



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of May 12, 2022

To: Committee of the Whole
From: Curt Kingsley, City Clerk
Bill Eisenhauer, Head of Engagement
Subject: 2022 General Local Election
Date: May 3, 2022

RECOMMENDATION

That Council appoint Curt Kingsley as Chief Election Officer for the 2022 General Local Election and that Christine Havelka, Crystal Anderson, and Grant Diamond be appointed as Deputy Chief Election Officers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The general local election for 2022 in British Columbia is October 15, 2022. Local governments are required to appoint a Chief Election Officer and Deputy Chief Election Officer(s) to oversee and manage the election process.

Voting places will be located at 13 sites that are geographically distributed across the City on General Voting Day, Saturday, October 15, 2022. The same voting and reporting machines utilized for the 2018 election and 2020 by-election will be used for the 2022 election.

The City will again exceed the minimum legislated advertisement requirements with the communications tools, strategies, and lessons learned in previous general local elections.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to request Council appoint the Chief Election Officer and Deputy Chief Election Officers for the upcoming general local election, and to provide Council an overview of voter engagement strategies for the upcoming election.

BACKGROUND

The *Community Charter* requires each local government in British Columbia to hold a general local election with a General Voting Day of October 15, 2022. The *Local Government Act* prescribes the statutory requirements for the election. Local governments are required to appoint a Chief Election Officer and Deputy Chief Election Officer(s) to oversee and manage the election process. All aspects of the election are under the management authority of the Chief Election Officer in accordance with the *Local Government Act* and the City's Election Procedures Bylaw. Campaign financing requirements for candidates and campaign organizers are managed by Elections BC under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

After the 2020 by-election, a Lesson's Learned report was presented to Council highlighting experiences and suggesting guidelines for subsequent local elections, attached as Appendix A.

The *Local Government Act* has minimum requirements for municipalities to advertise. City staff also monitor voter engagement efforts in other municipalities to measure what is working. In 2008, the City began to increase its non-statutory advertising and engagement efforts to encourage higher voter awareness and participation. In subsequent general local elections, the City introduced new communications tools and strategies that resulted in increased voter turnout and positive feedback.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

In 2022, staff will continue to focus on ensuring the election process meets the legislated requirements of the *Local Government Act*, while making the election more accessible through enhanced opportunities and voting methods and engaging to support a positive voting experience.

Based on the 2020 lessons learned, Council endorsed the following as minimum requirements for conducting a by-election:

- One month of planning before appointing a Chief Election Officer
- Hire one additional senior staff and one additional administrative staff
- Establish at least eight (8) general voting day locations that are geographically distributed throughout the city
- At least two advance voting locations
- At least five advance voting days
- Each voting location to have two voting machines
- One accessible voting machine to be available during advance and general voting in a central location
- Provide return postage-paid envelopes for requested vote by mail packages
- Distribute election information materials to households using a voter card system and other standard engagement activities
- That Council restate to the Province its advocacy from 2014 that the nomination period occur earlier to allow for mail in ballots or that the Province make an allowance for provisional ballots.

Voting Locations

Voting places will be located at 13 sites that are geographically distributed across the City on General Voting Day, Saturday, October 15, 2022. Polls are open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Two (2) advanced voting opportunities are required under the Local Government Act. The City will offer a minimum of five (5). Three advanced voting opportunities will be held at Victoria City Hall, one at Our Place Society, as well as one at the University of Victoria, jointly with the District of Saanich.

All voting locations will be accessible and elections staff will accommodate curbside voting for those with difficulty accessing the voting station. The signage and room set up at voting places will mirror that used in 2018 and 2020, enhanced to improve wayfinding and traffic flow.

Voting Technology

The same voting and reporting machines utilized for the 2018 election and 2020 by-election will be used for the 2022 election.

Electronic voter check-in, first introduced in 2014 will also continue this election, providing several benefits including automatically updating the voter list reducing the possibility of an elector voting twice, increased confidentiality, audit functions, and access to demographic information of voters. This also facilitates a “vote anywhere” model, as opposed to designated voting locations that can be an inconvenient barrier for voters.

Election Engagement

The 2022 election engagement plan goes well beyond statutory requirements with the aim to increase voter turn above the 43.5% achieved in 2018.

Strategies are based on lessons learned from previous elections and insights from other communities.

In 2018, with a shared desire to see increased voter turnout in all municipalities, Victoria, Esquimalt, Saanich and Oak Bay did a small amount of joint communications outside the statutory requirements. This involved a “wrap” on the front of the Times Colonist. For the 2022 election, staff will again seek opportunities to further combine resources and share communications strategies and efforts.

The *Victoria Votes* section of the City’s website is the online election hub for voters and candidates, with important information from the City and Elections BC, as well as new resources developed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities’ ‘Toward Parity’ project to foster equality in representation. It will also host a Candidate Profile Guide.

In the lead-up to the 2014 and 2018 Election Day, traffic was high on all *Victoria Votes* webpages, peaking on Election Day. This was specifically directed at the Candidate Profile Guide, suggesting that many voters accessed this information shortly before voting.

To reach and inform prospective voters, the City will once again launch its *Victoria Votes* app. The free smartphone app – available for iOS and Android devices – includes candidate profiles, automatic reminders of advance and general polling dates and real-time maps to voting locations, as well as all you need to know about how to register to vote, or how to check if you are already on the voter list.

Other public information activities in 2022 will include:

- Advertising (statutory and non statutory) in both print and online media
- Signage on City-owned communication channels, including parking pay stations and digital screens
- Special election edition of the City’s CONNECT print newsletter direct mailed to homes
- A Voter card mail-out to all registered voters
- Voting day encouragements, including the “I Voted” stickers
- Social media
- Animated video on “Everything you Need to Vote”
- e-Newsletters
- Future Voter program, including “Future Voter” sticker and colouring contest
- Earned media

Election night results will be live webcast at the close of polls on General Voting Day.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Accessibility Impact Statement

The variety of voting options available to eligible electors in the City, including mobile voting and mail ballot voting along with legislated procedures to accommodate visual impairments, enable a wide range of enhanced accessibility options for voters in the City.

Impacts to Financial Plan

The overall budget for election proceedings and election engagement activities in the Financial Plan is \$420,000 (an increase from the 2018 general election budget of \$289,000). The budget is net the 1/3 of total cost contribution from School District No. 61 to compensate the City for conducting the School Board Trustee election in conjunction with the general local election.

The increase to the budget from previous elections is a result of enhancements directed by Council, lessons learned, as well as inflation and current stresses on the supply chain. Staff have endeavoured to provide the best estimate for the budget; however, current supply chain and inflation pressures have made accurate estimates challenging. Staff will report back to Council if costs increase beyond those estimated in the current overall budget.

CONCLUSIONS

The general local election in 2022, as in previous elections, requires a significant and interdepartmental resource requirement, particularly from Legislative Services, Engagement and IT. Planning for the election began at the beginning of the year and will continue to ramp up in the coming months as the election approaches.

Respectfully submitted,

Curt Kingsley
City Clerk

Bill Eisenhauer
Head of Engagement

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

List of Attachments:

Appendix A – Staff Report, January 27, 2021 Re: 2020 By-Election Lessons Learned