECTIONS PROCESS

All election activities are open to public observation. For every election we update our *Observers' Guide* to explain the various activities taking place during an election and how to observe these activities. The *Observers' Guide* is on our website and anyone is welcome to visit our main office at City Hall room 48 to obtain a copy or to inquire more about observing the elections process in San Francisco.

BALLOT STORAGE

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

The Department stages unvoted absentee ballots in Brooks Hall, located in the basement of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. Access to Brooks Hall is limited to Department of Elections' staff and to personnel associated with the Auditorium and the Public Library. An eight-foot fence encloses the storage and work area. The Department maintains ballot custody logs of the ballots received from the printing vendor and those assembled for mailing.

Department personnel inspect each box of ballots to ensure the contents match the shipping invoice. Staff then logs each set of ballots that we receive from the printing vendor and this log is continually compared to the order placed with the vendor before the ballots were printed.

Ballots provided to voters utilizing our voting counter located outside our main office are kept in City Hall room 59. When the printing vendor delivers the ballots we begin tracking these ballots on custody forms. At the end of each day, we will account for each ballot in our possession and move the voted ballots to a secure room within our office. The tracking and logging of these ballots will continue through Election Day.

When voted absentee ballots arrive in the mail to City Hall, the Department secures the envelopes containing the voted ballots in a room within our main offices. Staff will scan the barcodes on the envelopes to track the receipt of each voter's ballot in our office. Next, our data entry personnel will compare each signature on every absentee ballot to the electronic image file of each voter's signature that is linked to the voter registration database. It must be noted that the barcode on the envelope is never viewed in conjunction with a voted ballot. In fact, when the ballots are removed from the envelopes, our staff will organize the envelopes so that the barcodes and signatures are not visible to the staff removing the voted ballot cards.

After the signature on each envelope is verified with the image file associated with our registration database, the envelopes are moved to City Hall room 59. Department personnel will sort the envelopes in precinct order before opening the envelopes to extract the ballot cards. When the ballot cards are removed, they remain in precinct order until two staff moves the ballots for counting in the Department's computer room where all absentee and provisional ballots are processed.

PRECINCT BALLOTS

Precinct ballots are staged and prepared for distribution at the Department's satellite building at 240 Van Ness Avenue. This building is located at the corner of Grove Street and Van Ness Avenue. Department personnel inspect each box of ballots to ensure the contents match the shipping invoice. Staff then log each set of ballots received from the printing vendor and this log is continually compared to the order placed with the vendor. Each step of the elections process we will track the ballots until we conduct the canvass after the election. During the canvass we compare our tracking records to all of the voted and unvoted ballots in our possession.

The Department distributes the precinct ballots to polling place inspectors beginning six days before the election on November 1. Before inspectors obtain ballots they must have a precinct assignment from the Department and have completed the proper training classes. The inspectors must sign ballot custody logs indicating the number of ballots, the type, and the precinct in which the cards will be voted. We also scan barcodes affixed to the ballot containers to record the transfer of possession of the ballot cards from the Department to the pollworkers.

ELECTION DAY

ELECTION DAY SUPPORT

As in past elections, the Department of Elections will dispatch Field Election Deputies (FEDs) throughout the City on Election Day. FEDs provide direct support to polling places by delivering additional ballots and other supplies, addressing technical or staffing problems that arise during the day, and assisting in the opening and closing of polling places.

The Department will train the FEDs to visit each polling site and to observe that the pollworkers are providing the best possible service to voters. As in past elections, pollworkers receive training that includes assisting voters who are unfamiliar with the elections process or otherwise need assistance when casting their votes.

TRANSPORTING AND SECURING VOTED BALLOTS AFTER THE POLLS CLOSE

Voted ballots are inserted *and stored* in the optical scan voting machines used at the polling places. Voted ballots are not removed from the machines until the polls close at 8 p.m. After the polls close, Deputy Sheriffs collect both voted and unvoted ballots, provisional ballots, and absentee ballots that voters have dropped off at the polling places. During this collection, the Deputy Sheriffs sign a Ballot Custody Form (BCF) in quadruplicate format, to confirm receipt of the ballots and a copy is given to the polling place Inspector. This form is used later to track the custody of ballots. The Deputy Sheriffs then deliver the ballots to the Elections Processing Center at Pier 29.

Department staff waiting at Pier 29 receives the ballots from the Deputy Sheriffs and these staff and the Deputies sign the BCFs to confirm the receipt of ballots from each precinct and to maintain a record of custody. The Deputy Sheriffs receive copies of the forms and the Department files remaining copies for reference.

