



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: General Purposes Committee
From: David Weber
Acting City Clerk
Date: February 19, 2003
File: 8125-30-01
Re: 2002 General Local and School Election Referrals

Staff Recommendation

That the report responding to election-related questions and issues (from the Acting City Clerk dated February 19, 2003), be received for information.

David Weber
Acting City Clerk
(4098)

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CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER

Staff Report

Origin

At the November 25, 2002 Regular Council meeting, a number of issues relating to the 2002 General Local and School Election were referred to staff for a report to the General Purposes Committee.

Analysis

The following issues and questions were referred to staff for reply:

1. Whether advance elector registration is held prior to Election Day

The Advance Elector Registration period was from August 5th to September 24th, 2002. The closure of the List of Registered Electors is regulated under the *Local Government Act*, and must occur 53 days prior to General Voting Day. This timeline is established so that a finalized list can be prepared in time for the public inspection period that coincides with the candidate nomination period.

The Local Government Act also requires that the closure of advance registration be duly advertised, therefore, "Are you registered?" notices appeared in local newspapers on August 11th, 18th and 25th, 2002; and, the closure of advance elector registration was advertised on September 12th and 19th, 2002.

During this time, electors, and those who qualify to vote, are asked to contact the Election Office to verify their status or to make arrangements to register. If anyone misses the advance registration period, they may still register to vote on General Voting Day or on any of the Advance Voting Days.

In total, only 59 new electors were registered during the advance registration period in 2002, as compared to 1,715 new registrations at the time of voting. In the past, election staff have set up registration tables in local malls and community centres during the advance registration period, but the resulting numbers of new registrants was very low. This experience, and similar experiences in other jurisdictions, have shown that most people will not go out of their way to register in advance if they know that they can register to vote at the time of voting.

2. The feasibility of having one day of advance voting take place on a Saturday prior to Election Day.

Having an advance voting day on a Saturday is entirely possible and this direction will be noted for future municipal elections.

There are two required days of advance voting: the first day is established by the Local Government Act as the 10th day before General Voting Day and the second day is established by bylaw as the 9th day before General Voting Day (the Wednesday and Thursday in the week prior to Election Day). Richmond usually holds four advance voting days - the other two days are established by the Chief Election Officer as authorized by bylaw.

3. The feasibility of publishing an election map in a local newspaper which shows the voting places and how a resident's address relates to a specific voting place.

In the past, election advertisements have not included a map primarily due to costs. Such a map, showing the 34 voting divisions and printed large enough to show sufficient detail, would likely require a full newspaper page, the cost of which is approximately \$1,200 per appearance, adding a further \$7,200 to the cost of the General Notice of Election (which is published 3 times in each of two local newspapers).

Instead, a listing of all 34 voting place addresses is published in the newspapers as required by the *Local Government Act*, and a small map of the voting place location is included on the "Where to Vote" postcard that is mailed to Richmond households.

More detailed maps, that show individual streets within each voting division have been made available on the City website for the last two elections and we look forward to enhancing this service using the new GIS public inquiry and its address search feature to provide even more customized election maps in 2005. Another idea that we will be looking at in 2005 is incorporating even more election information, including a detailed map, into the "Election Flyer" that was mailed to every Richmond household for the first time in 2002. We are looking at the possibility of combining an enhanced "Flyer" with the "Where to Vote" postcard as a cost-saving measure since the flyer includes much more information, has the potential to reach more people (both registered and un-registered residents), and could save approximately \$30,000 dollars from the election budget.

4. The relationship of voting places to senior citizen housing developments and the feasibility of allowing the residents of these developments to vote at the voting place which is located closest to them.

The Local Government Act states that if a jurisdiction adopts a divisional voting model for an election, then electors *must* vote within the voting division in which they reside. Unfortunately, the Act does not allow exceptions to this rule. Voting divisions are usually established for most larger jurisdictions which have multiple voting places in order to more evenly distribute voting across the jurisdiction and to help reduce the possibility of electoral fraud.

However, Richmond does offer mobile polling for senior citizen housing and in 2002, Election Officials visited Gilmore Gardens, Pinecrest, Minoru Residence, Courtyard Gardens, Fraserview, Lions Manor and Rosewood Manor. A total of 125 ballots were cast at mobile polls for the last election. In addition, individuals who live at home but cannot attend a voting place due to physical disability or impairment are eligible to receive a mail ballot up to and including Election Day and a total of 38 mail ballots were issued for the last election. Individuals who can drive or be driven to a voting place, but are unable to get out of their car due to physical disability or impairment, can vote at the curb-side with the assistance of the Presiding Election Official.

5. Intercultural Advisory Committee Referral

In response to the Council referral regarding the inclusiveness of the election process, the Intercultural Advisory Committee has invited the Chief Election Officer to their March 20, 2003 meeting to begin a dialogue on this issue.

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Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

That the report, responding to election-related questions and issues, be received for information.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Weber". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

David Weber
Acting City Clerk
(4098)