

I spoke to St. Cloud, Virginia and Rochester. Also attached is election statistics from the SOS - during presidential elections voter turnout is well over 70%, and well over 60% during gubernatorial elections – this data is consistent going back to 1950. .

St. Cloud estimated cost of election at \$250,000 to \$270,000 – and that is with even year elections. Although there is much more voter participation in even years, they had a lame duck mayor that just pushed through switching back to odd years – they seem to go back and forth. St. Cloud sits in 3 counties with a population of about 71,000. There is currently one clerk, and one other staff in the clerks office that mostly handles licensing and helps a little with elections. Each county uses different voting machines and they need to report to 3 counties on election night. In the clerks experience there, voter engagement is very high on local elections on the even years, as overall the election process is top of mind. This changing back to odd years is very concerning to him and a lot of other people - it will result in the need to hire more staff, and they feel will result in much lower voter turnout and less engaged voters, at a huge financial cost. St. Cloud sent me sample ballot language – attached..

Virginia feels that voter engagement is high, but a significant factor is cost – they just paid the county \$3,000 for maintenance on the voting machines. She said that voters seem less engaged when there is not much on the ballot. But again saving money is primary. They are very happy with even year elections.

I spoke to the clerk in Rochester (population of 125,000) who was also the clerk in Austin MN (population of 25,000). She has only worked in even year elections, but can't imagine having odd year. Citizens are extremely engaged in the whole election process during the even years, and that includes the local races. In her experience in the odd years, people are just not interested in elections. She can't imagine trying to motivate people to vote on an odd year due to the lack of engagement, which leads to low voter turnout and not worth spending all that money for very little people voting. She said she would have serious concerns about an odd year election. People are engaged during the even years they get out and vote, and the election judges do not want to be bored sitting there all day – they sign up because they want the help people vote and she felt she would have difficulty hiring judges if they had to sit there all day being bored. She has no hesitation recommending going to even year elections and willing to be available for questions.

For the financial health of the city, as well as voter turnout moving to even year elections is an excellent long-term solution.

Election Expenses

We just paid the county \$12,000 for maintenance. \$2000 for just the layout of the ballot, not the ballots themselves.

This is a rough cost breakdown for this year/information for our budget presentation in a couple months I have been working on

Election Costs: (Odd year – Primary and General)

Publications (DNT) - \$300

Ballot Layout - \$4000

Ballots - \$80,000
Election Coding - \$13,000
Truck Rental - \$800
Absentee Envelopes - \$8000
General Office Supplies - \$3,000 (Over 50% paper alone)
Postage - \$5000 - \$7000
Election Judge Payroll - \$50,000

Absentee Process: 1) Mail application to voter.

2) Voter mails back and we enter into SVRS

3) Print labels – Put together packet (instruction sheet we print off – two envelopes to mail to and back – two envelopes to hold ballot.) Mail

4) Ballot is voted and mailed back. Clerks staff then:

a. Opens packet and places ballot into ballot box

b. Opens ballot box back up once the board meets

c. Ballots are verified for accuracy

d. Ballots are scanned into the system to receive them officially.

e. Any denied ballots are redone, sent back out with the same process with an extra page for explanation for denied ballot.

f. Ballots are opened on election day and run through the machine

g. Ballots are removed from machines and manually verified by counting.

All in all – Each vote that comes through AB is touched 9 to 10 times by staff. I would estimate that each Early Voting vote costs the city on an odd year election a half hour of staff time plus cost for ink, postage, paper, envelopes, ballot.

**This cost estimate DOES NOT include the Overtime paid to 3 administrative staff, or clerk staff salaries*