Once the Department comes into possession of voted ballots, the Sheriff's Department provides security for the ballots. This security begins at Pier 29 where two Deputies will stay at the Pier until all ballots are transported either to Brooks Hall for canvassing or to City Hall for processing. Whenever the Department transports ballots from Pier 29, Deputies will escort the vehicles to their respective destinations. The transport of ballots will take place on the Wednesday and the Friday following Election Day. Department staff will use a separate custody form (a Ballot Transport Log or "BTL") to track the transportation of ballots from Pier 29 to City Hall. Department staff will complete and sign the BTL forms when the ballots leave Pier 29, and again when they arrive at City Hall. These forms can be reviewed later to track custody of the ballots.

Deputy Sheriffs will escort the transportation of voted precinct ballots, unvoted precinct ballots, unvoted generic ballots, spoiled ballots and ballots containing write-in votes for the canvass from Pier 29 to Brooks Hall (located in the basement of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium) on the Friday following the election. The Department staff will again use a

Ballot Transport Log form to track the transportation of these ballots from Pier 29 to Brooks Hall; a copy of this form will be provided to the Deputy Sheriff. The Deputy Sheriff continues to supervise ballot security until the canvass is completed and will be stationed in Brooks Hall while Elections staff conducts the canvass. The Department of Elections has 28 days to complete the canvass.

TRANSPORTING AND SECURING VOTE-RECORDING DEVICES AFTER THE POLLS CLOSE ***Memory Packs***

The optical scan voting equipment used at the polling places contains a memory device called a "memory pack" that records votes cast for candidates and for and against ballot measures in specific polling places. After the polls close, pollworkers print two copies of a report from the optical scan voting machine of the votes cast at that precinct. After printing these reports, poll workers must break a security seal on the machine and remove the memory pack. Poll workers then enclose the memory pack with one copy of the report in a special bag and seal and sign the bag; the second report is posted outside the polling place and left for public inspection. Parking Control Officers (PCOs) from the Department of Parking and Traffic, but working under the direction of the Sheriff's Office, will retrieve the memory packs from the polling places and transport them to modem centers called "Uplink Sites." At the Uplink Sites, staff logs the arrival of each memory pack and will then transmit in a secure manner the vote totals stored in each memory pack to the Department's computer room in City Hall.

Memory Cards

For the November 7, 2006 Consolidated General Election, PCOs will also retrieve PCM-CIA cards at the polling places on Election Night. PCM-CIA cards store the votes cast for the contests using the ranked-choice voting method. The PCOs, who travel prearranged routes, will remove the PCM-CIA cards from the optical scan voting machines and place them in clear plastic covers. After completing routes that consist of no more than ten stops, the PCOs will transport the Memory packs and PCM-CIA cards to specific Uplink Sites. At the Uplink Sites, the Deputy Sheriffs and Election workers will log the memory packs and PCM-CIA cards received. The PCM-CIA cards are not read until they arrive at City hall. At the end of Election night, the memory packs and PCM-CIA cards are delivered to the Department's computer room in City Hall by Deputy Sheriffs. In some instances, Deputy Sheriffs also assist with the memory pack and PCM-CIA card collection.

BALLOT PROCESSING

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

On Friday, October 27, the Voter Services Division will begin verification of signatures of absentee envelopes that arrived in the mail or were turned in at polling places on Election Day. After this verification, the still-sealed absentee ballot envelopes are moved from Room 48 to Room 59 in City Hall, where the ballot envelopes are opened and the absentee ballots are removed. Absentee ballots are extracted from their corresponding envelopes by placing the side with the return address face down to avoid viewing voters' names and information. The ballot cards are moved to the Department's computer room, where they are processed by the optical scan central count equipment. Although these ballots are read before Election Day, State law prohibits the Department of Elections from tabulating or reporting any results until after the close of the polls.

Tabulated absentee Ballots are secured and stored in City Hall Room 56B. Deputy Sheriffs provide security for all absentee ballots and envelopes until the Department of Elections completes the official canvass and the election results are certified.

PROVISIONAL BALLOTS

Voters whose names that do not appear in rosters specific to each precinct can still vote by using a "provisional ballot." Provisional ballots are identical to the regular precinct ballots but after the voters mark their selections, the ballot cards are sealed in large pink envelopes and are not scanned through the optical scanning machine at the precinct. Instead, the Department will tabulate provisional ballots in its computer room in City Hall after the Department has determined the eligibility of each voter who cast a provisional ballot.

Before counting provisional ballots, Department staff must verify voters' eligibility to vote according to the information voters provide on the envelope that contains the ballot cards. The verification process is similar to the process described above for verifying absentee ballots.

If voters are eligible to vote but voted at the wrong precinct and therefore voted an incorrect ballot type, the Department of Elections will "remake" the provisional ballots so that only the contests for which the voter were eligible to vote are counted. The Department of Elections will begin to process provisional ballots after it processes all absentee ballots.

