



Department of Elections

Julie Wise, Director

April 14, 2016

The Honorable Joe McDermott
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember McDermott:

It is with excitement and gratitude that I transmit to you the attached report, "King County Ballot Drop-off Locations: A Plan to Improve Voter Access." In December of 2015, the Council passed legislation in support of expanding the number of permanent ballot drop-off locations in the County. This support was underscored by the mid-biennial funding the Council approved in February. I am proud that together we are taking this important step to expand access and convenience to our residents.

Specifically, Motion 14491 required that the plan include:

- A proposed number of additional drop-off locations to ensure geographic equity;
- Proposed sites for the drop-off locations;
- Estimated costs; and
- An implementation timeline.

The legislation also required "an analysis of the feasibility and desirability of using all public library locations in King County, including Seattle Public Libraries and the King County Library System, as a means to ensure geographic equity and convenience for voters." With this letter I am also transmitting a Motion that acknowledges the receipt of the plan and releases the expenditure restriction on the dedicated ballot drop box funds.

Putting together this proposed list of locations was challenging. We aimed to balance two primary, sometimes contradictory, priorities – (1) providing a fair geographic distribution of sites across the county to ensure that every resident has reasonable access to a ballot drop-off location, and (2) focusing on – and providing a higher level of service to – those areas of the county with lower voter registration rates, lower turn-out, and a history of being underserved. At the same time, we had to make sure that any proposed site met a variety of specific operational requirements, including accessibility and security.

I think are the following aspects of the plan are particularly noteworthy:

- Of the forty-three locations deemed feasible for 2016, twenty-four of them are located at public libraries.
- Twenty-six locations are in areas that score highest in key equity demographic characteristics.
- Six locations are located in unincorporated King County.
- Box locations are proposed for a variety of geographically-isolated communities including, Vashon Island, SE King County and East King County.
- Locations are also proposed for several culturally distinct communities, including the Chinatown/International District and the Muckleshoot reservation.

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- The vast majority of King County residents (91.5% of residents) live within three miles of a proposed location.

In the attached plan you will see we have proposed a three phase approach to implementation, which includes the following:

Phase I - Drop-off locations for the Primary Election. We are proposing a total of 29 locations for the 2016 Primary Election on August 2nd. This includes keeping our ten current locations and adding 19 additional locations, all of which are either libraries or properties with whom we already have an agreement. Our intent with this phase is to provide as much continuity as possible to our customers as well as add boxes to some key locations owned by already established partners.

Phase II - Drop-off locations for the General Election. We are proposing to add 14 new locations for the November 8, 2016 General Election (for a total of 43). We still have more work to do on these locations. In some cases, for example the Chinatown/International District, there was not a suitable library option and we are still working to identify an appropriate location. In other cases, we have identified a desirable location, but have yet to come to an agreement with the property owner.

Phase III - Potential locations to be added in 2017. There were several library locations identified as highly desirable that are presently under construction. Some of these locations also happen to be in areas with historically low turn-out and high representation of persons of color and persons for whom English is a second language. For these four locations, we are proposing that we consider adding them in 2017 when the construction is complete. This could be done either by foregoing replacement of several of the current boxes that are in better shape, or by procuring additional boxes.

Of course, all of these locations are contingent on approval by the Council and on a final agreement with the property owner. We plan to continue working with representatives from all sites while the Council considers this plan.

I believe this approach balances our various priorities and provides as much service to voters as soon as possible. I welcome your questions and input on this and any other opportunities we have to remove barriers to voting. This expansion of ballot drop-off locations is an important step in making it easier for King County residents to participate in decisions about their community and I thank you for your partnership in making it happen.

Sincerely,



Julie Wise
Elections Director

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers
ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff
Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council
Ellen Hansen, Chair, Citizen Elections Oversight Committee