



Memorandum

To: Elections Commission
From: John Arntz, Director
Date: April 14, 2023
RE: Director's Report: April 19, 2023, Elections Commission Meeting

Following is a brief listing of the work and related information in which the Department of Elections (Department) has been engaged since the previous report issued in relation to the Elections Commission meeting on March 15, 2023.

I. The Department plans to launch its new *sf.gov* website on Friday, April 21, ahead of schedule.

- A. Department staff have revised nearly 40 webpages and uploaded them to the Drupal Content Management System. The content of these new pages is much simpler, with an approximate average reading level of 5th grade.
- B. Department staff have been working on translating new webpages into Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino, with a goal of publishing most translated pages on April 21, along with the launch of the English pages.
- C. To ensure that URLs of "old" pages are properly redirected to new pages, Department staff have also been working on a "redirecting roadmap." Digital Services engineers will use this roadmap to set up a redirection structure for "old" pages to new *sf.gov* pages.
- D. The new site will have several notable changes in appearance and functionality in relation to the Department's legacy site. For instance, the new site limits customization and requires all content fit into prescribed templates. The Department will no longer be able to use custom HTML on the *sf.gov* site. Other differences include:
 - i. The new *sf.gov* site also does not support navigation bars or page hierarchies, as it uses a "flat" design approach that prioritizes traffic coming from search engines. This means that users can only navigate from one service page to another via the hyperlinks added to that page. Users will no longer be able to navigate using pull down menus that allow moving to different pages listed under one menu category. This new design removes the navigation pane located at the top of the homepage. Instead, main topics will be presented vertically as categories such as "Services", "News", and "Resources".
 - ii. The new *sf.gov* site does not support Graphics Interchange Format (GIFs) for any pages. Neither does it support images in service pages or tables wider than 3 columns. The Department is currently exploring alternate ways to present the data tables it currently hosts on its Measures and Candidates page. One option is to host the existing tables on *sfelections.org*, which we can edit, and another is to convert the tables into fairly long lists of text.
- E. On April 17, the Department will introduce all staff members to the new website to ensure they can assist members of the public with questions about the new pages. As part of this orientation, staff will familiarize themselves with the new website structure, navigate through its pages, and take a short quiz to test their knowledge of the new site.

- F. Department staff are now updating voter-facing tools, all of which must continue to be hosted on *sfelections.org* due to *sf.gov* limitations. The goal of this project is to simplify the content and update the design of all the tools to more closely resemble the *sf.gov* pages.

II. The Department continues to provide voter outreach and education to communities across the City.

- A. In recent weeks, the Department's Outreach Team has participated in a number of neighborhood events, hosting resource tables, and distributing outreach materials about voting and registration options. These events were co-hosted with the Five Keys Resource Fair, which provides professional development resources to formerly incarcerated individuals and helps them transition back into society; Support for Families of Children with Disabilities Information and Resource Conference, which helps families who have children with disabilities find resources to support their children on the path to academic and life success; Project Homeless Connect, which provides services to housing insecure individuals; SF Pathways to Citizenship Initiative Workshop, which provides services to recent immigrants; and Glide Memorial Church, which provides meals and services to homeless and housing insecure individuals and their families.
- B. In February, the Department issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) with the goal of partnering with local nonprofits to supplement its outreach efforts to actively and formerly justice-involved individuals. Following the March 17 deadline for submission of proposals to this RFP, the Department's selection panel evaluated each of the eight proposals received and awarded funds to seven organizations: 1) Humanmade, 2) Goodwill Industries, 3) Chinese Newcomers Service Center, 4) Saved by Grace, 5) San Francisco Rising, 6) Open Door Legal, and 7) Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice. One of the eight submitted proposals was deemed non-responsive because it did not demonstrate one of the minimum requirements, namely, to be in good standing with the State of California's Registry of Charitable Trusts.

The Department has begun negotiations with all selected organizations and intends to execute all grant agreements by May 31. Following the negotiation period, the Department will train all seven grantees, reviewing the official outreach messages and materials grantees will be using over the course of grant activities. The duration of this grant is from June 1, 2023 through November 1, 2023.

- C. In preparation for the annual High School Voter Education Weeks (April 17-28), the Department trained a group of student ambassadors to conduct voter pre-registration and registration drives at their schools. This year, 16 students from 11 local high schools will participate in the Department's High School Student Ambassador Program. Through partnership with Youth Works and the Mayor's Youth Employment and Education Program, the Department secured financial support for this program, ensuring that each participating student can receive up to \$550 for their efforts. The Department plans to expand the scope of this program in 2024 to possibly double the number of students who can participate and receive stipends.
- D. On Friday, April 21, one day before Earth Day, the Department will launch its Go Green! outreach campaign. This campaign will utilize several outreach strategies to remind voters that they have the option to stop postal delivery of the Voter Information Pamphlet (VIP) and instead opt in to reading it online. Some of these strategies include:
 - i. On Friday, April 21, the Department will send an email to nearly 220,000 voters, encouraging them to switch to the digital VIP. This email will also highlight the different benefits of reading the VIP online – each of which may speak to different voters – such as saving taxpayer dollars, reducing carbon emissions, and experiencing the

convenience of digital copy. The email will also encourage households receiving more than one paper VIP to consider having all but one voter opt out so that their household can share one paper copy.

