

City of Piedmont
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: April 4, 2007

FROM: Ann Swift, City Clerk

SUBJECT: **Update on the Impact of the Statewide Primary on the Regular Municipal Election of 2008**

RECOMMENDATION

Direct staff to proceed with an all-mail ballot for the regular municipal election of 2008, and consider whether to engage in a public discussion regarding a change of election date.

BACKGROUND

On March 15, Governor Schwarzenegger signed legislation moving the state's primary from June to February 5, 2008. This move places the City of Piedmont and Piedmont Unified School District in a difficult position. By charter amendment approved by the voters in 1999, "The regular election of Councilmembers shall be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of March in each even-numbered year, in the manner provided by State law". Note that the charter also requires that members of the school board shall be elected at the same time and in the same manner as members of the city council. In 2008, the date for the city's regular municipal election is March 4, 2008. This date cannot be changed, except by a charter amendment approved by the voters.

The 1999 charter amendment was approved in order to consolidate the city's election with the statewide primary which would lower election costs and increase voter turnout. When the charter amendment was passed, the state legislature had moved the statewide primary date to March. In 2000, 2002 and 2004, Piedmont did consolidate with the statewide primary, saved money and increased voter turnout. In 2006, the legislature moved the statewide primary to June and Piedmont held a more expensive stand alone election in March.

The Alameda County Registrar was able to provide services for the 2006 election because there was more than a two month gap between Piedmont's election and the statewide primary. This will not be the case in 2008 when there is only a three-week gap between the two elections. Under these circumstances, Dave McDonald, the Alameda County Registrar of Voters, has advised that his office cannot provide a traditional election for the City of Piedmont in March 2008. He is willing, however, to provide an

all-mail ballot if the city wishes. The cost for this stand alone election would be approximately \$45,000 (normally divided evenly between the city and the school district). This compares to a cost of \$40,000 in March 2006.

The alternative to this recommendation would be for the City of Piedmont to manage its own election, including hiring and training of poll workers, contracting for electronic equipment, translation and printing of ballots, etc. I do not believe that the city has sufficient staff or time given the current workload to attempt this solution. However, if council wishes to proceed in that direction I can prepare a more detailed analysis of the manpower and resources which would be required.

The council may also wish to consider placing before the voters a measure which would move the city's regular municipal election to a date which is less impacted by a political agenda. The State of California provides the first Tuesday after the first Monday in June of each year as an election date. Although costs for an election in June would be higher than for a consolidated ballot, they would be less than for a totally stand alone election. Council may wish to schedule public hearing on this possible change and/or to refer this matter to the Piedmont League of Women Voters for their recommendation.