

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

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July 9, 2014

The Honorable E. Bradley Nelson
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Solano Superior Court
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

RE: Response to the 2013/2014 Grand Jury Report – Registrar of Voters

Dear Honorable Presiding Judge Nelson:

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933(c) and 933.05, I am responding to the findings and recommendations in the FY2013/14 Grand Jury Report received on May 27, 2014 on the Registrar of Voters that pertain to matters under my control as the Chief Information Officer and Registrar of Voters.

Finding 1

There has been an increase in the amount of cross training from 2013 and 2014. Areas requested have reduced and areas learned have increased.

Response to Finding 1

The Registrar of Voters agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 1A

ROV management continue to provide avenues for employee training and improvement.

Response to Recommendation 1A

This recommendation has been implemented. Part of the cross-training plan for all employees includes professional development. Management will continue to support staff in participation of the California Association of Clerks and Elections Officials (CACEO) conferences, CACEO training and election certification courses, and vendor conferences and training on election processes and procedures statewide.

Recommendation 1B

Employees should seek out opportunity for one-on-one individual cross-training with their peers.

Response to Recommendation 1B

This recommendation has been implemented. Staff has opportunities between elections and during lower turnout elections to learn new aspects of the election process.

Finding 2

There is no mechanism in place to encourage employees to cross-train.

Response to Finding 2

The Registrar of Voters disagrees wholly with this finding as set forth in our responses to Finding 1 and Recommendations 1A and 1B.

Recommendation 2

Management should encourage more employees to participate in cross-training. Incentives should be considered to motivate employees and inspire cross-training.

Response to Recommendation 2

This recommendation has been implemented. The Registrar of Voters has taken a two part approach to cross-training. In addition to supporting professional development within Elections Administration, management provides opportunities through mock-elections and low-turnout elections for staff to engage in cross-training activities. During 2012, a mock-election was conducted to revamp the vote by mail receiving process. The office was between elections, and all staff participated to help review existing procedures and create new procedures to help more efficiently and securely process vote by mail ballots. Management will continue to conduct mock-elections during non-election time to use as a cross-training tool.

Finding 3

The Deputy Registrar of Voters position has been vacant for approximately three years. The current Recruitment #13-167080-01 Deputy Registrar of Voters had a filing deadline date of January 31, 2014. As of March 19, 2014, this position has not been filled.

Response to Finding 3

The Registrar of Voters disagrees wholly with the finding that the position has been vacant for three years. The Deputy Registrar position was first approved by the Board of Supervisors effective July 1, 2011. A recruitment was subsequently opened and the position filled by John Gardner on 10/31/11. The Assistant Registrar retired effective 5/5/12. John Gardner, while still in his Deputy position, performed the duties of Assistant Registrar on an interim basis until 11/11/12 when he was promoted to Assistant Registrar. The department held the Deputy position vacant for approximately one year due to financial conditions within the County. The position was then opened for recruitment in December 11, 2013 with a filing deadline of January 31, 2014. An offer was extended to

a candidate on April 18, 2014 and was accepted.

Recommendation 3

Efforts to fill this position with a qualified candidate should be expedited.

Response to Recommendation 3

The recommendation has been implemented. An offer was extended to a candidate on April 18, 2014 and was accepted.

Finding 4

Planning for use of the County Events Center for poll worker training was not cost effective resulting in an unnecessary cost of \$4,978.

Response to Finding 4

The Registrar of Voters partially agrees with this finding. County departments are charged for the use of the Events Center through the A-87 cost allocation plan. The costs for the Event Center from the November 2013 Election will not be allocated to ROV until Fiscal Year 2015-16. When Event Center space goes unused the cost is allocated to the General Fund. Since ROV is a General Fund department, the allocated cost would have the same impact on the General Fund whether the space was charged to ROV or went unused.

Recommendation 4

Improve planning and scheduling of poll worker training and investigate utilization of the conference rooms in the Government Center.

