

To: **Mayor and City Council**
From: **Ryan Schroeder, City Manager**
Date: **August 31, 2020**

Accept Default Option of County CARES ACT Election Funding

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Enclosed, please find a Dakota County CARES ACT application to the State of Minnesota and a municipal agreement. Requested of Council is acceptance of the enclosed agreement, which includes acceptance of a default allocation of CARES funds, directed toward Election pandemic mitigation and response costs. This funding is in addition to prior CARES ACT distribution of funds to the City. The grant allocates \$8,047.10 to the City of West St. Paul under a non-negotiated (default) formula, which Staff supports.

Authorized Uses of the CARES Act Funding

The use of the CARES Act funds is restricted by both Federal and State law. State law outlines the broad categories for which the funds can be used, including:

- 1) Ensuring the health and safety of election officials and in-person voters, including the purchase of sanitation and disinfectant supplies;
- 2) Public outreach and preparations for implementing social distancing guidelines related to voting, including additional signs and staff;
- 3) Facilitation, support, and preparation for increased absentee voting, including voter education materials, printing, and postage;
- 4) Preparation of training materials and administration of additional training of local election officials;
- 5) Preparation of new polling place locations; and
- 6) Purchasing an electronic roster system meeting the technology requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 201.225, subdivision 2, along with equipment necessary to support the system.

Currently, the City of West St. Paul has over 12,000 registered voters. We would anticipate that for the November General Election an estimate of 9,600 voters would submit ballots. We further anticipate that 5,500 of these voters may submit ballots by absentee, based upon the number submitting during the recent Primary. We project that the absentee ballots over the 45 workday period beginning September 18 will add over 900 hours of workload over that which would occur during an Election Day only event. We believe this increase in absentee balloting is due in large part to the pandemic and concerns regarding in-person balloting.

Currently, we do not have the technology, nor personnel, available to handle 900 additional hours of absentee balloting. Hence it would be the Staff intent, under category #3 above, that we allocate the CARES funding to pay for 80% of the cost of two laptop computers, software, and the staffing to operate the technology which facilitates and supports the increased absentee voting anticipated. Further,

we would intend to allocate funds for 80% of the cost of preparation and sanitation of polling locations. To the extent funds are available, we would further allocate toward preparation of outreach materials and/or other expenditures meeting the above noted grant categories.

FISCAL IMPACT:

		Amount
Fund:		
Department:		
Account:		

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

By motion, approve the enclosed municipal agreement for CARES ACT election funding, contingent upon receipt of the approved Dakota County/State of Minnesota CARES Act agreement.

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