



Agenda Item #: _____

Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Ward and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Geoff Dolan, City Manager

FROM: Liza Tamura, City Clerk
Terri Aliabadi, Senior Deputy City Clerk

DATE: February 21, 2006

SUBJECT: Discussion of the City Council's Work Plan Item to Review Available Measures to Maximize Voter Turnout

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council discuss the work plan item regarding available measures to maximize voter turnout and provide direction to staff.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

There are no fiscal implications associated with the recommended action.

BACKGROUND:

The City Council's 2005-2007 Work Plan includes a review of available measures to maximize voter turnout. To facilitate discussion, staff has provided several measures to consider. Staff is also looking for direction from the City Council on how to proceed in order to implement any changes prior to the March 6, 2007 General Municipal Election.

Currently, in order to maximize voter turnout, the City Clerk's Office displays two street banners reminding the community to vote on Election Day; places the Sample Ballot on the City's web site; and provides extra copies of Sample Ballots at the Library and in City facilities such as the Fire & Police Departments, Manhattan Heights and the Joslyn Community Center. In addition, the City Clerk's Office makes every effort to mail out Absentee Ballots within 24-hours of receiving an application.

DISCUSSION:

In considering the following measures, staff consulted with Scott Martin, President of Martin & Chapman (the City's Election Consultant) and confirmed the following in regard to Mail Ballot Elections, Weekend Elections and Consolidating Elections.

Mail Ballot Elections

California Elections Code Section 4004 “Small City” or “Eligible Entity” Mailed Ballot Elections states, that a “Small City” means a city with a population of 100,000 or less...” and also, that “The election is a special election to fill a vacancy in the legislative body or governing body.” While Manhattan Beach may consider Mail Ballot Elections based on population standards, the restrictions of holding a Mail Ballot Election still needs to be held for the election in which Council will be filling a vacancy, and not for the terms of conducting a General Municipal Election.

Weekend Elections

California Elections Code Section 1301 - Date of General Municipal Elections states, “Except as required by Section 57379 of the Government Code...a General Municipal Election shall be held on an established election date pursuant to Section 1000 of the Elections Code.

California Elections Code Section 1000 – Established Election Dates states, “the established election dates in each year are as follows:

- a) The second Tuesday of April in each even-numbered year;
- b) The first Tuesday after the first Monday in March of each odd-numbered year;
- c) The first Tuesday after the first Monday in June in each year;
- d) The first Tuesday after the First Monday in November of each year”

Furthermore, *California Elections Code Section 1100* states that elections must be held on a Tuesday unless you are a Charter City. Recently the City of Santa Monica conducted a Saturday/Sunday election and reported that they received approximately the same turnout as a Tuesday election.

Consolidate with State Primary or State General Elections

Cities in Los Angeles County can not consolidate with the State Primary or the State General Elections held in June or November of even years, but can consolidate with School Elections in November of odd years. There are approximately 20 cities in Los Angeles County who consolidate with the November odd-year election date; however, some cities have expressed an interest to go back to conducting their own elections because turnout has not increased and the results are not known until the next day. Also, due to the amount of limited space on a ballot, the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors have established a policy not to allow any City General Municipal Elections onto their ballots, except to fill a vacancy or a special ballot measure issue.

Other Possible Alternative Measures

Utilizing network resources from the League of California Cities, California City Clerk’s were surveyed regarding whether their cities had developed any unique public outreach programs in order to increase voter turnout. Responses and suggestions included: offering free rides to the polls; advertising telephone numbers where voters could call for a ride to the polls; paying for postage, including the return of Sample Ballots; contacting civic organizations to ask for volunteers to shuttle voters to and from the polls; providing Absent Voter applications on the City’s web site; and offering extended hours and additional days during the Absentee Voter period.

CONCLUSION:

Limited alternatives are available to the City due to State laws; therefore, Staff recommends that the City Council discuss and provide direction in time to implement any changes for the March 6, 2007 General Municipal Election.