



Agenda Item #: \_\_\_\_\_

# Staff Report

## City of Manhattan Beach

**TO:** Honorable Mayor Ward and Members of the City Council

**THROUGH:** Richard Thompson, Interim City Manager

**FROM:** Liza Tamura, City Clerk  
Terri Aliabadi, Senior Deputy City Clerk  
Ariana Kennedy, Administrative Clerk

**DATE:** March 16, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Consideration of a City Council Work Plan Item to Consolidate the City's March General Municipal Election with the Los Angeles County's November Odd-Year Election

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that City Council discuss consolidating the City's General Municipal election with the Los Angeles County's November odd-year election and provide staff with direction.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATION:**

Currently, the Manhattan Beach Unified School District (MBUSD) consolidates with the Los Angeles County election in November odd-years at an approximate cost of \$80,000. The City currently conducts a stand-alone election in March odd-years with an approximate budget of \$75,000. If Council chooses to consolidate with the Los Angeles County election in November odd-years, MBUSD and the City would split the election costs (approximately \$40,000 each). However, in the event that the School District cancels their election (i.e. MBUSD 2009 election) the City would be responsible for the full cost.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Per the City Council Work Plan, Council directed staff to evaluate the pros and cons of consolidating the City's General Municipal Election in March with the Los Angeles County November Election.

Staff conducted a survey through the League of California Cities, analyzed available data, spoke with Los Angeles County Registrar Records Office, MBUSD, and election consultants Martin and Chapman. Based on this research staff determined the following:

March Odd Year Election (Off-Cycle)

Positives:

- Minimized voter confusion due to a shorter, simple ballot
- Community involvement
- Higher levels of customer service – personalized service for voters, etc.
- Control over polling locations
- Counting of ballots takes place at Joslyn Center on election night
- Canvass is shorter, results finalized sooner (within two weeks of election date)

Negatives:

- Staff time (signature checks) on top of regular office work
- Cost

November Odd-Year

- Insignificant change in voter turnout, per a review of studies (Attachment B)
- Would extend Councilmember terms
- Would extend mayoral rotation

Positives:

- Cost savings
- Minimal staff time (County would be responsible for: signature checks, Vote-By-Mail ballots, poll workers, precincts, sample ballots).
- Decrease in number of trips to the polls for the voters

Negatives:

- Longer ballot
- Possibility of increased voter confusion due to a longer ballot
- Counting will take place at Registrar's office, not at Joslyn Center; candidates will have to travel further if they want to observe the count.
- Results may not be known until following day, or days, or weeks later.
- Canvass longer (County has 28 days to conduct canvass)
- Loss of autonomy – city has no control (example, vote-by-mail ballots returned without signatures and spoiled ballots).
- Services provided to voters by city will be reduced, much longer response time.
- Precinct lists, street indices, vote-by-mail lists, maps and sample ballots are only available from County.
- Candidate's statements are small in the Voter's Pamphlet, 8 point type, 200 word limit, so candidates will not have flexibility to be creative with indents and bullets as they do with city election.

In summary, based on the data provided, staff concludes that consolidating with Los Angeles County's November odd-year election will create a cost savings (by reducing staff involvement and splitting cost with MBUSD) but does not guarantee an increase in voter turnout. In addition, below are the other alternatives staff came across while conducting the research.

*Alternatives*

- On-cycle elections, even-year November (County is not allowing at this time)
- MBUSD consolidate with City's March election
- Consolidate MBUSD and City's election with the LA County June Primary Elections (County is not allowing at this time)
- All mail ballot election (must change to charter city)

Attachments: A. Survey conducted through League of California Cities  
B. Voter Turnout Chart  
C. Actual Election Cost Comparison

ELECTION CONSOLIDATION			
DO YOU CONSOLIDATE WITH LA COUNTY?			
CITY	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Azuza		X	
Baldwin Park	X		We switched in 2005
Bell Gardens	X		We went through the process of changing our election date and requesting consolidation with LA County in 2006
Bellflower		X	
Beverly Hills		X	LA County usually consolidates with us for our March odd year elections
Cudahy	X		
Diamond Bar	X		We consolidated with the County of Los Angeles for all but two elections
Hawaiian Gardens	X		
Huntington Park		X	
Irwindale		X	We consolidated with the County for one election several years ago and then reverted back to stand alone. In our case, it was for local control. We are able to certify the election MUCH faster than the County.
La Canada Flintridge		X	
La Mirada		X	
La Puente	X		We were consolidated with the County for elections but changed back to a stand alone. Initially the cost did decrease with the consolidation, but in 2007 the County dramatically increased its administrative costs and it was determined to be more cost effective to have our own stand alone election.
Lakewood		X	
Lancaster	X		We have a measure on our April ballot to become a charter city.
Lawndale	X	X	We consolidate for special elections only
Lomita	X	X	We consolidated once, but usually run our own elections
Malibu		X	
Marina		X	
Monrovia		X	
Norwalk		X	
Rancho Palos Verdes	X		
San Dimas	X		We switched in the 80's because of the myriad of problems with the County's equipment (ballot counters, the ballot punches, delays getting information, verifying signatures, etc)
Santa Fe Springs	X		
Torrance	X		
West Covina	X		
West Lake Village		X	We switched to stand alone to add more excitement to our Election Day, and to get our results much sooner
Whittier		X	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	

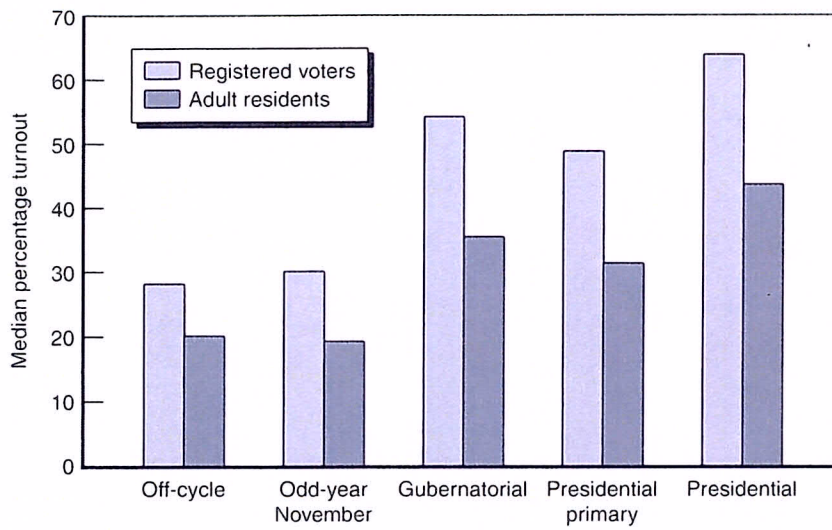


Figure S.2—Variation in Turnout by Election Timing  
(controlling for other factors)

Hajnal, Zoltan L., Paul G. Lewis, and Hugh Louch, *Municipal Elections in California: Turnout, Timing, and Competition*, Public Policy Institute of California, San Francisco, California, 2002.

2007 and 2009 Actual Election Cost Comparison:  
City of Manhattan Beach and Manhattan Beach Unified School District

Year	City of Manhattan Beach	MBUSD
2007	\$64,654.00	\$88,879.78
2009	\$70,233.00	\$0 (election cancelled)

*Note: City of Manhattan Beach conducts stand alone elections, whereas, the Manhattan Beach Unified School District consolidates their elections with the County of Los Angeles.*