

REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Date: March 23, 2009
Item No.: 12.b

Department Approval

Acting City Manager Approval

Christopher K. Miller

Item Description: Resolution to Consider Early Voting or Vote by Mail Options

BACKGROUND

The current election system has not kept pace with changing demographics and changing demands of a voter's time. The high turnout and follow up from the 2008 election demonstrate several things that can discourage or prevent eligible voters from voting or having their votes count. Numerous election reforms could help make elections easier to administer and make the voting process easier for eligible citizens to exercise their right to vote.

At the March 9, 2009 City Council meeting, Ramsey County Elections Coordinator Joe Mansky discussed the early voting or vote by mail options as possible ways to ease the pressures of administering an election.

Several legislative initiatives have been proposed this year by the Secretary of State and others to make improvements to the election process. Among the proposals are Early Voting and Vote by Mail options.

Using the early voting process, voters complete the ballot and feed it through the voting machine, eliminating the need for envelopes and the possibility of human error that could prevent their ballot from counting. Currently more than 30 states allow early voting.

Using the vote by mail option, ballots are mailed to every registered voter. It is up to the voter to return the ballot by election day. Voters have a personal identification number, usually their driver's license or passport number, which they include on the ballot envelope. Unregistered voters use the absentee voting process, either in person or through the mail, to request a ballot.

Currently townships, cities and unorganized areas with fewer than 400 registered voters can use the vote by mail in state elections. Approximately 275 precincts use the vote by mail process. Additionally, a county, municipality or school district can conduct a special election by mail but no more than two questions may be submitted and no office may be voted on.

Advocates for these types of election reform hope they pass in 2009, giving election administrators adequate time to develop rules and procedures before the 2010 election. However, there is concern that legislators may consider these changes too far-reaching without testing them on a smaller scale. Advocates for election reform hope the Legislature is willing to make these voting improvements, but recognize the need to make contingency plans.

Ramsey County Elections Coordinator Joe Mansky asked if any Ramsey County city was interested in testing either of these election reforms. City Manager Bill Malinen had experience

in Vote by Mail elections in a previous job, so he saw numerous benefits. In addition, because of Roseville's high voter turnout especially among absentee voters, Roseville would be an ideal site for a pilot project.

If the Legislature agrees to test either of these election reforms, Ramsey County staff would provide substantial support to ensure that it is done right.

POLICY OBJECTIVE

To facilitate error-free elections in which every eligible voter can vote easily and be assured that his/her vote counts.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

None

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Pass resolution supporting Early Voting and Vote by Mail options and offering Roseville to serve as a pilot project site for Early Voting and Vote by Mail.

Direct staff to work with Roseville's legislative delegation to pass legislation supporting election reforms.

REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION

Pass resolution supporting Early Voting and Vote by Mail options and offering Roseville to serve as a pilot project site for Early Voting and Vote by Mail.

Direct staff to work with Roseville's legislative delegation to pass legislation supporting election reforms.

Prepared by: Carolyn Curti, Elections Coordinator
Attachments: A: Proposed Resolution

1 **Attachment A**
2 **EXTRACT OF MINUTES OF MEETING**
3 **OF THE**
4 **CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROSEVILLE**

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6 * * * * *

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8 Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a regular meeting of the City Council of the City
9 of Roseville, County of Ramsey, Minnesota was duly held on the ninth day of March,
10 2009, at 6:00 p.m.

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12 The following members were present:

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14 and the following were absent: .

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16 Member introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption:

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18 **RESOLUTION No xxxx**

19
20 **Consider Early Voting and Vote by Mail Options**

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22 WHEREAS, The current election system has not kept pace with changing
23 demographics and changing demands of voter's time; and

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25 WHEREAS, Early Voting and Vote by Mail are two election reform options that would
26 alleviate some of the challenges that makes voting difficult for some
27 voters; and

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29 WHEREAS, Advocates for election reform hope the Legislature will pass legislation
30 making these voting improvements, but in the event that they do not, the
31 City of Roseville is interested in trying these reforms in a trial basis; and

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33 WHEREAS, Because of Roseville's demographics, the City would be an ideal location
34 to serve as a pilot site to test the early voting and vote by mail options
35 during a state election; and

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37 WHEREAS, Roseville will work with the City's legislative delegation, Ramsey
38 County, Secretary of State and other election reform advocates to serve as
39 a pilot project for early voting and vote by mail.

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41 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Roseville requests the
42 Legislature to approve legislation giving the City of Roseville the option
43 to serve at a pilot site to test early voting or vote by mail options in the
44 2010 election.
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47 The motion for the adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly seconded by Member

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49 , and upon a vote being taken thereon, the following voted in favor thereof:

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51 and the following voted against the same: none.

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53 WHEREUPON said resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

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Resolution - Consider Early Voting or Vote by Mail Options

STATE OF MINNESOTA)
) ss
COUNTY OF RAMSEY)

I, the undersigned, being the duly qualified City Manager of the City of Roseville, County of Ramsey, State of Minnesota, do hereby certify that I have carefully compared the attached and foregoing extract of minutes of a regular meeting of said City Council held on the day of , 20 with the original thereof on file in my office.

WITNESS MY HAND officially as such Manager this day of , 20 .

William J. Malinen, City Manager

(Seal)