DAMAGED BALLOTS

When ballot cards are damaged or contain stray marks that interfere with processing by the vote tabulation equipment, Department staff duplicates voters' marks on new ballot cards so that the votes can be counted (California Elections Code § 15208). Each remade card is cross-referenced with the original, damaged ballot card, in accordance with State law. The process of remaking absentee ballots can begin as early as October 31, and is conducted in

City Hall Room 82. Remade and original ballots are stored and secured together in City Hall Room 56B with other absentee and provisional ballots.

WRITE-IN VOTES

Write-in votes must be manually reviewed prior to tabulation. The voting equipment at the polling places and in the Department's computer room in City Hall keeps a count on the number of identified write-in votes cast and segregates those ballots for the manual review process. Once the Department verifies votes were cast for qualified write-in candidates, those votes are manually added to the report of votes cast.

State law further specifies the procedures for tabulating write-in votes. In addition to voting for qualified write-in candidates, voters must properly mark the ballots for the votes to be counted. Voters must not only write the names of the qualified write-in candidates in the appropriate space and under the correct office, but must complete the vote arrow (California Elections Code § 15342).

In each ranked-choice contest, the Department must take additional steps to ensure write-in votes are properly tabulated. When voters place write-in candidates for their first, second or third choice in a ranked-choice contest, but the candidates are not qualified write-in candidates, the Department must remake the ballot to omit the write-in vote.

Department staff must also remake ballots if voters write the name of a candidate who is already printed on the card. This procedure applies to all write-in contests. The remake ballot is then tabulated by the vote count equipment so the vote is properly captured.

On October 31, the Department will begin to manually process and, if necessary, remake write-in votes. The remake process is generally the same as described under "Damaged Ballots."

AUTO-MARK BALLOTS

Since there is no equipment certified to read ranked-choice voting ballots voted on the new accessible voting equipment, the AutoMARK, the Department must remake each AutoMARK card onto ballots used with the older optical scan equipment. The AutoMARK ballots will be secured at the polling places in the red ballot box, and retrieved by Deputy Sheriffs on Election Night who will transport the ballots to the Department's Processing Center located on Pic 29. The Deputies will later transport the AutoMARK ballots to City Hall where Department staff will remake the votes onto ballots that can be read by the older optical scan equipment.

RESULTS REPORTING

REPORTING OF RESULTS ON ELECTION NIGHT AFTER THE POLLS CLOSE

As noted on page one, after the polls close on Election Night, election results will be released as they become available. Candidates, members of the media, and the public may observe the vote tabulation and production report from a public viewing area outside the Department of Elections.

Results will be reported in several ways. The Department of Elections will project results gathered from votes cast in the polling places on large monitors located in the North Light Court on the main level of City Hall and this information will be updated at 20-minute intervals. In addition, the Department will post the results on its website, www.sfgov.org/election and this information will be updated at intervals of between 20 and 30 minutes. Additionally, the Department will distribute paper copies of the cumulative election results approximately every hour in the North Light Court and Room 48. In addition, SFGTV Channel 26 will broadcast the results.

For the contests involving ranked-choice voting, only first-choice votes will be released on Election Night as they become available. The Department will release results concerning second and third-choice votes and unofficial run-off tabulation results starting at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, November 10.

The reporting of results concerning second and third-choice votes is separate from Election Night results as data concerning first-choice votes is recorded differently than the second and third-choice votes. Based on the technical design of the voting system, data concerning first-choice votes can be retrieved, tabulated and reported more rapidly than data concerning second and third-choice votes.

UPDATES: REPORTING OF RESULTS AFTER ELECTION DAY

Final election results are not available on Election Day because the Department must still process absentee ballots that were received on Election Day as well as provisional ballots and any ballot cards with write-in votes. In general, it takes the Department at least two weeks to process all absentee and provisional ballots because San Francisco typically has a large number of these types of ballots and because the Department must review the information voters placed on each envelope. As in past elections, candidates, members of the media, and the public are welcome to observe the signature verification and processing of absentee and provisional ballots and write-in votes.

After Election Day, the Department will release daily cumulative reports at approximately 4:00 p.m. that includes provisional and absentee ballots and write-in votes processed that day.

REPORT OF FINAL ELECTION RESULTS

The Department expects to certify the final results no later than 28 days after Election Day. The Department will announce the final election results by issuing a press release, posting a notice on its website, and posting a notice both outside and inside the door of the Department's main office in Room 48 of City Hall. The Department also provides election results to SFGTV.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

RESOURCES FOR VOTERS

The Department of Elections website contains many resources for voters, including a polling place look-up site, an electronic copy of the Voter Information Pamphlet and sample ballot, and absentee voting information. The website also contains information on ranked-choice voting, including an interactive feature which allows voters to simulate marking a ranked-choice ballot. For more information, please visit www.sfgov.org/elections, or call the Department of Elections' Voter Information Phone Bank: (415) 554-4375 (English); (415) 554-4367 (Chinese); (415) 554-4366 (Spanish).

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