

Agenda Report



Date: January 12, 2016
To: Jeffrey W. Collier, City Manager
From: Kathryn A. Marshall, City Clerk-Treasurer
Subject: 2016 Election – Weekend Voting

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the City Council receive and file a report on weekend voting; and, if weekend voting is desired for the 2016 General Municipal Election, authorize the City Clerk-Treasurer to take the actions necessary to offer voting at the Central Library on Saturday, April 9, 2016.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting held December 8, 2015, the City Council called an Election for Tuesday, April 12, 2016 for the purpose of electing a citywide Mayor and Council Members in Districts 1 and 3. In response to a request from representatives of the Whittier Voters Coalition to offer early voting on the Saturday or Sunday before the Election in order to increase voter participation, the City Council directed staff to research other cities' experience with weekend voting.

DISCUSSION

The City follows state law in offering a vote-by-mail alternative to voting at an assigned polling place on Election day. Vote-by-mail is also known as "early voting" because voters are able to obtain and vote a ballot by mail or in person at City Hall beginning the 29th day before the Election until Election day. Voters registered as permanent vote-by-mail voters with the County Registrar are automatically sent vote-by-mail ballots on the 29th day before the Election. Applications for vote-by-mail ballots received prior to the 29th day before the Election are processed on the 29th day and applications are processed on the day of receipt thereafter. Vote-by-mail ballots are available to any voter in person or by mail from the 29th day to the 7th day before the Election. During the last seven days, per state law, the City can only issue a vote-by-mail ballot if the voter either: 1) appears and votes the ballot at the election official's office; or 2) signs a form stating he/she will be absent from the precinct on Election day; cannot go to the polls because of illness or disability resulting in confinement to home or a medical facility; or, because a physical handicap prevents him or her from accessing their polling place due to an architectural barrier.

To identify cities which offer weekend voting staff sent an email inquiry to city clerks of all League of California Cities members (approximately 482); and telephoned the largest cities in Los Angeles County (Burbank, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Pasadena, Santa Clarita, Santa Monica). Martin & Chapman Company, the only full service election vendor serving California, was contacted and the city outside the County they reported offers weekend voting, Santa Barbara, was contacted.

Burbank conducts all mail ballot elections so has drop boxes available on weekends but does not have staffed ballot issuing locations. Santa Monica contracts with the County, no weekend voting is offered in the city. Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Santa Clarita have not offered weekend voting.

Santa Barbara has been conducting mail ballot elections for years. Due to its new district voting system implemented in November 2015, it offered voting at City Hall on the Saturday before the election. With a voter registration level of 46,782 and voting from 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m., eight people voted on that Saturday. The person assisting with the research advised that the Saturday was Halloween which may have impacted participation. Outreach regarding Saturday voting included water bills, ads on buses and on radio, and posting on their website. Four drop-off locations (City Hall, Neighborhood Center, and two churches) are provided for its vote-by-mail elections. For the November 2015 Election, the drop-off locations were operated as polls Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., the week prior to the Election. Approximately 200 people voted at those locations.

Pasadena is the only local city identified which offers weekend voting. It has been offered since the March 2011 election. In 2015, City Hall was open the Saturdays before both the March Primary and April General Elections from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. In April, eight people voted on Saturday. Data is no longer available for the March Primary; however, the City Clerk estimated 12-15 voters participated. The outreach used by Pasadena included a website notice and calendar entry and notice in the sample ballot pamphlets.

The Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk offers voting on Saturdays and Sundays the two weekends before an election at the Registrar's headquarters in Norwalk. No satellite location or "precinct" voting is offered. Following is data on voter participation in this voting alternative for the last four countywide elections:

Election	<u>11/14</u>	<u>6/14</u>	<u>11/12</u>	<u>6/12</u>
Saturday, 10 days before election	28	7	421	10
Sunday, 9 days before election	31	6	423	10
Saturday, 3 days before election	139	26	1,547	36
Sunday, 2 days before election	100	59	1,580	33
Voter registration (million)	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.5

The request is to add Saturday or Sunday in-person voting. Precinct officer training will occur the Thursday before the Election and it is necessary to issue precinct supplies, including voter rosters, to Inspectors (precinct supervisors) that day to provide time for them to check supplies and review instructions. Therefore, it was determined that using the vote-by-mail database, vs. precinct rosters, would be the best alternative for managing on-site voting in Whittier if conducted the weekend before the Election.

If the City Council determines that weekend voting should be an alternative for the 2016 Election, it is recommended it be offered at the civic center on the Saturday before the Election. It is proposed that voting be staged in the Nixon Room of the Central Library to take advantage of the foot traffic already present at the Library and community knowledge that the Library is open on Saturdays. Voting could be offered from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., matching the Library’s standard hours of operation. Spanish bilingual staff would operate the voting center and staff would also be at City Hall to answer the Election line and make callers aware of the on-site voting opportunity and respond to other election questions. To prevent someone from being able to vote twice, on the following Monday (the day before the Election) staff would call each Inspector managing a precinct in which voters have obtained ballots during the last seven day period and provide information for them to update their voter roster.

The costs associated with this voting alternative are estimated to be \$3,981 and would include additional vote-by-mail supplies (\$285 for 200 ballots; VBM instructions; gray, ID and outgoing envelopes); event staffing (\$1,500 for the contract Election Assistant, an Information Systems Technician, and three Staff Assistants); and outreach through the calendar page in the sample ballot pamphlets, flyers at City facilities and outreach events (\$220 for 2,000 flyers), press release to *Whittier Daily News* and *La Opinion*, eNewsletter blast, City webpage, Library and Parks Recreation and Community Services Facebook pages, cable message board, City Connection, the Community Services spring catalog (\$476), and banners on the south and west exterior walls of the Central Library (\$1,500).

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of operating the Saturday voter center is estimated to be \$3,981. If approved, this expense would be funded through a post-election resolution which will also capture the costs for the enhanced public education effort underway to inform the community about the new district voting system.

Submitted by:



Kathryn A. Marshall
City Clerk-Treasurer