



## Memorandum

**To:** Honorable Members, Board of Supervisors

**Cc:** Elections Commission

**From:** John Arntz, Director of Elections

**Date:** June 29, 2020

**RE:** Report to the Board of Supervisors Regarding Planning for the November 3, 2020, Consolidated General Election

On May 19, 2020, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors (Board) enacted *Ordinance No. 200400*, "amending the Municipal Elections Code to require the Department of Elections (Department) to expand use of vote-by-mail ballots at the November 3, 2020 Consolidated General Election, to report to the Board regarding planning for that election, and to report to the Board regarding implementation of the Voter's Choice Act in future San Francisco elections." Subsequently, on May 5, 2020, Governor Newsom signed *Executive Order N-64-20*, and on June 18, 2020, signed *Assembly Bill 860*, mandating universal mailing of vote-by-mail ballots and universal access to Accessible Vote-by-Mail systems to all registered voters in California.

The purpose of this memorandum is to report to the Board on the Department's planning for the November 3 election in light of current law. This report addresses the following topics: (1) voter outreach, education, and services, including to limited-English speaking communities and persons with disabilities; (2) staffing needs, hiring strategies, and staff training; (3) voting equipment and capacity; (4) preliminary voting locations and hours, dropbox or curbside drop-off locations and hours; (5) ballot collection and processing; and (6) public health measures and procedures for both voters and poll workers.

Some of the services and programs proposed by the Department in this report are not mandated by current law and are contingent upon certain funding in the Department's recently resubmitted FY2020-2021 budget. As per the Mayor's Budget Office instructions, the Department has noted a list of potential cost reductions and their corresponding impacts on elections services and outreach programs for the November 3 Election.

Regarding potential reductions to the Department's budget, the Elections Commission has communicated its concerns that reductions to the Department's funding could "seriously jeopardize" the conduct of the November 2020 election (see Attachment 1).

### **I. Voter Outreach, Education, and Services, Including to Limited-English Speaking Communities and Persons with Disabilities**

#### **A. Voter Outreach and Education**

To provide election services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department has developed a three-prong outreach plan designed to reach San Francisco residents with a wide range of multilingual, multi-format information about the November 3 election. Although the current health guidelines prohibiting large gatherings have required the Department to postpone its

participation in live outreach events, the Department intends to reach City residents, focusing on the most vulnerable communities, using mostly no-contact outreach strategies and partnerships with city departments—in particular the Office of Racial Equity and the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs—local agencies, and community-based organizations.

First, over the course of the next four months, the Department intends to send City residents several mailings and digital notices, each of which will highlight key information about the November 3 election, including expanded vote-by-mail service for all registered voters, in-person voting options, and the recently introduced ranked-choice voting ballot format that allows voters to rank up to 10 candidates in a given contest. These informational mailings and notices will include: i) a language preference notice, ii) a voting options notice, iii) notices with information relevant to military and overseas voters, college student voters, and unhoused voters, iv) a digital resources notice, v) a Voter Information Pamphlet, vi) “Your Ballot is on its Way” notice, vii) vote-by-mail instructions, and viii) address verification notices.

Second, the Department is developing a myriad of multimedia tools and resources, including digital flyers, online slideshows and trainings, social media feeds, and digital newsletters. The Department will also update its website to highlight information about voting options in the November 3 election and key election dates. To help voters maintain the most current information in their registration records and learn about essential election topics, the Department will offer several online self-help tools, including the Voter Portal, My Election Navigator, and a ranked-choice voting practice ballot.

Third, the Department continues to leverage its partnerships with other city departments, community-based organizations, local media, schools, hospitals, employment centers, and local businesses to effectively distribute digital outreach and registration materials. Many of the Department’s partners work with the general public as well as members of vulnerable or hard-to-reach populations, including voters who are elderly, first-time voters, voters living in low-income communities, members of the City’s language minority groups, voters with disabilities, and voters experiencing homelessness.

Using the three-prong outreach approach of sending voter notices, offering comprehensive digital resources that are based on principles of accessibility, cultural relevancy, and user-friendliness, and extending its reach through local partnerships, the Department intends to saturate the City with key information about the November 3 election.

## **i. Mailings and Digital Communications**

Serving as the first part of its three-prong, mostly no-contact approach to outreach for this fall’s election, the Department intends to increase its communication with voters and prospective registrants via mailing a series of multilingual notices and sending digital notices to voters who provided email addresses as part of their registration records. All of these notices are described in this subsection.

### **(a) Voting Options Notices**

To inform voters about expanded vote-by-mail services and in-person voting options in the November 3 election, the Department intends to send multilingual notices to each of the 374,446 households in San Francisco this summer and fall.

These notices will provide key information about voting by mail, in-person voting options, and available accessible and language services.

Voting Options notices will encourage voters to "Take action today!" to ensure timely delivery of their ballots this fall by checking their residential and mailing addresses in their registration records via the Secretary of State's website at [voterstatus.sos.ca.gov](http://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov) or by contacting the Department of Elections at (415) 554-4375 or [sfvote@sfgov.org](mailto:sfvote@sfgov.org). Further, the notices will advise voters to sign up to receive automatic notifications on the status of their mailed ballots via email, SMS (text), or voice message at [wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov](http://wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov).

The Department will also send digital versions of the Voting Options notice to nearly 250,000 voters who provided email addresses as part of their registration records.

### **(b) Language Preference Notices**

For the November 3 election, the Department will provide official bilingual ballots and sample ballots in English and Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino, official monolingual Voter Information Pamphlets in English, Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino, and bilingual facsimile ballots in English and Burmese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese. Voters may select a language preference for election materials and ballots when registering to vote, by contacting the Department, or using the Department's online request form.

In a proactive effort to inform voters about availability of translated election materials, on June 12, the Department sent nearly 20,000 language preference mailers to City voters born in Chinese, Spanish, Filipino, Burmese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, or Vietnamese-speaking countries with no language preference in their registration records as well as voters who did not provide their birthplace when registering to vote. These mailers include bilingual information about official and facsimile ballots available in several languages and options for selecting a language preference. Voters may select their language preferences on the notices and return the notices, postage-paid, to the Department. Department staff will process returned notices by entering voters' stated language preferences into the registration database and use this information for mailing the official and facsimile ballots, and Voter Information Pamphlets this fall.

On June 5, the Department also sent a digital version of the notice to nearly 7,000 voters in this group who have email addresses in their registration records.

In an effort to reach new voter registrants, who register after the initial mailings are sent, the Department will continue sending notices on a rolling basis up through the mailing of vote-by-mail packets in October.

### **(c) Tailored Notices to Military and Overseas Voters, College Student Voters, and Unhoused Voters**

The Department will send notices with additional tailored guidance to voters serving in the military or residing overseas, college student voters, as well as voters whose registration records indicate they may be experiencing homelessness.

While all California voters are entitled to receive their ballots in person or via mail, voters serving in the military or residing abroad are also entitled to receive their ballot by email or fax. One consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a slowdown of international mail delivery times. On June 19, the Department sent an email notice to nearly 3,000 military and overseas voters, encouraging them to consider updating their ballot delivery preferences to email or fax to avoid potential issues with mail delays. The Department mailed postal letters with similar content to approximately 600 military and overseas voters without email addresses in their registration records.

In an effort to reach college students whose residences in the fall may be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, in August, the Department will send an email notice to voters registered at residence halls and dormitories associated with San Francisco State University, University of California, Hastings College of the Law, and University of San Francisco. The notices will provide key information about the upcoming election and options for updating voter registration information, including residential and mailing addresses.

Also in August, the Department will attempt to contact all voters who may be experiencing homelessness as indicated by their voter registration at cross streets, asking such voters to provide or update their mailing addresses where they receive mail. These notices will also explain other voting options available to San Francisco voters, such as picking up ballots at early voting locations or visiting one of the City's in-person voting sites.

### **(d) Digital Resources Notice**

This summer, the Department will send emails describing digital election resources to 250,000 San Francisco voters who provided email addresses as part of their registration records. These digital notices will outline online voter tools and resources, including online registration, digital versions of the Voter Information Pamphlet, and online accessible vote-by-mail system. The notices will also encourage voters to use the Department's Voter Portal to check their registration details, track their vote-by-mail ballots, and find the locations of in-person voting sites as well as announce the launch of My Election Navigator, a new online tool that provides voters with personalized election information in one easy-to access place.