- ii. Starting Friday, April 21, the homepage of the Department's new *sf.gov* website will prominently feature the "Go Green" message and will offer easy ways for voters to submit paper opt out requests.
- iii. On Earth Day, Saturday, April 22, the Department's Outreach Team will join other San Franciscans to celebrate in Golden Gate Park at the County Fair Building. At this event, outreach staff will raise awareness of options regarding delivery of the VIP and help those who want to opt out of postal delivery for future elections.
- iv. For a two-week period, beginning Earth Day, Saturday, April 22, the Department's "Go Green" messaging will be displayed on digital boards located across the City, with 181 screens available to promote this outreach campaign using environmentally friendly media. These digital boards are estimated to produce over 350,000 impressions. During this period, the "Go Green" messaging will also be displayed online, through digital banners that are specifically targeted to reach over 200,000 San Franciscans on their favorite sports, news, and entertainment websites.
- v. The Department has partnered with the Department of Environment to make the "Go Green" message part of their outreach and to distribute Department-produced materials on this topic at their events.
- vi. The Department has also partnered with the San Francisco Public library to include the "Go Green" message on digital information boards at all library branches and in their digital newsletter, which will be sent to nearly 300,000 subscribers.
- vii. In the coming months, the Department will encourage San Franciscans to go green via TV, radio, and print ads, and social media. The Department's Outreach Team will also partner with local nonprofit organizations and other city agencies to help deliver messages about the benefits of switching to the digital VIP.

III. The Department continues to work on numerous short, mid, and long-term administrative projects.

- A. The Department has completed its 2022 Racial Equity Progress Report (Attachment A) and will submit it, as required, to the Office of Racial Equity by May 8, 2023. Should the Commission choose to provide an update on their work to be included with the Department's submission, it must submit that update to the Director by Thursday, May 4, 2023.
- B. The Department has received notice of three special elections scheduled for the near future:
 - i. The first special election is occurring because the elected retired trustee of the Retiree Health Care Trust Fund Board has resigned, creating a vacancy for the remainder of their term. The Department must thus conduct the Retiree Health Care Trust Fund Special Board Election, preparing and mailing ballots and voting packets to all individuals who are in the City's Health Service System no later than Monday, June 26, 2023. Following the close of voting on Tuesday, August 1, 2023, the Department will count voted ballots received and certify the election.
 - ii. The second special election is occurring because the elected trustee of the Retirement Board resigned, creating a vacancy for the remainder of their term. The Department must thus conduct the Retirement Board Special Election, preparing and mailing ballots and voting packets to all active and retired members of the

Retirement System no later than Monday, June 26, 2023. Following the close of voting on Tuesday, August 8, 2023, the Department will count voted ballots received and certify the election.

- iii. The third special election is occurring because the Board of Supervisors introduced a resolution of Intention to Establish the Excelsior Community Benefit District. The Department must thus conduct the Excelsior Community Benefit District Election, preparing and mailing ballots to all property owners in the Excelsior Community Benefit District by Friday, May 26. Following the close of voting on Tuesday, July 11, the Department will count voted ballots received and certify the election.
 - C. Last month, the Department launched a voter notification program to let former San Francisco voters who had become ineligible to vote due to imprisonment know about the restoration of their voting rights following release. The Department has been mailing such notices to these individuals on a weekly basis, with 91 notices mailed to date. The Department will send follow-up notices to voters who do not take action (register to vote) after receiving earlier notices.
 - D. This month, the Department will launch another voter notification program for voters who have registered to vote without selecting either a political party preference or "no party preference". (These voters have an "Unknown" party preference designation in their records. Voters who do not resolve their "Unknown" party preference can still vote, and have the same voting options as those registered with no party preference.) The notices will inform voters that they left the Party Preference field blank and explain how the voter's party preference – or lack thereof – will impact the contests on voter's ballot in the upcoming primary election. The notices will also explain how the recipients can provide such information to the Department to be entered in their voter record.
 - E. The Department continues to carry out voter file maintenance, including the processing of online and paper affidavits of registration and the sending of notices on a weekly basis to voters who have recently registered or re-registered.
 - F. The Department continues to provide routine services to members of the public who visit the Department's office in person as well as those who contact the Department via email or phone.
- IV. Responses to the Commission's request for information to be included in the Director's monthly report.**
- A. There are no new items to report under this section.