



Maricopa County

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Interim Report

September 21, 2018

Maricopa County Board of Supervisors
301 W. Jefferson Street, 10th Floor
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Board of Supervisors:

At your request, the Maricopa County Internal Audit Department (Internal Audit) is conducting a review of Election Day activities overseen by the Maricopa County Recorder's Office (Recorder's Office). In light of recent events surrounding the primary election on August 28, 2018, we are reviewing key issues relating to the primary election that may significantly impact the November 6, 2018 general election.

The purpose of this interim report is to provide information and recommendations early enough for key corrective actions to be implemented for the general election. Our focus is to identify preliminary issues related to polling locations that opened late during the primary election and make meaningful recommendations. In addition, we are determining if proper contingency plans are in place to address unanticipated problems that may arise. This report does not address all issues related to the primary election. However, as this engagement continues, additional issues may be included in our scope of work.

This report does not provide information related to the Recorder's Office use of an outside contractor to set up voter check-in systems at voting locations. We are still in the process of reviewing information related to these services. Once we have completed our review, we will provide any recommendations needed to affect positive change for the upcoming general election.

The results contained in this report are based on conditions in effect at the time of our work. We did not perform an audit, which would include detailed testing. Our review is limited and may not detect all deficiencies, errors, and irregularities that may exist. The Recorder's Office is responsible for establishing and maintaining an effective system of internal controls and procedures to provide reasonable assurance that all relevant laws and policies are followed.

Attached are the preliminary issues identified, related recommendations, and responses provided by the Recorder's Office on September 20, 2018. This report is intended for the information of the party listed above. However, this report is a public record and its distribution is not limited.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Michael McGee

Michael McGee
Maricopa County Auditor

BACKGROUND

The Recorder's Office provides document recording and voter registration services required by statute. Pursuant to a charter originally promulgated in 1955 with the Board of Supervisors (BOS), the Recorder's Office also provides elections services. We will refer to the Recorder's Office throughout this report when discussing election services.

The Recorder's Office was responsible for implementing the Maricopa County Board Approved Primary and General Election Plan which called for 503 sites where registered voters could cast their votes on Election Day. The locations included:

- **40 vote centers** strategically placed throughout the County that allowed any Maricopa County registered voter to cast a provisional ballot. The provisional ballot could be counted, even though it was cast out of precinct, because the vote centers were equipped with systems and printers that would verify voter information and print a ballot specific to the voter's assigned precinct.
- **463 polling locations** with assigned precincts that allowed registered voters assigned to those precincts to vote.

Vote centers and polling locations are staffed with poll workers, including **inspectors** (responsible for overseeing operations at one polling locations) and **troubleshooters** (assigned to 6-8 locations, providing assistance and guidance).

During the primary election, the Recorder's Office used an electronic voter check-in and ballot printing system that was implemented in the November 2017 jurisdictional election and the February 2018 special election in the 8th Congressional District. The system includes electronic **SiteBooks** to enable voter check-in and ballot printers to produce the required ballot for each voter. The system was implemented in order to (1) decrease the time required to vote in-person, reducing lines at polling places, (2) provide locations where registered voters from any precinct may vote, and (3) reduce the number of uncounted provisional ballots due to ballots cast at the wrong location.

SiteBooks were used at the 40 vote centers and the 463 polling locations in order to electronically check-in voters and verify they had not already voted by mail or at a vote center. During the primary election, some voters were not able to vote at their designated polling locations because some locations did not open on time. The SiteBook setup process described in this report is a key factor that contributed to the late opening of polling locations.

The current plan for the general election is to use a similar number of polling locations and vote centers. There were approximately 100,000 voters that cast an in-person ballot during the primary election. The Recorder's Office projects that there will be over 240,000 in-person ballots cast during the general election. As identified in this interim report, this projected increase in turnout creates a need for the Recorder's Office to develop procedures that address contingencies, setup, resource planning, and project management.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Preliminary Issue: The Recorder's Office asserted that 62 voting locations out of 503 were not operational at 6:00am on primary Election Day but were fully operational by 11:33am. The Recorder's Office also asserts that SiteBooks were not operational at these sites and that vote centers served as a contingency for some voters to cast a ballot. We have not yet validated the assertions of times and places.

