



Memorandum

To: Elections Commission
From: John Arntz, Director
Date: March 15, 2024
RE: Director's Report: March 20, 2024, 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 February 14, 2024.

- I. The Department has completed most March 5 election cycle activities and released preliminary results reports.**
- A. For the March primary election cycle, the Department delivered a full array of multilingual, multiformat voter outreach to City residents and provided equitable registration and voting services to more than half a million local voters. After the polls had closed, the Department provided preliminary election results and is now working to complete all necessary post-election canvass activities before certifying election results.
 - B. Successfully completed tasks thus far include 1) facilitation of nomination papers filing for 120 local candidates, 2) processing of all necessary documents for seven local ballot measures and 118 local ballot arguments, 3) processing of over 20,000 voter record updates and new registrations, 4) provision of multilingual and multi-format information at approximately 250 neighborhood events, 5) prompt telephone and email response to over 5,500 public inquiries, 6) production of a two-card ballot in three bilingual formats, with 120 ballot faces and seven ballot types, 7) publication of 49 versions of the Voter Information Pamphlet, varying by voter ballot type as well as by party, language and format preference, 8) administration of vote-by-mail services for half a million voters, 9) procurement and operation of 501 polling places, 10) administration of City Hall voting service for nearly one month, 11) recruitment and training of approximately 2,000 adult and 400 high school student poll workers, and 12) organization and training of more than 100 Deputy Sheriffs and 90 Municipal Transportation Agency Officers to securely retrieve vote data and ballots.
 - C. On Election Night, the Department securely collected all vote data after the close of the polls and reported preliminary election results. In order to properly coordinate all Election Day tasks, the Department operated 1) the Election Center, which provided support to local poll workers from 5:15 a.m. until approximately midnight; 2) the Poll Worker Dispatch Center, which fulfilled requests for back-up poll workers between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m.; 3) the Data Collection Center, which received and uploaded 501 memory cards delivered by MTA officers between the close of the polls and midnight; and 4) the Processing Center, which received voted ballots and other vital materials from each of the 501 sites, delivered by Deputy Sheriffs between the close of the polls and approximately 2 a.m. the following morning.
 - D. On Election Night, the Department issued four preliminary summary results reports, along with the Statement of the Vote, which showed local election results data by precinct, district, and neighborhood, as well as the Cast Vote Record, which contained raw data of votes cast in the election. The Department also transmitted preliminary election results to the Secretary of State (SOS) via a secure process (which had passed two SOS systems and certification tests in advance).

- E. On March 6, the Department began posting the approximate number of ballots left to count on its website on a daily basis. Most such ballots have been returned to the Department on or after the Election Day and include vote-by-mail ballots received by mail, at drop boxes, and at polling places, as well as in-person provisional ballots cast at polling places and the City Hall Voting Center. The following day, i.e., on March 7, the Department began issuing preliminary results reports on a daily basis, announcing those results postings via press releases and social media, and facilitating question and answer sessions with Director Arntz and members of the media and the public at City Hall.
- F. Over the last several months, seasonal and full-time Department staff, worked to conduct this election in a free, fair, functional, and legally-compliant manner, and in accordance with the March 5 Election Plan. Many voters took notice of the Department's efforts, providing encouraging feedback such as the following comments:

"Thanks so much for your helpful responsiveness and everything you do to conduct elections in San Francisco" -Julie

"Thank so much for clarifying and explaining my options; you've been absolutely brilliant in helping me work through the voting process."-Matt V

"Thank you so much for your kind email and for taking care of my request so promptly!"-Lila

"Thank you sooooo much!! I am so impressed by your lightning speed and kindness in giving me this detailed, crystal clear response!" -Philip M.

"Thanks, SF Dept of Elections. I wish more cities/counties/states protected the right to vote."-Wendy

"Thank you so much for your help. I was repeating the same wrong action in panic until you clarified. You are awesome! Hope your year is smooth and not stressful!"-Jo

II. The Department continues to count ballots and to conduct other post-election activities for the March 5 Election.

- A. According to the Secretary of State's last statewide report, San Francisco is currently leading in voter turnout among 15 counties with more than 350,000 voters. (This report remains unofficial until all counties finish processing ballots.)
- i. The average voter turnout in presidential primary elections since 1972 is around 50%. The turnout for the March 5 Election is currently nearly 47%.
 - ii. As of March 15, the total number of ballots counted and reported so far is 233,279. While the Department may identify more valid ballots during canvass and tally a small number of cured, challenged ballots before certification, the Department has processed a majority of cast ballots in the March 5 Election.
- B. As of March 15, the Department has counted 203,885 VBM ballots and challenged 3,221 VBM ballots. In accordance with state law, the Department has only challenged VBM ballots in cases where 1) the ballot envelope was not signed, 2) the signature on the envelope did not compare to any on file, 3) the voter had already voted in the election (e.g., at a polling place), 4) the return envelope contained no ballot, or 5) the envelope was postmarked or returned late. The Department has contacted all voters with curable ballots within 24 hours of receipt via the Voter Portal, postal mail, email, and/or telephone. To date, 288 voters have cured challenged VBM ballots. The Department will continue to cure ballots up through two days before certification.