### **(e) Voter Information Pamphlet**

Prior to each election, the Department produces a Voter Information Pamphlet and Sample Ballot (VIP) in English, Chinese, Filipino, and Spanish. The VIP is available in PDF, HTML, XML, large-print, MP3, USB flash drive, CD, and National Library Service (NLS) cartridge formats. The VIP provides information about candidates and local ballot measures, voting options and key election dates, and a sample ballot matching the voter's ballot type.

The VIP for the November 3 election, which the Department will send to City voters in October, will include several pages dedicated to voting options, highlighting the mailing of ballots to all registered voters, in-person voting options, and the availability of language and accessibility resources.

**(f) “Your Ballot is on its Way” Notices**

A few days before vote-by-mail ballots begin arriving in San Francisco mailboxes, the Department will send notices to voters with email addresses in their registration records, advising voters that their ballots should arrive shortly. There will be two versions of this message: one tailored to those who traditionally vote by mail and the other to those who voted at polling places in previous elections and who may not expect to receive a ballot in the mail, despite the Department’s previous outreach on the subject. These emails will not only serve to remind voters to expect their vote-by-mail ballot packets soon, but to reiterate ballot language and accessible format choices, as well as in-person voting options.

**(g) Vote-by-Mail Instructions**

The Department will send a vote-by-mail packet with a ballot for the November 3 election, along with an instructional insert and a postage-paid return envelope to all City voters. In an effort to educate voters who are new to voting by mail, the instructional insert will include step-by-step illustrated instructions and information on how to properly fill out the return envelope, how to request a replacement ballot, and ballot return options and deadlines. The instructions will also provide information on how voters may request large-print ballots, and ballots in different languages, and access their ballots through the online accessible vote-by-mail system. Vote-by-mail packets will also include “I Voted!” stickers, so voters who vote by mail can express their enthusiasm for participating in the election.

**(h) Address Verification Notices**

When voters move without updating their voter registration information, the United States Postal Service will return mailed correspondence to the Department. Upon return of election mail, the Department will attempt to contact the voters again using address verification postcards, as well as by email when email addresses are available. These follow-up communications will likely increase the number of ballots delivered in a timely manner to those who have moved within the City.

**ii. Digital Outreach**

Serving as the second part of its three-prong outreach plan, the Department will bolster its efforts to connect with voters using digital channels. Such efforts include updating the Department’s website, *sfelections.org*, to highlight the availability of digital tools and resources, including online registration, ranked-choice voting practice ballot, and the accessible vote-by-mail system; expanding the Department’s repository of outreach materials and trainings published in digital formats, including flyers, brochures, and presentations; and increasing engagement across social media channels. All of these projects are described in this subsection.

**(a) Website**

The Department's website, *sfelections.org*, features essential information about registration and voting and self-help voter tools, all available in multiple languages and presented with key accessibility functions, including screen-reader compatibility, high contrast and adjustable font size, and Alt text for images. The website also includes pages dedicated to language and accessibility resources, as well as information on registering and voting in special circumstances.

To alert voters to election changes, including the mailing of ballots to all registered voters, access to the online Accessible Vote-by-Mail system for all voters, and safe in-person voting opportunities, the Department will prominently feature voting options in the November 3 election on its homepage. To expand the reach of its website, the Department will encourage its community partners and city departments to feature a link to *sfelections.org* on their websites.

## 1. Voter Portal

The Department provides an online Voter Portal to facilitate convenient access to individualized registration and election information. After logging in, Voter Portal users can review the data in their registration records, view sample ballots, find their elected officials, opt in or out of paper Voter Information Pamphlet mailings, track their ballots from ballot assembly through delivery, verification, and counting, and request a replacement ballot. To ensure that voters receive their ballots at the correct address and in their preferred language, all voters will be encouraged to double-check information in their registration records, including current address and language preference for election materials.

## 2. My Election Navigator

In an effort to provide voters with personalized election information in one easy-to access place, the Department will launch a new online tool, My Election Navigator. This tool is intended to help voters choose their preferred voting method after presenting users with three simple questions and generating customized responses.

The first question is, "Are you registered to vote in San Francisco?" After the voter selects a response, the tool provides information about registering to vote to those who need it, and encourages all voters, including those who are already registered, to keep their registration information current.

The second question, "Have you decided how you will vote in the upcoming election?" helps voters who have already decided how they will vote (by mail or in person) navigate to specific content regarding their chosen voting method, and helps those who are still deciding understand the different voting options available.

The third question, "Are you familiar with ranked-choice voting in San Francisco that allows voters to rank up to ten candidates in local contests?" allows the Department to provide targeted education to voters unfamiliar with the expanded RCV ballot format. Those unfamiliar with RCV will be invited to read more about the subject and to practice marking an online ballot with immediate feedback on common RCV ballot-marking errors.

Voters seeking specific information can skip the questionnaire and navigate directly to the topics that interest them using the tool's repository of election-related links and resources, which include answers to common questions, such as how to provide

a temporary mailing address, how to find out what's on the ballot, how to request a replacement ballot, and ways to get involved with the election process.

By providing flexible navigation to election topics, My Election Navigator will serve as a useful resource for all types of voters, ranging from first-time voters who are unfamiliar with the voting process to voters seeking detailed information about voting options in the November 3 election. This new tool will soon be available from the homepage of the Department's website as well as from the sidebar of all landing pages.

### **(b) Outreach Materials in Digital Formats**

For the November 3 election, the Department will develop multi-format informational materials covering a variety of election-related topics and transition many of its multilingual outreach presentations and educational materials that would normally be presented in person, to digital formats. The development of such materials will be guided by the key criteria that meet the following equity baseline thresholds for engaging in and with vulnerable communities: (1) accessibility, language, and cultural relevancy, and (2) user-friendliness/user-legibility.

Voters and other interested parties will be able to download these resources from *sselections.org* or request CD or USB copies via postal mail. In addition, the Department will provide outreach trainings to local partners via teleconferencing technology such as Zoom. Teleconference topics will range from best practices in voter registration drives to understanding how to assist residents voting by mail for the first time.

### **(c) Social Media and Digital News**

Throughout the November 3 election cycle, the Department will post updates on social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Next Door, publishing "bite-sized" bits of important information on changes to voting options and other key election information. Many of these posts will include links to detailed informational pages and voter tools on the Department's website.

For City residents who prefer more traditional news formats, the Department will issue press releases and news articles for redistribution by local media outlets and community partners. The publications, which will be made available on the Department's website and distributed directly to the Department's contacts, will focus on voting options in the November 3 election and other key information.

### **iii. Local Partnerships**

Serving as the third part of its three-prong, mostly no-contact approach to outreach for this fall's election, the Department has begun collaborating remotely with its local partners. These partners include nearly 250 nonprofit, community-based and private sector organizations, advisory committees, local businesses, hospitals and care facilities, colleges, and other city departments and government agencies.

In lieu of conducting in-person presentations and meetings with its community partners at various City venues, the Department will offer various outreach materials and presentations on YouTube, through its website, and in CD and USB formats. Through new multilingual digital presentations, webinars, and newsletters the Department intends to explain pertinent election topics to its partners who can in turn provide election information to members of the City electorate.

The Department will intend to supplement its outreach efforts about the November 3 election to members of populations likely to benefit from additional, focused outreach through a grant program with local nonprofit and community-based organizations. Focus populations include unhoused or housing insecure residents, residents of neighborhoods with turnout below the City average, seniors and people with disabilities, members of the City's minority language communities, and first-time voters.

Outreach partnerships will focus on disseminating essential election information such as what has changed for this election, how to register online or by mail, how to vote by mail or in person, how to utilize curbside voting, how to schedule ballot pick-up, and how to request emergency ballot delivery services.

#### **(a) City Departments, Agencies, and Community-Based Organizations**

The Department will collaborate with the City's Emergency Operation Center (EOC) outreach team to distribute election information to the City's most vulnerable populations. The Department will supply EOC outreach team with several thousands of multilingual posters with key election information for distribution to local merchants and door hanger flyers for reaching residents in the following neighborhoods: Civic Center/Downtown, South of Market, Bayview/Hunters Point, Visitacion Valley, Chinatown, Western Addition, Excelsior/Outer Mission, and Ingleside.

