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Budget and Finance Sub-Committee Hearing Fiscal and Technical Feasibility of Open Source Voting

May 10, 2018



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

Fiscal and Technical Feasibility of Open Source Voting

I. Brief Background on Open Source Voting

A. Open source voting as supported by the Elections Commission allows for all software code associated with the City's voting system to be posted online.

1. The code will be posted online while the system is developed
2. The code will be posted online after the City implements the system
3. Members of the public will have the opportunity to read the code and look for errors and to write new code for suggested improvements
4. Anyone could use the code to create their own voting systems.

Fiscal and Technical Feasibility of Open Source Voting

I. Brief Background on Open Source Voting

B. Department of Elections issued a Request for Information (RFI) in August 2015 regarding the City obtaining a new voting system, including the possible development of an open source voting system.

Fiscal and Technical Feasibility of Open Source Voting

I. Brief Background on Open Source Voting

C. The Elections Commission organized a hearing regarding the RFI in November 2015, inviting respondents to the RFI to present information.

1. The respondents' estimates for developing an open source voting system ranged from a few months to six or more years
2. The costs ranged from a few hundred thousand dollars to more than \$13 million or more.

Fiscal and Technical Feasibility of Open Source Voting

I. Brief Background on Open Source Voting

D. In FY 17/18 COIT allocated \$300,000 to the Department to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify a Contractor to prepare a business case to assess the feasibility of the City developing an open source voting system.

1. \$175,000 was allocated to the agreement with the Contractor
2. \$125,000 was allocated to hiring an FTE to assist with writing the RFP and also to assist with work following the issuance of the business case
3. The Department was unable to hire the FTE and the \$125,000 associated with this position remains available
4. The Contractor, Slalom Consulting, issued the business case in March 2018.

Fiscal and Technical Feasibility of Open Source Voting

I. Brief Background on Open Source Voting

E. Based on information from the report by Slalom, the Department and the Department of Technology drafted an application to COIT for funding to develop an open source voting system.

1. The application requested \$960,000 for FY 18/19 to identify the specifications of a system and the resources necessary to develop a system
2. The application also requested \$23 million for the next two fiscal years for developing a voting system
3. COIT allocated \$300,000 for FY 18/19 and has not yet considered allocations for further fiscal years
4. COIT also is adding the \$125,000 remainder, from the \$300,000 allocation from FY 17/18 for a total of \$425,000
5. This COIT funding is to identify a project manager who will draw together the specifications required to develop, fund, implement, and maintain an open source voting system and the time needed to do so
6. The project manager will utilize Slalom's business case as the foundation for next steps.

Fiscal and Technical Feasibility of Open Source Voting

II. What is the timeline to implement open source voting?

A. There is no set timeline for developing the voting system since the specifications of the system are unknown.

B. The timeline is also impacted by the City not knowing which specific options to utilize for developing a voting system.

C. However, the Elections Commission has stated it wants the City to implement a new open source voting system for the November 2020 election.

Fiscal and Technical Feasibility of Open Source Voting

III. Request for Proposals (RFP)

A. The Department issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) on February 1, 2018, to obtain a new voting system.

1. The reason for this RFP is the contract with the current voting system vendor Dominion Voting terminates at the end of 2018
2. The Department is currently negotiating a new contract with Dominion that will begin in January 2019, and the new system will be first used for the November 2019 election
3. The City purchased the current voting system using federal and state grant funds in 2008 for approximately \$8.8 million
4. The next contract will be to lease a system from Dominion rather than purchase the equipment.

Fiscal and Technical Feasibility of Open Source Voting

III. Request for Proposals (RFP) (continued)

A. The Department issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) on February 1, 2018, to obtain a new voting system.

5. A lease allows the City to change equipment and without paying additional costs
6. The City will spend approximately \$2.3 million for services and fees in the current year to Dominion
7. The contract for the next voting system will cost the City approximately \$2 million year for services and lease fees
8. No open source voting systems are approved for use in California by the Secretary of State's Office.