Work Session

Agenda Item #	4
Meeting Date	May 28, 2013
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Approved By	Suzanne Ludlow Acting City Manager

Discussion Item	Election Vendor Recommendation from the Board of Elections
Background	After the November 2011 election, the Board of Elections reviewed all aspects of the election to consider what worked well and what improvements can be made. After that evaluation, the Board recommended that the City issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for election services and equipment. Takoma Park elections provide certain challenges and opportunities – short election season from the nominating caucus to election day, incorporation of write-ins, instant runoff voting, non-citizen voting, and policy of requiring a verifiable paper trail. The RFP was issued and two responses were received by the closing date – from TrueBallot and Election Systems & Software (ES&S). Both respondents meet the requirements set forth in the RFP, but offer different approaches for conducting the election. The costs vary widely between the two and also depend on the options selected. The attached report details the Board's considerations and recommendation. At the meeting on May 28, Marilyn Abbott, Chair of the Board of Elections, will present the Board's recommendation.
Policy	Takoma Park Code, Chapter 5.04 Elections, General Provisions: The City Council provides for the conduct of registration, nominations and voting in City elections and for the prevention of fraud in connection with such elections.
Fiscal Impact	$8,300 to $23,500 depending upon the vendor and options selected.
Attachments	Board of Elections Recommendation Summary of Options Evaluation Sheet
Recommendation	Staff believes that the solutions offered by either TrueBallot or ES&S would serve the City and its voters well. The ballot on demand option offered by TrueBallot would streamline voter check-in and help with processing absentee requests. However, staff recommends that the Council consider the solution provided by ES&S because of its ability to provide assistive technology for blind voters.
Special Consideration	

BACKGROUND:

The Board of Elections (Board) reviewed the two proposals, one from Election Systems & Software (ES&S) the other from TrueBallot, Inc. (TrueBallot), received in response to the City's request for proposals for election services. Both proposals met the requirements as set forth in the Request for Proposals (RFP). Both proposals had merit, but offered different approaches for the Board to consider for conduct of the upcoming election.

PROCESS:

A multi-step evaluation process was followed. Board members independently rated both proposals based on the RFP requirements. After discussion of the functionality ratings, the Board compared costs for the proposals and discussed trade-offs between cost and functionality. Both offerors met with the Board and demonstrated their proposed solution. Both offerors responded to requests for additional information and submitted revised costs. After reviewing all the information provided, the Board reached consensus that one offeror provided a more complete election services package than the other.

RECOMMENDATION:

Consensus of the Board is that both proposals meet the City's election needs for the 2013 City election. The Board is sensitive to the cost differential between the ES&S and TrueBallot proposals, and based on cost, recommends the TrueBallot Ballot-on-Demand proposal. If the Council feels that the ES&S proposal is preferable and is willing to appropriate funds, the Board believes the ES&S proposal provides more services that would be beneficial for voters.

COMPARISON OF PROPOSALS:

<u>TrueBallot, Inc.</u>

TrueBallot proposed pre-election services (ballot design), scanning, and results tabulation. TrueBallot also addressed options outlined by the City.

Basic services. Scanning services only occur after the close of elections. Election judges must remove all ballots from the ballot boxes, align, and orient them, and then provide them to TrueBallot for scanning and processing. Scanned images are processed to create a preliminary record of the votes on each ballot. Each ballot image in the first batch is reviewed and compared to the processed results to demonstrate logic and accuracy of the process. When this is completed remaining ballots are processed. Estimate is that preliminary results are available within two to three hours of the polls closing.

TrueBallot has extensive Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) experience, extensive association and union voting experience, and limited municipal election experience.

Evident from the proposal and the demonstration meeting, is TrueBallot's flexibility to consider and use a variety of techniques. TrueBallot's basic proposal has no impact on established City election procedures to check-in voters and issue voter authority cards.

TrueBallot ties all election data to individual images of the original paper ballot. Any physical ballot can be compared to its image and all of the electronic records for that individual ballot. Ability to audit 100% of the ballots is present.

Pricing for basic services was $8,300.

Optional Services. Optional services proposed by TrueBallot included ballot-on-demand and assistance with overseas and absentee ballots. The ballot-on-demand system requires that voter information from the County voter rolls be downloaded to be used to generate a ballot when a voter checks in to vote. This ballot is then marked and placed in the ballot box to be handled similarly to the process described in the Basic Services section. Ballots are printed as needed and only the necessary number of ballots are printed. Procedures for overseas ballots and absentee ballots can be incorporated into existing procedures. Estimate is that preliminary results are available within two to three hours of the polls closing.

Neither of the two TrueBallot proposals provide technology for assistive voting.

Pricing including optional services was $17,500.

Election Systems and Software, Inc.

ES&S submitted an integrated proposal, including basic services and options. ES&S proposed pre-election services (ballot design), scanning, results tabulation, and voter assistive technology. To cast an official ballot the voter inserts the marked ballot into the scanner input slot. The terminal scans the ballot, interprets the voter selection(s), and either accepts the marked paper ballot or identifies and alerts the voter to any exception (for example, overvotes and mismarks), with a system message and audible alert. The ballot is "ejected" and returned to the voter for correction. An accepted ballot is processed and retained in the locked ballot bin. Estimate is that preliminary results can be available within an hour of the closing of the polls.

ES&S has extensive experience in municipal elections but minimal experience with IRV.

The ES&S proposed solution fits within existing City procedures for handling absentee and overseas voting, as well as checking-in voters, issuing voter authority cards, and shutting down the polling place at the end of the day.

Use of the ES&S process provides for tying all election data to individual images of the original paper ballot. Any physical ballot can be compared to its image and all of the electronic records for that individual ballot. Ability to audit 100% of the ballots is present.

Visually impaired voters can use the ES&S AutoMARK to vote. The AutoMARK consists of a touch screen terminal and keypad. Voters can use either technology to navigate the ballot. Marked ballots can then be cast with limited or no assistance as any orientation can be read by the scanner.

Pricing for the integrated proposal is $23,500.

Non-selection of a Proposal

The Board also considered conducting the election as a fully manual process. Manual counting will require recruiting and training significantly more election judges for counting ballots at the end of the day. Further, the Board is concerned with the delay in tabulating all the races since there is the potential for IRV in each contest. Estimate is that preliminary results can be available within four to six hours after the closing of the polls.

The Board estimated $5,000 for conducting a fully manual election.

ELECTION COSTS:

The costs stated for each proposal are based on our best information. Once a final contract is signed we can determine best costs for election judges, printing ballots, and using the County electronic poll books.

Summary of Election Vendor Options

Options	Budget Impacts				Convenience	Personnel			Hardware Characteristics							Software
	Cost	Number of Election Judges	Number of closers needed	City staff opportunity costs	Time to preliminary result	Experience in municipal elections	IRV experience	Increased community participation and chance of human errors	Requires rental of county poll books ($750/election)	Provides ballot on demand	Will provide multilingual ballots	Automark voter assistance for the visually impaired	Scanner has voter error notification	Scans ballot	Will be used in State elections	Computerized records for later election analysis
Election Systems and Software (ES&S)	$23,500	17	4	low	1 hour	high	limited	low	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	when voted	possibly	yes
TrueBallot (plus ballot on demand)	$17,500	13	4	low	2-3 hours	limited	high	low	no	yes	yes	no	no	end of night	no	yes
TrueBallot (with preprinted ballots)	$8,300	15	4	low	2-3 hours	limited	high	low	yes	no	yes	no	no	end of night	no	yes
Manual count	$5,000	15	18	high	4-6 hours	limited	limited	high	yes	no	yes	no	no	never	no	no
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