The Department will continue its partnership with the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) to engage San Francisco residents who are immigrants and/or Low English Proficiency (LEP). Collaborating remotely when possible, the Department will work with the multilingual OCEIA Community Ambassador Street Team to distribute election information to populations who may not receive election messages via mainstream channels.

The Department will also continue to provide services and information to City voters in jail through a collaborative effort with the Sheriff's Department and its Prisoner Legal Services Unit (PLS). Working closely with PLS, the Department will administer the Incarcerated Person Voting Program to provide election services, such as tailored outreach and materials, registration forms, and ballot delivery, to voters and potential registrants currently in county jail or otherwise involved in the justice system.

The Department will continue to collaborate with the San Francisco Library for the Blind and Print Disabled and the San Francisco In-Home Supportive Services Public Authority to reach the people served by these agencies and to distribute digital election materials to their constituents.

Similarly, the Department will collaborate with city departments and local agencies, such as the Office of Racial Equity, the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, and the San Francisco Housing Authority, and organizations such as Project Homeless Connect, Swords to Plowshares, the Homeless Prenatal Project, Episcopal Community Services, Catholic Charities, Five Keys, and many other community partners that provide services to vulnerable populations. Through the



channels established by such departments and organizations, the Department intends to reach residents living in low-income communities, voters with disabilities, and voters experiencing homelessness.

The Department will work with staff at local shelters and navigation centers to assist voters experiencing homelessness in receiving their election materials. The Department has begun developing materials for shelter staff and other people who work with voters who may be experiencing homelessness, that explain the importance of distributing vote-by-mail ballots and other election mail to voters registered at shelters or navigation centers. The Department is simultaneously developing a guide designed for direct use by voters experiencing homelessness. This guide will explain voting options in the November 3 election, how to complete the residential fields of a registration affidavit using cross streets or a shelter address, how to complete the mailing address fields using general delivery, shelter, or other temporary address, and how to select a language preference for election materials.

To supplement its outreach efforts, on June 9, the Department issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking to identify partners willing and able to assist in disseminating information about the November 3 election using effective and engaging outreach strategies. The Department will collaborate with and provide funding to local nonprofit and community-based organizations who can assist in educating members of the City's vulnerable or hard-to-reach populations about how they can participate in the November 3 election, providing information about voter registration, voting by mail and other voting options, language and accessibility resources, key dates and deadlines, and other election topics.

The Department will organize training for grantees selected through this RFP and will provide grantees with a variety of ready-to-use, multilingual, multi-format, outreach materials, including posters, brochures, digital presentations, and videos on topics such as voter registration and voting options, ranked-choice voting, poll worker recruitment, and general election information. Grantees will be expected to begin outreach activities on August 24 through Election Day.

### **(b) Advisory Committees**

The Department will continue working with the Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC), a Department networking group comprised of language access leaders and members of the public, to reach and disseminate election information to voters from minority communities and improve language-related services and materials offered by the Department. Similarly, the Department will continue its collaboration with the Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC), a Department networking group comprised of accessibility experts and members of the public, to improve its materials and services for voters with disabilities and seniors. To facilitate input from the LAAC and the VAAC, the Department plans to transition its in-person meetings with the committees to virtual formats.

### **(c) Hospitals and Schools**

Prior to every election, the Department works closely with many care facilities and hospitals throughout San Francisco to provide election-related services to people in such facilities. This summer, the Department will reach out to nearly 135 hospital and care facilities to provide resources designed to help patients and residents register to vote and participate in the election while observing health guidelines. Through this partnership, approximately two weeks before the election up until Election

Day, the Department will facilitate ballot pick up and delivery for voters who are homebound, in a hospital or residential care facility, or otherwise find themselves unable to use another voting option.

The Department will also work with colleges and universities located in San Francisco to disseminate digital election information and materials. Communicating remotely with student advocates, professors, and school administrators, the Department will provide these resources to all interested parties and encourage the distribution of election-related messages through student communication channels, and for campuses that will be open in the fall, in classrooms and campus bulletins.

#### **(d) Employment Centers and Local Businesses**

The Department intends to expand its connections to job training and vocational service providers this election cycle, especially those who serve residents of neighborhoods with below-average voter turnout. In addition to providing election materials, the Department will create and distribute materials designed to inform program participants about temporary and short-term employment opportunities with the Department and serving as a poll worker.

To increase the visibility of election-related materials at locations that provide essential goods and services to City residents, the Department will work with merchants to display elections-related posters in their storefronts, with particular focus on businesses in neighborhoods with below-average city turnout. Poster topics will focus on voting options, language and accessibility options, and the opportunity to serve as a poll worker.

### **B. Universal Vote-by-Mail Service and Accessible Vote-by-Mail System**

On June 18, 2020, Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 860, which requires California counties to mail ballots to all registered voters for the November 3 election and permits all voters to use a remote accessible vote-by-mail (AVBM) system to access their ballots. Accordingly, the Department will mail ballot packets and open its AVBM System to all registered San Francisco voters starting 29 days before the November 3 election.

In preparation for expansion of voting by mail to all registered voters in the upcoming election, the Department has taken several steps to ensure timely delivery of vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot packets to voters in October. This work has involved collaborating with the United States Postal Service (USPS) regarding delivery logistics; establishing earlier production schedules with ballot vendors; redesigning outgoing and ballot return envelopes to ensure compliance with the latest guidelines for election mail; updating the content of vote-by-mail packets; and providing voters with BallotTrax, a free ballot tracking and alert system that allows voters to track the status of their mail-in ballots, from printed to accepted.

#### **i. Collaboration with the United States Postal Service and Distribution of Vote-by-Mail Packets**

The Department has been collaborating with the United States Postal Service (USPS) to plan and organize the timely delivery of an increased volume of ballot packets this fall, and to ensure the designs of ballot envelopes and other official mailings meet current guidelines for official election mail. The Department plans to continue this dialogue with the USPS through Election Day to ensure timely processing of election mail, including ballots, election notices, and Voter Information Pamphlets.

Approximately one month before Election Day, the Department, in collaboration with its ballot printing and assembly vendor and the USPS, will initiate VBM packet mailings to San Francisco's registered voters. The Department will continue mailing VBM packets to new registrants and those who need replacement ballots up until four days before Election Day or October 30.

For most voters, VBM packets will contain a multi-card ballot, an instructional insert, a postage-paid ballot return envelope, and an "I Voted!" sticker. Non-citizen residents registered to vote in the local Board of Education Election will receive a single-card ballot, listing only the Board of Education contest, an instructional insert, a postage-paid ballot return envelope, and an "I Voted!" sticker.

As in previous elections, voters will be able to track their ballots by inputting their credentials into the Department's online lookup tool or by calling the Department's toll-free line. When checking the status of their ballots using the Department's Voter Portal, voters will be provided with current information as their ballots move through the following eight production, delivery, and processing steps:

1. The ballot is printed
2. The VBM packet has been assembled and is ready for mailing
3. The VBM packet is delivered to the USPS en route to the voter
4. The Department is in receipt of the voter's voted ballot packet
5. The Department has verified the signature on the return envelope
6. The return envelope has been accepted and is ready to be opened
7. The Department has removed the ballot from the return envelope
8. The Department has counted the ballot.

For the November 3 election, the Department will provide voters with an additional option to track the status of their ballots through the Secretary of State's Where's My Ballot? at [wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov](http://wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov). In addition to the steps available through the Department's Voter Portal, Where's My Ballot? provides the date that the voter's ballot is expected to be delivered to the voter and allows voters to sign up to receive notices via email, text, or voice message regarding the status of their ballots.

## ii. Envelope Design

In collaboration with its printing vendor, the Department has established an earlier production schedule for the printing and preparation of nearly 1.3 million envelopes (outgoing and return envelopes), to be distributed to voters this fall.

Each bilingual version of the newly designed outer ballot envelope features a notice translated into the other seven languages in which ballots and election materials are available, reminding voters who have not already updated their language preference that it is not too late to receive replacement or facsimile ballots in any designated language.

To encourage voters to return their ballots on time and to avoid potential mailing delays, the outer envelope features the phrase, "Do not delay, vote and return your ballot today!" The outer envelope also features a checklist, describing the contents inside the vote-by-mail packet, so those who are new to voting by mail are made aware of these components.

