2019 Municipal Elections: Ranked-Choice Voting Planning and Implementation Overview

Ballot Design and Format
Policy Question

• Does the city council support allowing voters to rank at least 3, but not more than 6, candidates for each office in order of preference?

Equity and Inclusion Considerations

• Will the number of rankings allowed directly impact the diversity of candidate pools in St. Louis Park?

• What other factors influence a person’s decision to run for office?
  ➢ Age, race, gender, income level, interest or desire to serve, social network, cost, time commitment, length of residency, language, family responsibilities, education, employment, etc.
Key Factors – Ballot Design and Format

• Voters
  - Education and outreach will be key to the success of RCV in St. Louis Park.
  - Goals = easy to understand and vote on a RCV ballot
  - As much as possible, keep the ballot in a format that voters have seen and used before

• State laws and regulations
  - Ballot format and style should match, as much as possible, what is currently allowed for statewide elections

• Equipment and technology
  - Ballot style and number of rankings need to be compatible with existing, certified technology used for voting and tabulation

• Continuous Improvement
  - Allow for future opportunities to evaluate and make changes as needed to improve processes
Key Definitions

• Chief Election Official
  ➢ Chief election official means the city clerk and includes the city clerk’s designee(s)

• Ranked-choice voting
  ➢ Ranked-choice voting means an election method in which voters rank candidates for an office in order of their preference and the ballots are counted in rounds where votes are distributed to candidates according to the preferences marked on each ballot until one (1) candidate meets the threshold, or until two (2) candidates remain and the candidate with the greater number of votes is declared elected.

• Ranking
  ➢ Ranked means the number assigned by a voter to a candidate to express the voter’s preference for that candidate. Ranking number one (1) is the highest ranking. A ranking of lower numerical value indicates a greater preference for a candidate than a ranking of a higher numerical value
Ballot Design Styles

- Main designs used in the U.S. for RCV ballots
  - 3-column, 3-column “stacked”, “Cambridge” style
Ballot Design Styles - Recommendation

- Three-column design – allows voters to rank up to 3 choices

- Must include instructions to voters that clearly indicate how to mark the ballot and how to rank candidates in order of preference

- Consistent with design of ballots used in state elections

- Style compatible with existing, certified election equipment used in Hennepin County

- Style can accommodate school district races (non-RCV) on back of ballot

- Style has been used, tested, and vetted in Minneapolis
Number of rankings: Why at least three?

- Number of rankings allowed in other cities
  - Minneapolis model provides for at least 3 rankings
  - St. Paul model provides for up to 6 rankings (if there are at least 6 candidates)

- The ballot design and format used by Minneapolis have been tested and proven to work with current voting equipment (DS200 and Automark)

- Counting Procedures
  - If more than three (3) rankings are allowed the DS200 is not able, at this time, to process the data file used to count votes. This would result in a manual tabulation process via a hand count of physical ballots.

- Hennepin County administrative support is key to our success — maintaining continuity with Minneapolis will help ensure things go smoothly in St. Louis Park in 2019
  - Ballot formatting and layout
  - Programming of voting equipment and election definition
  - Administrative support for testing/tabulation/reporting of results
Number of rankings: Why no more than six?

- Allow for future opportunities to maximize voter’s opportunity to express more than three (3) preferences in any race.
  - Collaborate with Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and ES&S to identify opportunities
  - Could include changes in ballot design when technology is available and certified for use
- In Minneapolis it has been shown that three rankings is sufficient in most rankings, but allowing for up to six (6) may help reduce exhausted ballots in large competitive elections.
- St. Louis Park will likely not have as many candidates in any one race when compared to Minneapolis and St. Paul, but allowing for up to six (6) provides flexibility in the future if we need it.
Number of rankings: Why no more than six?

Number of contests that would have required RCV in SLP, and the number of contests that required RCV in cities that have used the system.