- C. The Department has concluded review of the nearly 6,200 provisional (PV) ballots cast at polling places on Election Day, of which 5,950 were accepted and counted, and 221 remain challenged. Challenge reasons, cure procedures, and cure timelines parallel those for VBM ballots.
- D. On March 6, the Department commenced the Official Canvass. Among the major duties mandated during this period is the manual tally of 1% of neighborhood precinct ballots as well as 1% of citywide VBM and PV ballots, all randomly-chosen. The manual tally is conducted to verify San Francisco's voting equipment has properly tabulated ballots and accurately reported results, and is open to public observation both in person and via live stream on [sfelections.org](https://www.sfelections.org).
 - i. On Thursday, March 14 at 10 a.m., the Department randomly selected precincts and batches to include in the manual tally.
 - ii. At 8:30 a.m. on March 18, the Department will begin tallying selected ballots in its warehouse on Pier 31.
- E. The Department continues retrieving supplies and equipment from polling places for transport to the Department's warehouse on Pier 31, where personnel will check all such items prior to securely storing them.
- F. The Department is almost done processing stipends for the nearly 2,400 poll workers and 501 polling place providers who provided assistance in the March 5 Election, and is now preparing to mail stipend checks.
- G. The Department continues post-election voter roll maintenance processes. These include:
 - i. The review of rosters for new language preferences and corresponding updates to voter records;
 - ii. The scanning of signed forms for attachment to voter records (for future ballot processing signature comparison);
 - iii. The resumption of registration and maintenance messages processing through the state's VoteCal; and
 - iv. The resumption of the mailing of voter notification cards related to registration application processing.
- H. The Department will certify the March 5 Election by the state's legal deadline of April 4, 2024. Upon certification, the Department will post final election results on its website and announce the results via a press release.

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

- A. San Francisco's Office of Racial Equity has recently set the deadline for 2023 Racial Equity Progress Report submissions to Monday, May 13, 2024 (all departments/commissions must use the templates attached as Appendix 1). Accordingly, the Department has begun preparing its 2023 Racial Equity Progress Report, which provides an opportunity to reflect on its initiatives from FY 2023-24 and reprioritize actions for FY 2024-25. Should the Commission decide to provide an update on their own work for inclusion with the Department's submission, the Director requests the Commission provide that update to him no later than Thursday, May 9, 2024.
- B. The Department has begun planning its next biannual High School Ambassador Program, which will take place during the next High School Voter Education Weeks period, i.e., between April 15 and April 26. Through this program, the Department invites local high school students to serve as Election Ambassadors, to learn and then teach others about electoral processes, voter registration requirements, and registration processes. Department staff will help each student Ambassador develop an impactful and informed Outreach Plan and

will then follow up with individualized support and guidance. Through this program, many Ambassadors have gained leadership skills and exposure to civic operations while providing a critical service to the community by amplifying messaging about the importance of voter registration and voting.

- C. In 2017, the Department secured a Memorandum of Understanding with the Port of San Francisco to lease Pier 31 for its warehouse operations. Shortly afterward, the Department completed all necessary renovations at Pier 31 (these included leveling the floor, developing a new security system, constructing restrooms, and installing secure fencing for voting equipment), then relocated its warehouse operation to the new site. Last month, the Department successfully extended this lease with the City to maintain its warehouse operations at Pier 31 through 2027.
- D. Digital and Data Services have recently notified the Department that, in December 2024, the City will move *SF.gov* off of its current content management system, Drupal onto [Wagtail](#). It is hoped that the new system will be more flexible, secure, and functional for department editors. As part of this transition, the City also plans to improve the look of *SF.gov*, incorporating feedback from stakeholders on design improvements. In the coming months, Department staff will be working with Digital Services and Data staff to fully develop and undertake the work necessary to ensure a smooth transition to Wagtail.

IV. Responses to the Commission's request for information to be included in the Director's monthly report.

Data on registration rates and outreach events: 1) Total new registrations, 2) New registrations by supervisory districts, 3) Tactics employed (outreach, community engagement, grant funding, etc.) and in which districts, 4) Tactics employed by districts.

- A. Between February 1 – February 29, the Department processed affidavits for 2,893 new registrants, residing in the following Supervisorial Districts: (SD) 1 – 216, SD 2 – 330, SD 3 – 313, SD 4 – 174, SD 5 – 356, SD 6 – 341, SD 7 – 239, SD 8 – 308, SD 9 – 247, SD 10 – 206, SD 11 – 163.
- B. Between February 1 – February 29, the Department conducted 100 outreach events; which had approximately 10,300 people in attendance collectively. The number of such events by Supervisorial District was: SD 1 – 9, SD 2 – 3, SD 3 – 14, SD 4 – 2, SD 5 – 13, SD 6 – 28, SD 7 – 10, SD 9 – 12, SD 10 – 7, SD 11 – 2.