In addition to incorporating all requirements for official ballot return envelopes listed in Section 3011 of the California Elections Code, the ballot return envelope also includes signature line punch-outs to assist voters with visual impairment in locating the signature field. The envelope also provides instructions on how voters unable to sign may substitute a witnessed mark for a signature. To alert voters to providing the required information, the Department increased the overall size of the signature field and added a reminder to sign the envelope accompanied by a large exclamation mark, so that voters are yet again reminded about signing the envelopes before returning their ballots.

In keeping with guidance from health officials, the Department redesigned ballot return envelope which now features a “peel and seal” strip allowing for sanitary self-sealing.

Both the outer and return envelopes will feature an Intelligent Mail Barcode, which the USPS uses to sort and track election mail.

As discussed in Section 1A, the Department will review and update the voting instructions enclosed with VBM packets, focusing on presenting the essential steps of voting by mail in plain language. The VBM instructions will include step-by-step illustrated instructions for marking regular and ranked-choice voting contests, how to request a replacement ballot, as well as ballot return options and deadlines (Ballot return options are described in more detail in Section IV of this report.) The instructions will also provide information on how voters may request large-print ballots, ballots in different languages, and access their ballots through the accessible vote-by-mail system.

### **iii. Accessible Vote-By-Mail System**

The Department will open its Accessible Vote-by-Mail system to all registered San Francisco voters for the November 3 election starting 29 days before the election (In accordance with federal election law, the AVBM system will be open for voters serving in the military or residing overseas no later than 45 days before the election.)

The AVBM system, which is compatible with many personal assistive devices such as head-pointers and sip and puffs, allows voters to download and mark screen readable vote-by-mail ballots. For security reasons, the AVBM system does not store or transmit votes over the internet. Consequently, voters must have access to a printer to print and return their AVBM ballot printouts by mail or in person in a timely manner, just as vote-by-mail voters who use official paper ballots must do.

To access a ballot through the AVBM system, a registered voter will need to visit [sfelections.org/access](http://sfelections.org/access), and input their birthday, house number, and ZIP code.

Once logged into the AVBM system, voters can read or listen to ballot navigation, voting instructions, connect an assistive device such as a head pointer or sip and puff, or adjust the font, contrast, and language settings as desired. After marking and reviewing ballot selections, a voter will need to generate a ballot printout.

Voters may return AVBM ballot printouts by using the official ballot return envelope enclosed with vote-by-mail packets that all registered voters will receive this fall or their own envelopes. If using their own envelopes, voters will need to complete and enclose a Ballot Return Form (available through AVBM system), which will allow the Department to conduct the required

signature comparison on the envelope with the signature in a voter's registration record while protecting the secrecy of the ballot during processing.

## **II. Staffing Needs, Hiring Strategies, and Staff Training**

Multiple factors make the November 3 election notable in its workload and complexity, including those associated with an increase in new voter registration applications and updates to voter records, a higher volume of telephone and email inquiries, and a higher volume of ballots to be processed. In addition, the November 3 ballot will consist of multiple cards, containing local, state, and federal candidates and local and state measures, which will result in a larger VIP, increased workload associated with translations and proofing, and a higher number of cards to process and tabulate.

The combination of these factors, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, will create exponentially more work for the Department than in a "typical" election, with most processes affected. Accordingly, the Department will develop hiring staffing ratios and schedules commensurate with the projected workload and complexities of this election.

This summer and fall, the Department will recruit, onboard, and train nearly 300 temporary employees to aid its full-time staff in conducting the November 3 election. These seasonal employees will help provide election-related services to voters and campaigns, assist with candidate filings, maintain voter records, compare signatures on vote-by-mail ballot envelopes, prepare and staff in-person voting facilities, process voted ballots, and take part in post-election canvass.

As part of its effort to protect the health and safety of election workers while meeting operational demands of the November 3 election, the Department will modify its hiring, training, and workplace practices as described in this section.

### **A. Hiring Strategies**

In recruiting short-term employees to assist with various election activities, the Department plans to utilize various advertisement strategies, employing private and governmental job search engines and social media posts, and collaborating with its community partners, including local community-based organizations and job training and vocational service providers. The Department plans to design digital and print notices regarding temporary election job openings and provide such notices to its community partners who in turn can distribute the notices to their networks. The Department will also send emails about temporary job openings to San Francisco residents across the City.

In a proactive effort to avoid potential staffing issues due to extended or revived quarantines, the Department intends to hire additional reserve personnel with flexible employment start and end dates, focusing on positions that perform key functions such as processing voted ballots or maintaining voter records.

To support the City's effort to minimize movement of people across the City, the Department has developed a virtual Recruiting and Interview program using Zoom video conferencing for interviewing applicants to fill many seasonal positions. Applicants without access to internet video conferencing at home will be invited to join video conference interviews via sanitized computer stations at City Hall.

To maximize the efficiency and safety of the hiring process, the Department will collaborate with the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to update job announcements for temporary positions to include information regarding health risks associated with serving the public. In order to limit the number of instances each new employee will need to leave home during the hiring process, the Department will work with the DHR to schedule fingerprinting appointments concurrent with completion and signing of other hiring paperwork.

## **B. Training**

The Department has been maintaining and will continue to provide regular communication with employees regarding measures the City and the Department is taking to provide a safe and healthy workplace and steps that employees can take to protect themselves at work and at home. These communications are meant to help employees understand and comply with safety protocols, such as using personal protective equipment (PPE), practicing social distancing, and maintaining sanitary practices, and be aware of the availability of testing and additional employee resources.

For every election, the Department provides an Employee Orientation Program (EOP) to its newly hired seasonal employees. Over the course of two hours, employees are introduced to the Department's mission and goals and voter service standards that ensure accuracy, timeliness, and professionalism. The EOP also introduces new staff to emergency evacuation protocols, employee benefits, services, and resources, and workplace protections and responsibilities. For the November 3 election hiring cycle, the Department will revise EOP curriculum to provide a comprehensive overview of the City's and Department's practices and resources developed to protect and support employees in the pandemic.

In preparing temporary staff to complete the vital, deadline-driven tasks in each election cycle, the Department conducts many training sessions in the months leading up to Election Day. Traditionally, the Department has conducted such trainings in a live, group environment where staff received printed training materials, viewed presentations conducted by an instructor, practiced using elections applications and equipment, and asked questions during live question and answer periods. For the November 3 election cycle, the Department intends to conduct many of its training presentations via newly recorded webinar sessions as well as distributing digital worksheets and quizzes via email, and facilitating hands-on practice in a remote setting.

The Department plans to cross-train some employees to perform essential tasks outside of their traditional divisional responsibilities to ensure continuity of operations in the event of staff absences.

Recognizing that phishing attempts and other cybersecurity risks may be higher during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department requires all staff with access to the Department's network to take or retake cybersecurity training.

## **C. Health and Safety at the Workplace**

As part of its effort to ensure the health and safety of employees and visitors, the Department has posted COVID-19-related notices, implemented social distancing protocols, reconfigured workspace layouts, procured and distributed personal protective equipment (PPE), and introduced regular sanitation practices to minimize staff and public exposure to COVID-19. Going forward, the Department will continue to monitor federal, state, and local health advisories closely and adjust these practices and policies as necessary.

### **i. Health Directives**

To assist staff with understanding and following pandemic-related directives, the Department has posted multilingual signs with instructions regarding sanitary practices, testing options, hand hygiene, and social distancing at the entrances to its main office in City Hall, Room 48 and the warehouse on Pier 31. To keep members of the public equally aware, the Department also posted signs in areas with high public foot traffic. The signs provide information recently published by the Center for Disease Control, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and the San Francisco Department of Human Resources.

The Department also maintains a repository of COVID-19-related guidance and materials on its internal online Employee Resources Portal, providing employees with easy access to a set of frequently updated documents from the City's Department of Human Resources website and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website.

### **ii. COVID-19 Safety Plan Monitors**

To assist staff members in navigating a dynamic flow of information from official sources, the Department has designated two of its employees as COVID-19 Safety Plan Monitors (SPMs). The SPMs are responsible for ensuring implementation of all safety and sanitation requirements regarding the COVID-19 virus at the worksite; addressing COVID-19 related questions from employees; administering daily health screening for employees which is required to be completed prior to an employee entering the worksite; and ensuring the adequate supply, distribution, and use of PPE.

