

## City of Bethel Action Memorandum

Action memorandum No.	17-18		
Date action introduced:	2-14-2017	Introduced by:	Mayor Robb
Date action taken:	2-14-2017	X Approved	Denied
Confirmed by:	LS		

Direct the City Clerk's Office to negotiate an 8-year lease with Dominion Voting for City Election Equipment and agree to provide for the funding in the Fiscal Year 2018 Budget.

Route to:	Department/Individual:	Initials:	Remarks:
	City Manager		
	Finance Director		

Attachment(s): None

Amount of fiscal impact:		Account information:
\$5,000	Fiscal impact, not budgeted. Requesting Funding in FY 2018 Budget.	10-52-682

The City Clerk's Office would like to lease election equipment for the City's Election as opposed to using the State's equipment. The cost associated with a lease agreement for two tabulation machines would be approximately \$6,500 per year, which is an annual increase of \$5,000 to the City Clerk's Election Budget. The purpose of the AM is to allow the City Clerk to finalize a draft contract with Dominion Voting for the Council's approval before the FY 2018 budget adoption. If the approval is put off until July, the equipment would not be ready for the City's October Election.

The City of Bethel holds Regular Elections the first Tuesday in October of each year, the same day as the State's REAA Election. In exchange for supervising and coordinating the State and Federal Elections, the City of Bethel is provided use of the State's Accuvote (tabulation) machines for City elections. On the day of the Election, voters place the State's ballots in the State's Accuvote (tabulation) machine and the City's ballots are placed in a metal box. When the polls are closed, officials close out the State's Election then begin processing the City's Election, scanning the City's ballots through the tabulation machine.

### Leasing City Election Equipment:

#### **Outcome #1: Every eligible voter will know that his or her vote counted.**

Voters would cast their ballots by placing them into the City's tabulation machine as opposed to the metal box. All mismarked or damaged ballots would be instantly recognized. If the machine accepts the ballot, it means that it was counted, recorded internally, and displayed on the outer screen as an increase of one ballot counted.

#### **Outcome #2: Increased voting accuracy, timely reporting and improved voter perception while making it easier for Election Officials to perform their duties.**

During the October Election, Election Officials manage the State Election and City Election simultaneously. There are duplicate records for each election and multiple ballot types issued to each voter. The Election Officials have been trained to always issue the ballots separately, in hopes of eliminating the placement of State ballots in the City's metal box where they would not be counted until

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the State holds its canvassing board meeting. Despite diligent efforts, the accidental misplacement of ballots in the wrong location is always identified during the closing of the election resulting in significant delays during the closing process and preventing some ballots from being counted on Election Day. Additionally, Election Officials have to handle uncounted ballots, and although the Officials are very thorough in their accounting of the ballots, to alleviate the perception of mishandling of ballots it would be better to ensure to the extent possible, the ballots are counted with the voter present.

### **Outcome #3: Improved reliably to produce speedy, accurate election results.**

The State's Accuvote machines are old and undependable in their ability to scan ballots (not their ability to tabulate the ballots that are scanned). Some machines and memory cards have been broken and unavailable for elections, which sometimes leads to Election Officials having to conduct a hand count. At the minimum, however, the age of the machines often causes delays in the tabulation process. The State has expressed no plans to upgrade its equipment. Breakdowns will only become a bigger problem in the future.

### **Outcome #4: Independent operations of Elections.**

In order to use the State's tabulation machines as quid pro quo, the City must provide substantial assistance to the State of Alaska Division of Elections for the Primary, REAA, and General Elections. City assistance consists of administering absentee in-person and special needs voting two weeks prior to the elections, coordinating the staffing of each precinct with election officials, and providing the auditing and delivery of supplies before, during, and after each Election Day.

In 2016, the City Clerk alone provided 385 hours of support for State Elections. An allocation of this many hours to a State function puts at risk the City Clerk's ability to provide sufficient attention to actual responsibilities of the City Clerk's Office. Administration of State Elections is not a responsibility of the City Clerk, and is not the standard practice throughout the State.

### **Outcome #5: Language translation standards would be achieved.**

The proposed lease agreement would include a module that would allow primary Yugtun speakers to have the ballot read to them in Yugtun, eliminating any variation in the way the ballot is described to the voter. Currently, the City hires two language assistance workers for each polling location to assist voters in the interpretation of the ballot. This module would ensure consistency to each voter choosing to utilize this option. This is not an option with the State's equipment.

The City Clerk's Office wants to ensure the operation of Bethel's Municipal Elections are held to the highest standard and are carried out without ill perceptions. By utilizing their own election equipment the City Clerk's Office is taking steps to improve the voting process for the citizens in the community.