



King County

**Records, Elections and
Licensing Services Division**

Department of Executive Services
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ATTACHMENT 7

October 18, 2005

Hon. Larry Phillips, Chair
Metropolitan King County Council
Room 1200
COURTHOUSE

Dear Councilmember Phillips:

RE: Elections Facility Expansion

As you know, space needs and security are two of the most significant issues identified in multiple reviews and assessments of King County Elections. In particular, several recommendations in the Council's recently completed Independent Management Audit of King County Elections highlighted the need for more adequate facilities and improved security for the processing of mail ballots.

While efforts are ongoing to identify longer-term solutions to these issues, we are taking steps to further ensure the integrity of this election cycle by expanding our use of available space at the Airport Office Center (AOC) on East Marginal Way that was used during the conduct of the mandatory recount for Sheriff in the recent primary and also used to conduct the manual recount in last year's gubernatorial contest. This space will be utilized for several elections operations and will be used in addition to other leased and county-owned facilities necessary to conduct elections and provide for observation. This will be a temporary arrangement and will not in any way interfere with the policy direction given in Ordinance 15246 to seek a long-term consolidated elections facility.

Tabulation of mail ballots will continue to be conducted at our leased Mail Ballot Operations Satellite (MBOS) facility on First Avenue South. Likewise, preparation of poll voting equipment and supply storage will continue at the Election Distribution Center (EDC) on Fir Street, while voter registration, public services and election night reports continue to operate out of the Division administrative office on the fifth floor of the County Administration Building. Our voter hotline phone bank will operate out of temporarily assigned space in the Maynard Room, second floor Administration Building.

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To facilitate improved security, added procedures and better observation, we will be relocating the pre-tabulation processing of absentee and mail ballots from the MBOS facility to the AOC. These processes include receiving voted ballots from the post office, verifying voter signatures on the ballots, opening and separating the ballots from the envelopes, daily reconciliation, and ballot duplication for ballots that cannot be run through the tabulation equipment.

Training of Inspectors and Judges who staff our polling places will be conducted at the AOC this election cycle as well. This facility provides adequate parking and classroom space that allows for a more interactive training environment and the set-up of a model polling location to help those attending experience hands-on training.

Additionally, canvassing and reconciliation of poll ballots and materials that occurs starting the day after the election will be conducted at the AOC. A secured ballot cage has been erected in the facility and uniformed security will be onsite around the clock once the processing of ballots commences.

This expansion and use of additional temporary space is necessary to:

- respond to new laws requiring more robust ballot accountability and reconciliation;
- meet requirements for processing incoming mail-in ballots within newly established legal timelines;
- ensure adequate capacity for the number of seasonal election workers hired to facilitate the administration of the General Election;
- provide for expanded observation opportunities for political party observers, members of the Citizens' Election Oversight Committee, the Council's contracted professional election observers, and the general public; and
- demonstrate improved physical security and workflow efficiencies as recommended by the Independent Management Audit of King County Elections.

In reviewing options for meeting the requirements listed above, we considered the following objectives:

- The need to process mail ballots legally, efficiently and securely;
- The need to provide staff, observers and the public with a safe, accessible work location that is conducive to the body of work being performed;
- Identification of a solution that can be implemented with the least degree of risk and disruption to our core functions and performance; and
- Selection of an option that will allow us to capture key processes and planning elements that will contribute to future efficiencies and more permanent facility solutions.

We expect to have the AOC facility configured and operational by Monday, October 24, as ballots for the November 8 General Election begin to come back. From that time continuing through certification of the election on December 1, election-related activity at the AOC and all other elections facilities will be continuous. Should members of the Council have a desire to

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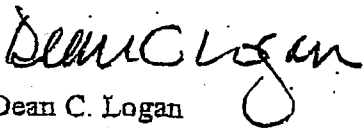
observe the varied and complex processes associated with administering elections, we would be pleased to provide tours of the many work locations and their associated activities.

Again, the use of the AOC is an immediate, temporary solution to address the needs of the November 8 General Election. Not only is there a need for a long-term solution to meet Elections' operational needs which cannot be adequately met at the AOC but also Facilities Management has advised that long-term occupancy of this facility by Elections could potentially jeopardize Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grant funding for the King County International Airport. The airport receives FAA grants that require assurances that any long-term use of the airport be for aviation purposes. In addition to the grant funding issues, this portion of the airport will be important in any long-term aviation redevelopment plan. In the short term, however, the site can be used to address some of the most critical and immediate Elections' needs.

The Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division and the Facilities Management Division of the Department of Executive Services will continue efforts to identify a long-term solution to establish a consolidated elections facility. The Executive has transmitted a legislative package with a proposal to move forward with that effort. The Executive will also be transmitting legislation prior to the end of this year for an interim solution to fund placement of the MBOS operations, currently in leased space (First Avenue South) with a lease expiration date in mid-2006.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information regarding the expanded use of the AOC facility and the relocation of some election activities to that location.

Sincerely,



Dean C. Logan
Director

- cc: Members, Metropolitan King County Council
ATTN: Scott White, Chief of Staff
Ron Sims, King County Executive
Sheryl V. Whitney, Assistant County Executive
Kurt Triplett, Chief of Staff, County Executive Office
Ryan Bayne, Council Relations Director, County Executive Office
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