### **iii. Social Distancing**

The Department has taken several steps to limit crowding and protect the health of its employees while maintaining efficient onsite operations in the November 3 election cycle.

First, the Department plans to relocate some of its operations from City Hall to Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. The current plan involves relocating most ballot processing operations and approximately 150 staff necessary to complete the ballot extraction, tabulation, adjudication and remake tasks associated with processing vote-by-mail, provisional, and conditional ballots, to Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. (See Section V for more information.)

Second, the Department has adjusted its office layout to ensure six-foot distance between each occupied workstation to help employees maintain proper distance from their colleagues. The Department added markers denoting six-foot spaces in the area at the public front counter where visitors stand while awaiting or receiving assistance, and installed a glass partition at the counter as an extra measure of health protection.

Third, the Department has created a pedestrian traffic map for those working in or passing through the office. Employees have been directed to utilize the entrances (and exits) nearest their workstations and to limit contact and conversation with others to essential communications. Employees are encouraged to walk down one of the main halls, rather than passing through other Department divisions areas, on their way to and from amenities in City Hall. Employees have also been asked to avoid common workplace behaviors such as shaking hands, utilizing communal snack bowls and containers, and

congregating at tables during lunch or coffee breaks. The Department has posted reminders about workplace policies and keeping proper social distancing in common areas including the mail-processing and supply storage rooms.

Fourth, to facilitate maximum social distancing, reduce the number of employees at any Department office area at a given time, and alleviate commute-time crowding, the Department will adopt staggered staff schedules. That is, instead of traditional Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. work schedules, the Department will modify and vary its employee hours at the outset of the election cycle, layering standard weekday schedules with a variety of early, late, and weekend schedules.

Fifth, in addition to reorganizing its office layout and staggering employee schedules, the Department will further minimize direct human interaction by replacing most on-site meetings and interactions at its offices with technology-assisted no-contact meetings and communications. Wherever feasible, digital Zoom or Microsoft Team meetings will take the place of face-to-face meetings, with attendees participating from their desks or workstations even if they work in the same facility.

Finally, the Department will update its Observation Guide to remind election observers to comply with all new health-related practices, including the requirement to maintain six feet of distance between observers, voters, and election staff, at all times. The updated Observation Guide will also highlight the fact that the Department streams nearly all of its election and ballot processing activities online.

#### **iv. Personal Protective Equipment, Workplace Hygiene, and Sanitation**

The Department has incorporated CDC recommendations and local health guidelines related to personal protective equipment, hygiene, and sanitation into its practices.

Department employees now have regular and continual access to PPE such as facemasks and gloves, as well as alcohol-based hand rubs, disinfectants, and paper towels for wiping down work surfaces. Hand sanitizers and facemasks are also available to visitors.

Employees with greater potential for exposure based on the nature of their work have access to supplemental PPE. For example, nitrile gloves are available to staff handling mail, petitions, registration forms, and other public-facing paperwork. To prevent cross-contamination, all staff have received training on proper glove usage and disposal, including hand sanitation or washing after removal.

All staff have been trained on how to maintain the Department's new cleanliness and sanitation standards in their respective areas, as well as how to maintain respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes). Employees have been asked to label personal work supplies, such as staplers, pens, and cups, with their names, and sanitize common surfaces and supplies, such as fax machines and printers, after each use.



### **III. Voting Equipment and Capacity**

In anticipation of an increase in number of voters voting by mail, the Department evaluated its ballot processing capacity and is currently working with the City on procuring additional equipment used for extraction of ballots from the returned vote-by-mail envelopes. The Department's current six Opex Model 72 openers/extractors were operating at maximum capacity to handle the number of vote-by-mail ballots received during recent high voter turnout elections.

With the November 3 election likely being among the highest turnout election in the City's history with a record number of voters choosing to vote by mail, the purchase of four additional ballot extractors is vital to the Department's ability to provide timely results. Additional extractors will increase the efficiency of ballot processing while compensating for potential delays in processing resulting from implementation of physical distancing requirements and limiting capacity of staff present at one time in the facility. The processes for which this equipment provide support are described in Section V.

### **IV. Preliminary Voting Locations and Hours, Dropbox or Curb-Side Drop-off Locations and Hours**

All City voters will have several options for obtaining and returning their ballots for the November 3 election. Any voter may receive their ballot by mail or in person at a voting center or polling place, via curbside voting, through an authorized family or household member, or, if necessary, via emergency ballot delivery service. Any voter may return their ballot by mail or in person at a voting center, polling place, or by authorizing another person to do so on their behalf.

In the upcoming election, in addition to mailing ballots to all registered voters, the Department will maintain a full array of neighborhood polling places and intends to organize several voting centers, and ballot pickup and delivery services.

#### **A. Voting Site Locations**

The Department is currently conducting an audit of all polling places and voting centers used in recent City elections, identifying sites with areas insufficient to protect voter privacy and support current social distancing guidelines as well as buildings occupied by individuals at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, such as senior care facilities and hospitals. To protect public health in the upcoming election, the Department will adopt new procedures (see Section VI for more details) and relocate potentially unsafe voting sites to more suitable locations.

To date, nearly 60 former polling places have been deemed unsuitable or unavailable for the use in the November 3 election, the Department is currently working to identify an equal number of new polling place sites as soon as possible. While the Department intends to organize Voting Centers in City Hall and the Joseph Lee Recreation Center, the Department is still working to identify at least two additional sites as possible Voting Centers. In evaluating the suitability of new sites, the Department is evaluating the potential impact to language minority voters, seniors, voters with disabilities, and residents of neighborhoods with turnout below the City average, and is therefore considering Census data, data obtained through the American Community Survey and data provided by local community partners.

Prior to the election, the Department will send multilingual mail and email notices to voters whose assigned polling places have changed. Any information on new polling place sites available before the Department prints the Voter Information

Pamphlet will be included in that pamphlet, with voters affected by later changes receiving supplemental mail and email notices on a rolling basis up through Election Day. Finally, as in all elections, the Department will post relocation information at polling sites no longer in use.

### **i. Voting Wait Times Tool**

In an effort to provide safe and efficient in-person voting services for the November 3 election, the Department has begun developing an interactive Voting Wait Times Tool. The Voting Wait Times Tool will enable any voter who wishes to return their vote-by-mail ballot in person, obtain a replacement vote-by-mail ballot, pick up or drop off a ballot for another person, or cast their ballot in person, to easily identify convenient voting sites.

The tool will also provide recently reported wait times at voting sites across the City, which will not only allow voters who need to visit a voting center or polling place to identify facilities with the shortest lines, but will also allow voters who want to drop off ballots to identify locations with low foot traffic. In addition, because the tool will identify polling places with the same ballot type, it will allow a user to make an informed decision whether to vote a standard ballot at a voting center or their assigned polling place, or to vote provisionally at another polling place with the same ballot type (neighborhoods lying in the same combination of jurisdictions present the same combination of contests, so all votes on ballots with a voter's assigned ballot type can be counted).

After launching the Voting Wait Times Tool, the user will see a map with voting site icons for all voting centers and polling places in the City. The user may click on any voting site icon to discover essential facts about that site, including its street address, voting hours, and reported wait times. Users may adjust the map view manually (zoom, pan, etc.).

The user will also see slightly more detailed site information (with accessibility facts) presented as a list in a separate panel.

The user may filter results by entering their registered residential address. This will restrict listed and mapped voting sites to the user's assigned polling place and other polling places with the same ballot type. The address query function utilizes autocomplete, so the user only needs to enter the first few characters of their home address to conduct a search.

The user may further filter results to view only voting sites open before Election Day or all sites open on Election Day. The results will also include recently reported wait times at each site.

To support the Voting Wait Times Tool, the Department is working to develop a web-based application that will allow Election Day roving support personnel and voting center staff to report wait times at voting sites in real-time. The data inputted into this application will feed into the Voting Wait Times Tool, allowing voters and the public to review reported wait times at each in-person voting location.

## **B. Polling Place Services**

Each of the City's 588 polling places for the November election will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day. All polling places will offer bilingual paper ballots in English and either Chinese, Spanish or Filipino and provide language assistance from bilingual poll workers on request. At some polling places where voters may need assistance in additional languages, the Department will provide facsimile (reference) ballots in Burmese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese. All polling places will also offer accessible ballot-marking devices with touchscreen and audio formats, personal assistive device compatibility, and accessible voting tools such as page magnifiers, pen grips, and seated voting.

