

ELECTIONS COMMISSION
City and County of San Francisco

**BUDGET AND OVERSIGHT OF PUBLIC
ELECTIONS COMMITTEE (BOPEC)**

Christopher Jerdonek, Chairperson
Nancy Hayden Crowley
Robin M. Stone



John Arntz, Director of Elections

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES (DRAFT)
(Approved XXXX)

Budget and Oversight of Public Elections Committee (BOPEC)
of the San Francisco Elections Commission
Tuesday, January 31, 2023 – 3:00 p.m.

Order of Business

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Jerdonek called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Roll call:

Present: Chair Christopher Jerdonek, Commissioner Nancy Hayden Crowley, and President Robin M. Stone.

Also in attendance: Director John Arntz and Deputy City Attorney Ana Flores.

President Stone stated the Commission's Land Acknowledgment.

2. General Public Comment

Brent Turner reported that Shasta County's Board of Supervisors voted to remove Dominion Voting Systems from the county and that a New Jersey Senator introduced legislation mandating that voting systems in the state be open source.

Deputy City Attorney Flores said that BOPEC doesn't need to adopt the resolution in the following agenda item because the motion that the full Commission passed covers committees.

3. Discussion and Possible Action on Resolution on Continuation of Remote Elections Commission Meetings

No public comment.

The committee moved on to the next item without discussion.

4. Discussion and Possible Action on Department of Elections' Proposed 2023 – 2025 Budget

Chair Jerdonek reviewed that this would be the first of two required reviews of the Department's proposed budget.

Director Arntz summarized that the Department's budget proposals represent just over \$24 million for FY 2023-24 and around \$27.6 million for FY 2024-25. He said that the Mayor's Office issued instructions for Departments to seek to reduce their budgets by 5% in FY 2023-24 and 8% in FY 2024-25.

He reviewed that in November 2022, voters approved local Measure H. This measure moved the local contests that would have been in a November 2023 election to the November 2024 election. This saves about \$9 million from not having a November 2023 election, but adds about \$2.1 million for the following elections, resulting in a net savings of about \$7 million, which meets the Mayor's reduction targets.

He said that AB 1416 is another legislation change affecting Department costs. It requires the proponents and opponents of state measures to be printed directly on the ballots, which the Department thinks would increase the space needed for state measures by almost 50%. Consequently, he expects to have at least one more card in each of the two 2024 elections due to this increased space.

Director Arntz said that if the Commission would like to request any additional expenditures for the Commission, the Commission should send him the information, along with a justification for the changes to provide to the Mayor's Office.

Commissioner Hayden Crowley asked how the budget is impacted if a special election is needed. Director Arntz replied that the Board would likely need to do a special appropriation and summarized some of the associated costs.

Commissioner Hayden Crowley asked about the new equipment being requested for sorting and extracting. Director Arntz said that tests show the equipment can handle up to 7 cards with the current style of envelope. The Department could also reduce the number of folds and increase the size of the envelope to make the envelope less thick and allow more cards – potentially going to 8. Commissioner Hayden Crowley suggested asking for additional funds to allow for additional changes to equipment in case of unexpected issues. Director Arntz said the Department could also go to monolingual ballots to reduce the card count.

President Stone thanked Director Arntz for providing a robust memo about the budget. President Stone asked about the possible use of the Bill Graham Auditorium, as has been done in the past. Director Arntz said that it cost about \$800,000 to rent the space for five or six weeks.

President Stone asked about the replacement of computer servers. Director Arntz said that each year they ask to replace two servers to spread out the costs, instead of replacing them all at once. President Stone asked about the possibility of using automatic voter signature-verification, as opposed to manual. Director Arntz said this topic has come up in the past, and that they have chosen to preserve the human element in the review process.

Chair Jerdonek asked about the deadline to pass legislation regarding the AB 1416 ballot labels for local measures. Director Arntz said the deadline works out to 118 days before Election Day. Director Arntz said he doesn't know how the Department would be able to conduct the election if the Board were to adopt it. President Stone suggested the idea of instead including a line in the ballot telling voters that they can go to the Voting Information Pamphlet to learn who the proponents and opponents of local measures are.

Chair Jerdonek asked about the history behind the choice of bilingual ballots. Director Arntz explained that before Filipino was supported as a language the Department used trilingual ballots.

Commissioner Hayden Crowley asked about the success of the grant program to groups doing voter outreach and what kinds of accountability there are around the program. Director Arntz said the program has been working very well and that they require various reports to be filled out for accountability and before the groups can receive the funds. Commissioner Hayden Crowley asked about the use of social media and whether the Department budgets money for it.

President Stone said the community groups she has interacted with have had very positive things to say about the grant program and that expanding the program would be helpful. President Stone asked if there would be a comparable increase in the grants given the increased scale of the elections in 2024.

President Stone said the Department of Justice changed the font of all their materials from Times New Roman to Calibri for accessibility reasons. She asked if a change of font could also help with addressing the length of the ballots. Director Arntz said they have looked at different fonts in the past, including their effect on other languages and the length of the ballot.

President Stone encouraged Commissioner Hayden Crowley to put in the request for Chromebooks if that is something of interest to her.

Chair Jerdonek asked about some of the cost breakdowns, like the \$2.65 million shown in the FY 2023-24 pie chart for Voter Information Pamphlet (VIP) translation

and production. Director Arntz said VIP translation and formatting is one vendor (InterEthnica), VIP production and printing is another vendor (Toppan Merrill), and the prep for mailing and labeling on the back cover is another vendor (to be determined), and the post office does the mailing. Chair Jerdonek asked about the breakdown of the printing cost in Table 3, which is \$4.1 million in FY 2023-24. Director Arntz said the printing of the ballots and VIP's is around \$1.4 million and \$1.9 million, respectively, for March. For November, the amounts are \$3.2 million and \$2.7 million. Chair Jerdonek asked how much of the \$1.7 million for Misc Facilities Rental in Table 3 is for the warehouse lease. Director Arntz said \$1.56 million. He also asked about the \$180,000 for Prop J vote-by-mail processing. Director Arntz said that is a printing cost under Ballot Printing & Assembly, and the vendor is K&H Printers.

President Stone asked if there are any feedback loops on the translations from the public to the vendor. Director Arntz said their translation vendor receives very positive reviews and gets a lot of input from people. Director Arntz said the Department is part of a small working group of counties that reviews and provides feedback to the state on its translations and that it's not uncommon for the Department's translations from its vendor to be used at the state level, especially for Chinese. Director Arntz also said they still use traditional characters for Chinese rather than the simplified characters.

Public comment:

Brent Turner said San Francisco could be saving \$1 million per year by moving to an open-source voting system, like Mississippi and New Hampshire have started to do.

President Stone suggested putting the Department's budget documents on the Commission's website for the public, once the documents are more finalized.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:31 p.m.