



WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: January 26, 2016

DATE: January 4, 2016
TO: Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Luanne Cutler, Registrar of Voters 328-2535, lcutler@washoecounty.us
THROUGH: Joey Orduna-Hastings, Assistant County Manager, 328-2016
jhastings@washoecounty.us

Craig Betts, Chief Information Officer, Technology Services, 328-2355,
cbetts@washoecounty.us

Michael Sullens, Purchasing and Contracts Manager, 328-2281,
msullens@washoecounty.us

SUBJECT: Recommendation to approve the sole source purchase of absentee ballot central scanning hardware and software for the Registrar of Voters Office from Dominion Voting Systems; authorize the Purchasing and Contracts Manager to execute an agreement in the amount of \$224,523, which includes first year maintenance as well as extensive training; approve the inter-fund contingency transfer of \$224,523 from the general fund contingency account 189000-820000 to project (number to be determined) Voter's Absentee Ballot project in the Capital Improvement Fund; and direct the Comptroller's Office to make the appropriate adjustments. The total project implementation cost, year one of maintenance and necessary training is requested for the project and years two through four maintenance costs are to be included in the base budget of the Registrar of Voter's Office beginning fiscal year 2016/2017 and is approximately \$39,000 annually. (All Commission Districts)

SUMMARY

The Registrar of Voters is in critical need to purchase absentee ballot central scanning hardware and software prior to the June 2016 primary election. The Nevada Secretary of State's Office has recently certified an absentee ballot scanning system produced by Dominion Voting Systems, a vendor that the Registrar of Voters currently uses. Therefore, a sole source purchase of this hardware and software is urgently needed and recommended. Because there is insufficient monies in the Registrar of Voters budget for such a system, a transfer from the General Fund Contingency budget is needed.

AGENDA ITEM # 10

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Sustainability of our financial, social and natural resources

PREVIOUS ACTION

No previous action.

BACKGROUND

With the implementation of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002, each state was tasked with improving voting systems. In Nevada, the choice was made to purchase a touch-screen voting system from then Sequoia Voting Systems (now Dominion Voting Systems). This choice was made by the Secretary of State's Office. Each county was given the equipment necessary to process voters at the polling place as well as count absentee (paper) ballots.

Since receipt of the hardware and software for that system (2004), there have been no upgrades or updates. Bi-annual preventative maintenance has also been paid for out of HAVA funds. Those funds have now been depleted. There is no funding in the pipeline after 2016 from either Federal or State sources.

During preparations for the 2014 General Election, one of the three computers that run the current absent ballot counting machines (400Cs), failed. Counting was continued on the other two 400Cs. After that hardware failure, Technology Services inspected the remaining two computers and found they had the same issue as the failed computer - "Capacitor Plague". It was only a matter of time until those failed as well.

Options were explored but new computers could not be purchased to run the outdated software. Only systems and software certified by the State can be used. Technology Services began the process of building new computers by taking apart old ones.

In October of 2015 another option became available. A new system that was developed by our vendor, Dominion Voting Systems, received certification from the State. A demo of this system was seen in July. Also, Denver, Colorado, was using this system for counting absentees and has been quite successful. As soon as it became certified, Clark County purchased the equipment as they were having similar issues with their 400Cs.

Clark County conducted a mock election to test their new system. Two representatives from the Registrar of Voters Office, as well as the Technology Services Representative assigned to them, made the trip to Las Vegas to observe the testing and talk to their employees about their experiences with it. It met with overwhelming approval and performed as expected.

There are two options: 1) Build new computers that will run old software or 2) Upgrade to a newer system with features that can be built upon and will be viable for a number of years ahead. The software that would be purchased is a building block and would be a necessary component for upgrading polling place voting equipment in the future as well.

The new software will speak directly to our current voting system for tallying purposes. Also

of note are features which include printing ballots-on-demand and open and transparent ballot adjudication.

Pursuant to NRS 332.115 1. (g) (h), computer hardware and related peripheral components and devices along with computer software are exempt from competitive bidding requirements.

FISCAL IMPACT

The initial purchase of this system will cost \$224,523. The funding for project (number to be determined), Voter's Absentee Ballot project will be provided by a transfer from the General Fund contingency account, 189000-820000. After the first year, the annual maintenance cost of \$39,000 will added in the base budget for the Registrar of Voters effective fiscal year 2016-2017. Account transactions are as follows:

Decrease C189000-820000	General Fund Contingency	(\$224,523)
Increase C189000-814092	Transfer to Public Works Construction	\$224,523
Increase PW TBD-621001	Transfer from General Fund	(\$224,523)
Increase PW TBD-781009	Computer Software-Capital	\$224,523

A slight decrease in the cost of printing the majority of absentee ballots will be noted as the off-the-shelf scanners do not require the heavy ballot card stock that the old 400Cs did. The ballot-on-demand system will allow us to print only the ballots needed in-house for walk-in and last minute customers. No longer will a large supply of each ballot type be required to be kept on-hand. The biggest savings here are to be seen in labor as tracking and securing large quantities of ballots is quite labor intensive. Printing fewer ballots is much more environmentally friendly as well.

A rough estimate of savings achievable would be \$15,000 - \$20,000 per election cycle.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation to approve the sole source purchase of absentee ballot central scanning hardware and software for the Registrar of Voters Office from Dominion Voting Systems; authorize the Purchasing and Contracts Manager to execute an agreement in the amount of \$224,523, which includes first year maintenance as well as extensive training; approve the inter-fund contingency transfer of \$224,523 from the general fund contingency account 189000-820000 to project (number to be determined) Voter's Absentee Ballot project in the Capital Improvement Fund; and direct the Comptroller's Office to make the appropriate adjustments. The total project implementation cost, year one of maintenance and necessary training is requested for the project and years two through four maintenance costs are to be included in the base budget of the Registrar of Voter's Office beginning fiscal year 2016/2017 and is approximately \$39,000 annually. (All Commission Districts)

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be:

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