At the polling places, the Department will provide ballot-scanning machines that tabulate votes onsite. Voters who surrender their vote-by-mail ballots or for whom a Roster of Voters indicates that their ballot has not been received and counted by the Department, will be issued standard (non-provisional) ballots that can be tabulated by a ballot-scanning machine. Provisional voting will be available to voters whose names do not appear in the Roster (e.g., voters who missed the registration deadline).

## **C. Voting Center Services**

In addition to the main City Hall Voting Center, the Department intends to organize three additional auxiliary voting centers for the November 3 election. All voting centers will serve all City residents—including eligible non-citizens—who wish to obtain personal assistance, use accessible voting equipment, pick up or drop off ballots, obtain replacement ballots, cast their ballots in person, or, after the registration deadline, register conditionally and vote provisionally.

At the voting centers, the Department will provide accessible-marking devices but there will be no ballot-scanning machines onsite. During voting hours, voters will deposit voted ballots enclosed in vote-by-mail envelopes into sealed ballot boxes monitored by Department personnel.

To facilitate no-contact voting, the Department will staff a ballot drop-off box outside each open voting center, adding a second box at City Hall on the two weekends before Election Day.

The City Hall Voting Center will be open during an entire 29-day early voting period. Between Monday, October 5, and Monday, November 3, the Voting Center will be open weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Weekend voting will be available on the two weekends before the election, October 24-25 and October 31- November 1, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. On Election Day, Tuesday, November 3, the Voting Center will observe the same voting hours as polling places, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Beginning Saturday, October 31 and through Election Day, the Department intends to open three additional voting centers in neighborhoods where residents may benefit from additional voting opportunities.

Any auxiliary voting centers will be open on Saturday and Sunday, October 31 – November 1, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Monday, November 2, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Tuesday, November 3, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Ballot drop-off stations will be set up outside all voting centers beginning Saturday, October 31 and through Election Day for the convenience of voters returning their vote-by-mail ballots and be staffed with two employees during all hours of operation.

#### **D. Ballot Pickup and Delivery Services**

Any voter who cannot or does not receive a ballot by mail for the November 3 election may visit a voting center to vote onsite or request a "to go" ballot packet containing an official ballot, a postage-paid return envelope, voting instructions, and an "I Voted!" sticker. Any voter may also authorize a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, or person over 16 residing in the same household to pick up a ballot packet on their behalf using a Ballot Pickup Authorization Form or contact the Department to designate a temporary mailing address to receive a ballot by mail. In addition, as part of its effort to distribute ballots to all registered voters in the November 3 election while minimizing crowding at in-person voting sites, the Department will offer curbside voting and emergency ballot delivery services.

First, as in recent elections, the Department will offer curbside service for voters with disabilities or illnesses at in-person voting sites. Such voters may also request accessible tools and reference materials, translated materials, including voter guides and facsimile ballots, and personal or language assistance.

Any voter may request curbside service at any in-person voting location by notifying a poll worker or voting center representative or calling in to the Department's phone bank, or by contacting the Department in advance. Given that the number of voters requesting curbside service is likely to increase in the upcoming election, the Department is currently assessing the feasibility of expanding curbside voting at all polling places and voting centers, evaluating the infrastructure, geography, and flow of pedestrian and vehicle traffic at each location.

Second, as in recent elections, in the last week of the election, the Department will provide emergency ballot delivery to voters who cannot or does not receive a ballot in the mail and who is unable to pick up a ballot in person or to authorize another person to pick up a ballot packet on their behalf. Such voters include patients in hospitals or homecare, and residents of shelters, nursing homes, convalescent homes, and other short-term and long-term care facilities in San Francisco. Working closely with facility staff, the Department will distribute ballots and accessible voting materials to these voters.

In accordance with California Elections Code, emergency ballot delivery service is only available in the week before Election Day and is intended to serve as a method for voters experiencing unexpected illness or disability. As a contingency plan to serve potentially large number of San Francisco residents in quarantine due to COVID-19 this fall, the Department is prepared to expand the staff devoted to this service if necessary. As with all vote-by-mail ballots, ballots delivered as the result of an emergency may be returned by mail or in person by the voter or any person authorized by the voter to do so.

## **V. Ballot Collection and Processing**

In recognition that turnout for the November 3 election may be the highest in the City's history and the expanded use of vote by mail, the Department will take several steps in an effort to improve the safety, efficiency, and capacity of its ballot collection and processing procedures.

To maintain social distancing between staff and election observers in ballot processing areas, the Department will relocate some of its ballot processing activities, typically conducted in City Hall, to an off-site location. The Department is seeking to secure additional space at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. The Auditorium lacks a secure fiber connection, which means that the Department will be able to only partially relocate ballot processing activities, such as ballot extraction, adjudication, remake, scanning of ballots on ImageCast Central scanners, while processing of the ballots through the Agilis Ballot Sorting system and signature verification will remain in City Hall.

### **A. Ballot Collection**

The City's early voting period for the November 3 election will begin on October 5, 29 days before Election Day. As explained in Section I, in October, the Department will mail ballots to all registered voters. In addition, as explained in Section III, all City voters will be able to visit voting centers throughout the early voting period to request to pick up or mark replacement vote-by-mail ballots, obtain personal assistance, or use accessible ballot-marking devices. Those who prefer to cast their ballots at their neighborhood polling places will be able to do so on Election Day. Voters will be able to return their ballots in person to any voting center or polling place, or by mail through Election Day.

At the voting centers, voters will deposit voted ballots into sealed ballot boxes monitored by Department personnel, and at the end of each day, all boxes containing voted ballots will be escorted by Deputy Sheriffs to the Department's ballot processing facilities, with additional mid-day transfers being made as necessary to accommodate high voter turnout.

At the polling places, the Department will provide ballot-scanning machines that tabulate votes onsite. All voted ballots and memory cards from the ballot-scanning machines will be transported to the Department after the close of the polls.

The Department will organize two collection points to facilitate the return of voted ballots and election materials from the polling places. The Data Collection Center, which receives memory cards from the ballot-scanning machines, will be located at City Hall's McAllister Street entrance. The Processing Center, which receives voted ballots, rosters of voters, and other vital election materials, will be located at the Department's warehouse at Pier 31. These two sites will be staffed by approximately 80 workers who unload, log, and organize materials delivered by hundreds of Municipal Transportation officers and Deputy Sheriffs.

## **B. Ballot Processing**

With the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 860 that made several amendments to the California Elections Code the Department can commence ballot processing 29 days before Election Day instead of 10 business days. AB 860 also extends the deadline by which vote-by-mail ballots must be received by the county elections official to the 17th day after Election Day. Accordingly, the Department will count ballots received in the mail up until November 20, so long as ballots are postmarked or dated on or before Election Day.

Vote-by-Mail ballot processing will consist of five steps: 1) envelope scanning, 2) signature comparison, 3) transfer of accepted envelopes to Bill Graham Civic Auditorium for processing, 4) ballot extraction, and 5) votemark scanning. As part of Step 2, Department staff will attempt to notify any voters who have submitted ballot return envelopes with missing or mismatched signatures, encouraging such voters to submit new signature samples so their ballots can be accepted. As part of Step 4, dedicated teams will “adjudicate” (interpret ambiguous marks using standardized rules) or “remake” (duplicate valid votemarks on irregular ballots onto new ballots for counting). Each of these five and two ancillary ballot processing steps are described in details below.

In addition to processing vote-by-mail ballots, the Department will also process provisional ballots and ballots cast by conditional voter registrants.

### **i. Envelope Scanning**

The Department will begin scanning returned vote-by-mail envelopes as soon as it receives the first such envelope in early October.

San Francisco’s official vote-by-mail return envelopes include barcodes with ID number of the voter to whom the enclosed ballot was mailed. Upon receipt of each official return envelope, the Department will use an Agilis Ballot Sorting system to read the envelope’s barcode and to scan, upload, and link the signature on the envelope to the voter’s record in the Election Information Management System (EIMS registration database). Staff will also use the Agilis system to divert unreadable return envelopes, separating them for manual review.

