

City Council Agenda Summary Sheet (Non Purchases)

Agenda No: 2004-0434 – Elimination of the Primary Election in City Elections
Date: July 23, 2004
Prepared By: Bev Jasinski, City Clerk
City File No: N/A

Meeting Date: July 28, 2004

PURPOSE

Consideration of a charter amendment to the Charter for the City of Rochester Hills which was approved by the electorate on May 22, 1984 and became effective at noon on November 20, 1984.

Section 9.9 states that “the City primary election shall be held on the Tuesday after the second Monday in September of each odd-numbered year. If there are not more than twice the number of candidates for each office to be filled as there are persons to be elected, the primary election shall not be held, and those persons filing valid petitions shall be declared the nominees”.

DISCUSSION

The AIS Committee has been discussing the possibility of the elimination of the primary election. Since Rochester Hills became a city in 1984, the city has held seven (7) out of a possible nine (9) primary elections due to the number of candidates who filed. The turnout for a primary has been under 15% (highest was 18.2%) with the winner of the primary becoming the winner in the city’s general election. The cost of an election is between \$35,000-\$40,000.

The City of Troy and City of Farmington Hills have both eliminated city primary elections. Reasons stated for elimination of primaries in the above communities were:

1. Viewed as acting fiscally responsible; cost savings to cities
2. Non-partisan election so cities felt there was no real need for a primary
3. Better control of blight; no signs for months before primary
4. Positive feedback from candidates; less expense for campaigning and less costs for signs

The City of Novi amended their charter in 1984 to read: “Candidates for any elective office, to be voted for at any municipal election held under the provisions of this Charter, except as provided in Section 5.6(c) shall be nominated at a primary election, and no other names shall be placed upon the election ballot for the election of such officers except those nominated in the manner hereinafter prescribed. However, whenever the number of candidates for nomination to any office does not exceed three (3) times the number to be elected to that office, then in such case, no primary election for the nomination of candidates for such office shall be held, and such candidates shall be deemed to be nominated to such office. The names of such candidates for any such office shall be placed upon the election ballot to be voted for at the next regular

municipal election, in all respects as though the said candidates had been nominated at a primary election”.

FISCAL INFORMATION

The cost of the primary will be between \$35,000 and \$40,000. This is a city election which means that the city pays for the entire cost of the election including supplies, precinct supply kits, and printing and folding of ballot cost paid for by the county for state and federal elections. In addition, the city would pay for election inspectors, all mailing costs, costs of applications, custodial fees, etc. plus all overtime for city employees involved in elections. Based on previous primaries the cost per vote ranges from \$3.50 to \$7.00.

RECOMMENDATION

If City Council concurs, direct the City Attorney to provide exact wording for an amendment to the City charter for approval by City Council. The amendment would then be submitted to the Governor and Attorney General.

(attached is Home Rules Cities Act, Section 117.22-117.24 which deals with Charter Amendments).

Department Authorization: Bev Jasinski, City Clerk

Reviewed by:

Fiscal: Jean Farris

Clerks: Susan Koliba-Galeczka

Approved by: Pat Somerville

RESOLUTION

NEXT AGENDA ITEM

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