Response to Recommendation 4

This recommendation requires further analysis. Due to the number of classroom hours required for poll worker training, ROV needs to plan out its space requirements months in advance. For the November 2013 Election, we planned for our space/training needs in July. At the time, we had to assume that all districts would participate in the election and corresponding impact that would have on needed training sessions. The Solano Irrigation District on its own would have added about 10 additional precincts generating the need for an additional 5 classes (had the district participated in the election, total costs of the election would have increased by approximately \$80,000 which would have been billable to the district). We also anticipated a separate roving inspector class due to the size of the election. Moreover, extra time is needed to setup and tear down the training equipment – 24 M100 Ballot Scanners, 24 AutoMarks, and 35 E-Rosters. Additionally, contingency time needed to be scheduled for make-up classes in the event poll workers did not attend their scheduled class. In the future, even-year elections will all be county-wide and we will not have major fluctuations in the number of precincts and poll workers leading up to the election which will help to make space planning more accurate. However, there will always likely be reserved space that goes unused because of the logistics involved in moving and setting up equipment, accommodating evening and weekend training times, and also allowing for contingencies, such as make-up classes.

Finding 5

Election cost estimates are substantially below actual final election costs.

Response to Finding 5

The Registrar of Voters disagrees partially with this finding.

Recommendation 5

Improve the accuracy of election cost estimates.

Response to Recommendation 5

This recommendation requires further analysis. The Registrar of Voters has a standard for estimating election costs and our typical estimate is \$7.00 to \$10.00 per registered voter. At the time of providing the estimates for the November 2013 election, more jurisdictions were still participating in the election and that would have reduced some of the costs borne by individual districts. The 2013 election was a unique case in that it was neither a stand-alone election, nor was it a county-wide election due to many districts switching to the even-year election cycle. Now that the vast majority of districts are on the even-year cycle ROV will need to re-analyze cost metrics and develop new estimating algorithms.

Finding 6

ROV incurred additional workload as a result of the City of Vallejo and Travis Unified School District holding special elections in 2013. This incurred additional costs to the City of Vallejo and Travis Unified School District.

Response to Finding 6

The Registrar of Voters disagrees partially with this finding. Both of these districts were regularly scheduled to participate in the 2013 Consolidated Districts Election (UDEL). The ROV workload was actually reduced significantly by many districts changing to participate in the even-year election schedule. The City of Vallejo was not able to switch to the even-year calendar due to its charter which required a vote of the people to enable the change.

Recommendation 6

City of Vallejo and Travis Unified School District should comply with the County decision to hold elections in even years.

Response to Recommendation 6

This recommendation has been implemented. However, the County did not decide to hold elections in even years. The State Election Code allows for elections in April, June and November of even years and March, June and November of odd years. Districts can choose the election cycle in which they wish to participate. Due to the trend in voter turn-out and the cost of running elections many districts on the odd-year UDEL cycle decided to switch to the even-year cycle. Both the City of Vallejo and the Travis Unified School District have since switched to the even-year calendar. Other districts that have recently switched include:

Benicia USD
Dixon USD
Fairfield Suisun USD
Vacaville USD
Vallejo City USD
Winters Joint USD

City of Benicia
City of Fairfield
Solano County Board of Education
Solano Irrigation District
Cordelia Fire Protection District

Districts remaining on the UDEL odd-year cycle are Maine Prairie Water District, and the North Delta Water District. Both are very small districts.

Finding 7

The City of Rio Vista, Benicia City Library and Dixon Public Library have not paid monies owed to Solano County.

Response to Finding 7

The Registrar of Voters agrees with this finding.

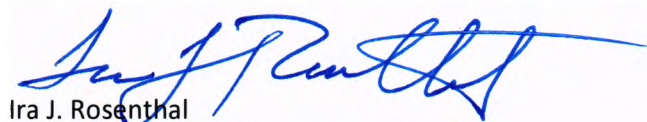
Recommendation 7

Efforts to collect any past due election costs/services should be prioritized.

Response to Recommendation 7

This recommendation has been implemented. All outstanding revenue was collected in April. The Registrar of Voters has implemented a process to review revenue collection on a quarterly basis.

Respectfully submitted,



Ira J. Rosenthal
Chief Information Officer / Registrar of Voters

cc: Grand Jury
Board of Supervisors
Birgitta Corsello, County Administrator
Dennis Bunting, County Counsel
Marc Fox, Director of Human Resources
Mike Lango, Director of General Services