Vote-by-mail return envelopes successfully processed by the Agilis system, as well as those processed by manual envelope review teams, will be forwarded to the signature comparison team, also stationed at City Hall.

## **ii. Signature Comparison**

The Department utilizes a multi-stage review process to compare each ballot envelope signature with the signatures on file for that voter. Using this method, no ballot is challenged for a signature-related reason unless the signature in question has been reviewed by three different staff members and compared to all signatures in the voter's record.

In the first stage, a staff member compares the signature on a given return envelope to the signature image from the corresponding voter's affidavit of registration, and determines whether these two signatures compare by looking for common characteristics. If the signatures compare, the ballot is accepted and transferred to the extraction team for opening and tabulation. If the signatures do not compare, the ballot is placed on pending status and proceeds to the second stage.

In the next stage, a different staff member compares the voter's signature on the return envelope to all other signatures in the voter's file. Only when the signature does not compare to any signature on file, will the ballot proceed to the third stage. In this final stage, another staff member will again compare the signature to all signatures in the voter's records. If, after three attempts to find a comparable signature, staff still cannot verify the signature on the return envelope compares with one on any form signed by the voter to whom the ballot was sent, the ballot must be challenged and the voter notified.

### **(a) Voter Notification Program**

The Department attempts to contact voters with challenged ballots using several methods. First, the Department mails a bilingual cure form regarding the challenge and actions the voter must take to allow the Department to count the ballot, and a postage-paid return envelope. Second, the Department provides notification to voters with challenged ballots via the Department's online Voter Portal, which offers a digital version of the cure form. Finally, if the voter has an email address or telephone number on file, the Department attempts to contact the voter by email and/or telephone, generally within one working day of challenging the ballot.

Voters may return challenge cure forms by mail, email, or fax, as well as in person to any polling place or voting center. In addition, the Department will facilitate home delivery and pickup of challenge cure forms for voters unable to travel.

Upon receipt of a challenge cure form, a staff member will scan the voter's signature sample, link the scan image to the voter's file for future reference, accept the voter's ballot, and forward the ballot envelope on to the ballot extraction team.

## **iii. Transfer of Accepted Ballot Envelopes for Processing**

After undergoing envelope scanning and signature comparison (Steps 1 and 2), accepted vote-by-mail ballots will be transferred from City Hall for ballot extraction and vote counting (Steps 3 and 4) to the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium using a secure custody transfer process.

To transfer accepted vote-by-mail ballot envelopes to the Auditorium, Department staff will begin by placing batches of ballot envelopes into ballot transport boxes secured with tamper-proof seals, and record the seal numbers on a custody transfer

form. Staff will then place the secured ballot transport boxes onto mobile racks, complete an inventory check, and encase each rack with shrink-wrap and tamper-proof tape.

A Deputy Sheriff will accompany Department staff to transfer racks via truck to the Auditorium. Finally, two Department staff members at the Auditorium will receive the racks, confirm the security seals are intact, confirm seal numbers match those recorded, and sign the custody transfer form. Ballot extraction staff will then remove the security seals, dismantle the shrink-wrap, and bring the transport boxes to the ballot extraction area.

#### **iv. Ballot Extraction**

As each rack of accepted vote-by-mail ballots is delivered, the ballot extraction team will begin inserting ballot envelopes into the Opex high speed envelope extractors. After ballot envelopes are processed (slit open) by the machine, staff will manually remove and flatten individual ballot cards and ready them for scanning. Throughout the extraction process, staff will protect vote secrecy by keeping envelopes face down so that voter information is removed from view. After extraction and flattening, boxes of accepted ballots will be transferred to the votemark scanning team.

#### **v. Votemark Scanning**

After ballot cards have been removed, staff will scan the cards for tabulation using Dominion ImageCast Central (ICC) scanning machines. When scanned ballots contain potentially valid over-votes, under-votes, blank contests, marginal marks, or write-in votes, ICC scanners divert such ballots for manual review and adjudication.

##### **(a) Ballot Adjudication and Remake**

State law requires the Department to count irregular votemarks, provided the intent of the voter is clear. Therefore, as explained in the previous section, when an ICC scanner detects a ballot with marginal or irregular markings or a write-in vote, an image of the ballot is sent to an adjudication team for review and interpretation.

Some types of irregularly marked ballots require Department staff to remake ballots on ballot-marking devices so votes can be read and tabulated properly by ICC Scanners. These include provisional ballots with invalid votes (e.g., those cast by voters using ballot types containing contests in which they are not eligible to vote and physically damaged vote-by-mail ballots (such as partially torn ballots).

To ensure consistent processing, both tasks are completed by two person teams using illustrated guides with standardized rules. In order to maintain social distancing, the Department will adopt new methods to allow adjudication and remake staff to work in pairs without coming within six feet of each other.

Adjudication teams will work at separate stations, rather than at single stations, with one member of each team marking a main screen and the other using a mirrored monitor to review and confirm adjudication actions. Remake teams will also work in tandem at different stations, with one member of the team entering votemarks and the other member of the team comparing those marks to ballot printouts.



After processing and tabulation, original, adjudicated and remade ballots will be securely transferred and stored at the Department's warehouse for the duration of archival period.

### **(b) Voting System and Election Transparency**

The City's voting system enables an increase in election transparency through public posting of images of voted ballots, equipment logs, and election reports.

In every election, the Department posts a complete set of preliminary and final election results data. In the last election, the Department began posting a "Cast Vote Record", which lists how votes for all contests and ballot measures were recorded on each ballot card. Data provided in the Cast Vote Record is captured from ballots as they are scanned by the voting equipment and before vote tabulation occurs, allowing members of the public to tabulate votes from specific precincts, districts, etc. and compare against the official election results.

The November 2019 election was the first election for which the Department posted images of voted ballots, allowing members of the public to view images for each voted ballot cast in the City. In addition to capturing images of voted ballot cards during processing, the system appends an "audit log" showing how the voting system interpreted and tallied each vote mark appearing on the images, and when applicable, how the markings were adjudicated by personnel. These "AuditMarks," available alongside ballot images at [sfelections.org/results](https://sfelections.org/results) provide interested members of the public with information about how the voting system operates and counts votes, and enables the comparison of each digital image to the individual ballot card's Cast Vote Record in order to verify that the system correctly tallied ballots.

Prior to posting ballot images for the November 2020 election, the Department will again redact any identifying information voters may have placed on ballot cards. To preemptively address and clarify any questions that the public may have on the redacted information, the Department will begin posting its redaction policy alongside ballot images. Under the policy, staff will be required to redact the names of unqualified write-in candidates, in addition to such marks as signatures, initials, names, addresses, voter identification numbers, social security numbers, driver's license numbers, or any other identifiable information. Redacted ballot files will be sorted by precinct and type (vote-by-mail or in-person voting) and posted with election certification documents.

The Department will also post transaction logs from the voting equipment used in the November 2020 election. These logs record the operation of equipment during scanning and processing tasks, further informing members of the public regarding the system's operation.

### **(c) Ballot Audit and Review**

For the March 2020 election, the Department posted a prototype of a new application that allows the public to sort the images of vote ballot according to precinct, contest, and district. The Department was the first county in the country to utilize this application, known as "Ballot Audit and Review."

The City's voting system vendor has continued development of this application that the Department will also post on its website. Next versions of the Ballot Audit and Review application will allow the sorting of ballot images according to specific candidates and vote markings. Members of the public will be able to personally audit the votes cast during the election using the images of the voted ballots and sorting these images with more specific criteria.

**(d) "Quick Facts" on Voting System in Voter Information Pamphlet**

The Department strives to bring transparency to all election cycle processes, including those involving voting equipment, and invites the public to observe and review its processes. With public awareness in mind, the Department has devoted a page of the November 3 Voter Information Pamphlet to "Quick Facts" about the voting system, including information about ballot image posting and voting system security. This new section of the VIP also features information on how the public may observe Logic and Accuracy testing of the voting machines and other elections processes.

**vi. Election Results**

The Department will release the first preliminary summary report of election results at approximately 8:45 p.m. on Election Night. This report will provide the results from the vote-by-mail ballots that the Department received and processed before Election Day. With this first summary report, the Department will also release a preliminary Statement of the Vote and Cast Vote Record data.