There was no plan to provide onsite voting options which created inconveniences for voters, among other issues. In addition, we noted that vote centers were not included in the disaster recovery plan for

elections services and not presented to the Board of Supervisors as part of a contingency plan. While troubleshooters and inspectors may have received some training related to the vote centers, many poll workers did not.

Recommendation: Implement training and procedures that provide options for voters to remain onsite and vote if equipment is not operational, in addition to providing vote centers. Enhance training and procedures to provide voters with handouts showing the locations of all 40 vote centers, and describing the differences between using a vote center and voting at their designated polling location.

Recorder's Office Response: The assertion that "...the vote centers were not included in the ...plan...and not presented to the Board of Supervisors..." is not completely correct, as evidenced by the fact that training materials and instructions specifically indicated the availability of vote centers for emergencies. Had these contingencies not been part of the plan, they would not have been included in the training. Additionally, had the vote center model not been available as a part of the contingency, we could not have handled the record turnout the Elections Department did. The plan worked.

Preliminary Issue: Individual polling locations may experience longer lines as a result of higher turnout during the general election. During the primary election, there were no procedures in place to sufficiently monitor voter traffic and to redeploy voting equipment and staffing resources from low-traffic voting locations to higher-traffic locations. The Recorder's Office maintains a reserve of SiteBooks and other equipment that can be deployed, however, these resources may not be sufficient considering the projected turnout for the general election.

Recommendation: Implement procedures to measure line wait times and voter check-in activity at individual voting locations throughout the day and quickly redeploy resources as needed.

Recorder's Office Response: The issue that "...there were no procedures in place to sufficiently monitor voter traffic and to redeploy voting equipment and staffing resources..." is false. Pollworkers were calling into the evening, as instructed in their training, to contact Troubleshooters or Headquarters where long lines were occurring. Additional staff and equipment were immediately deployed to the only two locations in the County with long lines. Importantly, under previous systems, the number of voters standing in these lines would have taken several hours to check-in. These lines moved quickly due to the speed of the new SiteBook check-in system.

SCHEDULING AND LOCATION SETUP

Preliminary Issue: The setup process at voting locations includes coordinating schedules, gaining facility access, and setting up equipment. During the primary election a troubleshooter, inspector, and contracted technician were required to be present in order to set up SiteBook equipment. If one person fell behind, all other routes could be impacted. Only contracted technicians were authorized and trained to set up SiteBook equipment. There was no backup plan in place for setting up the equipment if a technician did not show up at the scheduled time. In addition, if SiteBooks malfunctioned after setup, poll workers could not diagnose the problem or address minor issues since troubleshooters and inspectors were not trained to setup SiteBooks.

Note - The issue above is one of the key issues that contributed to the delays in opening voting locations.

Recommendation: As a backup plan, provide each troubleshooter, inspector, and technician with the training and authority to set up SiteBooks and diagnose setup issues on their own.

Recorder's Office Response: In reference to...“There was no back-up plan in place to set up the equipment if a technician did not show up at the scheduled time.” The fact that the technician's company guaranteed performance on a contract, then confirmed sufficient technicians in writing, then did not perform, should not be considered as a particular fault of the Elections Department, but that of the contractor who did not perform on the guarantee.

Preliminary Issue: During the setup of SiteBook equipment for the primary election, there was not an effective way for the Recorder's Office to determine which locations had operational SiteBooks. Therefore, the status could not be quickly ascertained and resources deployed if technical help was needed.

Recommendation: Develop and review real-time system reports showing SiteBook connectivity and other critical activities during the setup process and throughout the election.

