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

Equipment testing, reporting results, recounts, and post-election review
Policy Question

• Does the city council support the recommendations related to reporting of results, conducting recounts, testing of voting equipment, and post-election review?

Equity and Inclusion Considerations

• Are we putting procedures in place that will increase transparency and build trust in our voting system?

• How do we build trust?
  ➢ Be transparent about what will happen before, during, and after Election Day.
  ➢ Produce accurate results!
  ➢ Show the public **how** we achieved the results that were reported.
Equipment testing

• What happens now?
  - All voting equipment (Automarks and DS200) tested multiple times prior to Election Day.
  - Test decks are a pre-marked set of ballots with a pre-determined results.
  - Verify that Automark will correctly mark ballots using all methods supported by system.
  - Verify that DS200 will correctly count the votes cast for all candidates.
  - Testing procedures and requirements set by statute, including Public Accuracy Test.

• What will change?
  - In an RCV election, we must also test equipment to ensure that each ranking for each candidate is recorded properly and that the software being used to perform vote transfers and produce results is accurate.
  - Will require additional coordination with Hennepin County to verify that they are able to accurately produce the cast vote record needed for tabulation.
Results reporting

• What happens now?
  ➢ Precinct-level summary statements and results are prepared by election judges on election night.
  ➢ Precinct-level results are combined to produce city-wide results.
  ➢ Winners are declared and results are canvassed within timeframe prescribed by law.
  ➢ Canvassing board receives an election abstract that details precinct and city-wide results.

• What will change?
  ➢ Any races in which a winner cannot be declared with first-choice votes will be tabulated after Election Day –results will not be immediate.
  ➢ Summary statements will be prepared for each office in which a ranked-choice tabulation occurs.
  ➢ Election abstract will also include round-by-round results for any races in which the winner could not be declared with first-choice votes.

• Benefit
  ➢ Increased transparency –allow voters and candidates to see exactly how results are achieved.
Recounts

• Are there automatic recounts for municipal elections?
  
  ➢ No, state law does not provide for automatic recounts for municipal elections.
  ➢ Losing candidate can request a recount within seven days after the canvass of results.
  ➢ Scope of recount limited to determination of the number of votes validly cast for the office.

• Publicly funded recounts
  
  ➢ Recount conducted at city’s expense if the difference in the vote total between the losing candidate and winning candidate is less than one-half of one percent of the total votes counted for that office.
  ➢ Ex. If 1,000 votes are counted, the difference must be less than 5 votes.

• Discretionary recounts
  
  ➢ If difference in vote total is greater than threshold, the recount is done at candidate’s expense.
  ➢ In an RCV election, any recounts requested by a candidate eliminated prior to the final round of tabulation would be considered discretionary.
Post-election review

• Currently occurs at the direction of the county auditor.
  ➢ Precincts from Hennepin County are selected by lot for PER at the time results canvassed.
  ➢ County conducts PER, using a hand count procedure.
  ➢ Tests accuracy of voting system results.

• Recommendation
  ➢ Conduct a post-election review for all municipal elections, using a sampling of two precincts selected at time of canvass. Office of councilmember will always be reviewed.
  ➢ City staff (and election judges) will conduct review using a hand count procedure.
  ➢ Standard of acceptable performance = results cannot differ by more than one-half of one percent of the manual count.
  ➢ Because we will be using a new voting method, we must ensure the public trusts the accuracy of our equipment and results.