At approximately 9:45 p.m., the Department will release a second summary report of results. The second report will add the initial votes received from polling places to the votes reported in the first results report. At approximately 10:45 p.m., the Department will issue a third summary results report that will add more votes from polling places received since the previous report. After all polling places have reported, the Department will release a final summary report as well as a second preliminary Statement of the Vote, and Cast Vote Record data.

The Department will continue to process and count ballots after the Election Day and will report the final election results no later than the election certification deadline, December 3, 2020.

**VI. Public Health Measures and Procedures for Both Voters and Poll Workers**

To protect the health of voters and poll workers in the November 3 election, and to ensure that every eligible voter is able to vote securely and conveniently, the Department has begun taking steps to identify, staff, and supply safe, spacious voting locations and to modify its voter processing procedures at in-person voting locations. For the upcoming election, the Department plans to relocate polling places as necessary to safeguard public health, develop pandemic-compliant procedures for assisting voters, recruit a large and diverse group of poll workers, and provide comprehensive poll worker training using a remote curriculum as much as possible.

## **A. Polling Site Procedures**

The Department identified COVID-19 related changes to polling place and other in-person voting location procedures and is incorporating these changes into poll worker training and recruitment materials.

The Department will collaborate with the Department of Public Health in ensuring that safety procedures and practices established at in-person voting locations are in line with the current federal and local health guidelines.

In addition, the Department will continue to monitor public health official communications about COVID-19 in the next several months, further modifying procedures at in-person voting locations as appropriate to reduce risks of transmission and ensure compliance with new governmental directives.

### **i. Social Distancing Protocols**

As part of its effort to mitigate unnecessary contact between poll workers and voters, the Department will introduce social distancing measures at all polling places. For the same reason, the Department will establish limits on the number of individuals allowed in each polling place at any given time, based on the size of the facility and current CDC recommendations. The Department will comply with recommended social distancing policies by reconfiguring polling place layouts that allow for sufficient space between the election table, voting booths, voting equipment, poll workers, and voters. All new layout and reconfiguration plans will take the particular needs of voters with disabilities into account, protecting the rights of such voters to move through a polling place freely and to vote privately and independently.

To assist poll workers in setting up safe and accessible polling places, the Department will create several diagrams showing recommended placements for hand-sanitizing stations, election tables, voting equipment and marked voter pathways. To help poll workers mark six-foot intervals along pathways, the Department will provide painters' tape, which poll workers can also use to hang signs and identify suitable standing or sitting areas for election observers. The Department will provide all poll workers with facemasks and face shields and instruct poll workers to wear them at all times on Election Day.

The Department intends to staff each site with Polling Place Ambassadors, responsible for maintaining health-related protocols. Polling Place Ambassadors will be stationed at site entrances so they can assist voters dropping off their vote-by-mail ballots without having to enter a voting area, distribute hand sanitizers, answer voter questions, remind voters to maintain sufficient distances from one another, and limit the number of voters entering a voting area at any one time.

In addition to regular announcements from Polling Place Ambassadors, voters will see multilingual signs at polling place entrances reminding them to maintain six feet of distance between themselves and others. As an additional layer of voter spacing and line control, poll workers will mark the official start of voting lines with taped marks on the floor six feet from the election table where voters sign the roster and receive their ballots. Voters at the front of election table lines will be asked to wait to approach the election table to sign the Roster and receive a ballot until poll workers call them to do so.

To avoid close contact between voters and poll workers stationed at the election table, the Department has modified its check-in procedures. As each new voter approaches the election table, the poll worker will step back six feet, instructing the voter

to sign the roster with verbal assistance only. Ballot issuance procedures have been similarly modified to allow voters to retrieve their ballot cards without coming into close contact with the poll worker.

## **ii. Cleanliness and Sanitation Protocols**

The Department will implement cleanliness and sanitation standards at each site and will train all poll workers on these protocols. These standards will include frequent and thorough handwashing, distribution of alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol to all voters and poll workers at all entrances and exits, and recurrent disinfection of surfaces and supplies. The Department will provide nitrile gloves to all poll workers to be worn when disinfecting the polling place and handling supplies. To avoid cross-contamination, the Department will provide poll workers with illustrated step-by-step instructions on how to remove and dispose of these gloves in the Poll Worker Manual.

The Department plans to purchase a number of new supplies as part of its plan to maintain clean and sanitary in-person voting locations. To protect voters using the ballot-marking devices, the Department will procure single-use screen protectors and disposable, sanitary earpiece covers for the headphones, and stylus pens that can be used to mark the touchscreen ballots. Additionally, the Department will procure EPA-approved disinfectants and disposable paper towels to clean ballot marking pens, voting booths, voting equipment, tables, chairs, and any other frequently touched surfaces and objects regularly. To clean voting equipment and touch screens, poll workers will use manufacturer recommended 70% isopropyl wipes.

The Department redesigned its vote-by-mail and provisional ballot envelopes, which will now have adhesive “peel and seal” strips. The Department plans to replace reusable ballot secrecy sleeves with either single-use paper secrecy sleeves or laminated secrecy sleeves that poll workers can easily sanitize. Polling places will be provided with copies of the Voter Information Pamphlet and ballot facsimiles printed on non-porous material that can be cleaned after each use.

## **B. Poll Worker Recruitment**

In order to protect those willing to serve as poll workers, the Department has taken several steps to modify its poll worker recruitment and training programs.

First, in an effort to recruit a large and diverse group of regular and on-call poll workers, the Department will partner with local organizations and civic groups to disseminate information about the opportunity to serve as a poll worker. The Department also plans to collaborate with the Employment Development Department to expand poll worker recruitment efforts to those who are currently unemployed.

Second, the Department will facilitate remote recruitment for individuals interested in serving as poll workers and streamline the sign-up process on its website so that it is simple, accessible, and easy to find. Prospective poll workers will be able to complete and submit a poll worker application on the Department’s website or contact the Department to request a paper application with a postage-paid return envelope.

To assist members of the public in evaluating the decision to serve as poll workers in the November 3 election, the poll worker application will include a link to a CDC website with information regarding vulnerable populations who are considered at high risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. To mitigate exposure during the hiring process as much as possible, most applicants will undergo the interview and sign-up process via phone. To ensure safety of those who prefer to complete the process in person, the Department will equip its Poll Worker Recruitment office located in the annex, a room adjacent to the City Hall café, with some additional precautions, such as plexiglass partitions and frequent sanitation of frequently touched areas.

### **C. Poll Worker Training**

The Department has been revising its poll worker training programs, with a focus on expanding the availability of digital learning resources so that poll workers can prepare for Election Day remotely. In lieu of regular in-person training, newly recruited and returning poll workers will receive a comprehensive, digital presentation on the policies and procedures necessary to administer voting safely on Election Day. The training will be available on the Department's website and in USB flash drive and CD format.

Virtual poll worker training for the upcoming election will be comprised primarily of training videos and interactive slideshows, presented with audio and closed captioning. In addition to providing these online and web-based training resources for all poll workers, the Department will offer small group sessions (with no more than 15 people in a large room at one time) for Inspector where they can practice operating voting equipment and ask questions about new sanitation and social distancing protocols.

The Department has also been updating the Poll Worker Training Manual to incorporate all government-recommended social distancing and hygiene protocols. For example, the updated Manual will include poll worker scripts, translated into multiple languages, reminding voters to maintain six feet of distance between themselves and others at all times, as well as new Job Cards with step-by-step instructions detailing new voter processing procedures. Copies of the Manual will be distributed to poll workers in print versions by mail and digitally through posting of mobile-compatible versions on *sfelections.org*.

Prior to attending live small group training sessions or serving voters on Election Day, all poll workers will be asked to complete a COVID-19 self-assessment survey, which will advise anyone exposed to the virus or showing symptoms not to report for class or service. In anticipation of poll worker absences on Election Day, the Department will dedicate a telephone line to handle COVID-19 related poll worker absences and organize personnel to assist in coordinating the dispatch of replacement poll workers.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The Department's proposed plan for the November 3 election demonstrates its ongoing commitment to providing a full array of equitable voter outreach and resources to San Francisco residents. Additionally, the current plan will allow the Department to maintain its dedication to providing election services to members of vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations, seniors and voters with disabilities, members of the language minority groups, voters who are experiencing homelessness, and residents of neighborhoods with turnout below the City average.