Recorder's Office Response: In reference to...“During setup of SiteBook equipment for the primary election, there was not an effective way for the Recorder's Office to determine which locations were set up with operational SiteBooks.” The Elections Department relied on a “reactive” model requiring pollworkers to call in with issues. A shift to a “proactive” system of reporting includes a new dashboard system for monitoring equipment functionality will directly address this concern. The dashboard is well into design and creation phase, and should be ready for testing and implementation prior to Election Day.

STAFFING, RECRUITMENT, AND TRAINING FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION

Preliminary Issue: The Recorder's Office does not plan to rehire the contractor used during the primary election for SiteBook setup and related technical expertise. Staffing resources to replace these services have not been recruited. In addition, projected higher turnout for the general election may create a need for additional poll workers and ancillary services. The Recorder's Office asserts that a staffing plan is currently under development.

Recommendation: Finalize a staffing plan that identifies all resources needed to provide the adequate services and technical expertise for the general election. Contact existing poll workers to secure commitments for the general election. Identify staffing and training gaps for all categories of election-day workers. Analyze the need for having a contingency reserve of poll workers in the event that some do not show up. Develop and execute a strategy to recruit and train all needed staffing resources as identified during the gap analysis.

Recorder's Office Response: In reference to...“Staffing resources to replace these [contractor] services have not been recruited.” The Election Department will train and rely on Troubleshooters and Pollworkers to set up and connect equipment. The Department is actively hiring additional staff to assist with technical matters in this effort. Additionally, the Department has made a request to the County Manager for 100 extra County staff members to be designated to assist with set up.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Potential Issue: Leading up to the primary election, there was not a project leader responsible for coordinating election setup activities internally between employees and externally with a contractor for outside services. Based on our preliminary review, there were logistical and communication issues, with a lack of accountability. Prior to our review, the Recorder's Office had recognized this issue and designated a person to serve as the project leader for the general election.

Recommendation: Ensure that this new project leader has the resources, support, and ability to successfully plan and execute the general election activities, while mitigating potential pitfalls. This includes ensuring collaborative communications and coordination of efforts between all persons involved to facilitate a successful election day.

Recorder's Office Response: None.

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Preliminary Issue: The Recorder's Office plans to use the same facilities and equipment for the general election as was used during the primary election. A comparison of turnout at primary election locations to general election projections has not yet been completed to assess any additional facility and equipment needs. The Recorder's Office asserts that reach out efforts have been started to shore up commitments and address spacing needs at some facilities. However, a complete analysis of predicted voter traffic at all facilities has not been completed.

Recommendation: Compare voter turnout at all primary election locations to general election projections to determine if the facilities and equipment meet the needs for the general election. Contact existing voting facilities to secure commitments. Secure additional facilities as needed.

Recorder's Office Response: In reference to...“A comparison of turnout at primary election locations to general election projections has not yet been completed to assess any additional facility and equipment needs.” This is wrong. For example, as discussed with the auditors on 9/19, both the Century and Burton Barr branches of the Phoenix Public Libraries have been identified as locations where better access and more space will be necessary. The Elections Department has contacted all voting facilities, and is working with each to address issues and improve access if necessary on a case by case basis.

RECORDER'S OFFICE COMMENTS

The Maricopa County Recorder's Office and Elections Department does not concur with the internal audit as submitted for the specific reasons listed above. However, as has already been shared with the audit team, every recommendation item indicated in this audit has been previously identified, and is being actively addressed for the November election.

Additionally, in general terms, the audit misstates or misunderstands several critical assertions in its “Preliminary Issues” sections.

INTERNAL AUDIT COMMENTS

We appreciate the cooperation we've received from the Recorder's Office throughout this process and look forward to a continued positive relationship as our work continues. While the Recorder's Office may disagree with some of our preliminary issues, we are pleased that its leadership has agreed to implement the recommendations.

We welcome the recent addition of an external firm to provide an expert, outside perspective of the election processes in an effort to provide additional value-added recommendations for the upcoming general election.