



City of Huntington Beach

File #: 20-1836

MEETING DATE: 9/8/2020

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

SUBMITTED TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

SUBMITTED BY: Robin Estanislau, CMC, City Clerk

PREPARED BY: Robin Estanislau, CMC, City Clerk

Subject:

Approve and authorize execution of Vote Center Entry Permit (License) Agreements with the County of Orange for use of certain City facilities as five-day Vote Centers for the November 3, 2020 General Municipal Election

Statement of Issue:

California Senate Bill 450, known as the California *Voter's Choice Act* passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor in 2016, authorizes counties to conduct all-mailed ballot elections if the jurisdiction can meet certain criteria. The Orange County Registrar of Voters (ROV) has transitioned to this new model of voting, and is seeking approval to use certain City facilities as five-day Vote Centers for the November 3, 2020 General Municipal Election.

Financial Impact:

Not applicable.

Recommended Action:

Approve and authorize the City Manager to execute the Orange County Registrar of Voters "Vote Center Entry Permit (License) Agreements" approved as to form by the City Attorney for use of the following sites as five-day Vote Centers:

- A) Huntington Beach Civic Center, Meeting Room B-7, 2000 Main Street, Huntington Beach from Friday, October 30, 2020 through Tuesday, November 3, 2020; and,
- B) Huntington Beach Central Library, Rooms C/D, 7111 Talbert Avenue, Huntington Beach from Friday, October 30, 2020 through Tuesday, November 3, 2020; and,
- C) Huntington Beach City Gym and Pool, 1600 Palm Avenue, Huntington Beach from Friday, October 30, 2020 through Tuesday, November 3, 2020; and,
- D) Main Street Branch Library, Blue Room, 525 Main Street, Huntington Beach from Friday, October 30, 2020 through Tuesday, November 3, 2020; and,

E) Edison Community Center, Studio, 21377 Magnolia Street, Huntington Beach from Friday, October 30, 2020 through Tuesday, November 3, 2020; and,

F) Michael E. Rodgers Senior Outreach Center, Auditorium, 1706 Orange Avenue, Huntington Beach from Friday, October 30, 2020 through Tuesday, November 3, 2020; and,

G) Murdy Community Center, Studio, 1900 Norma Drive, Huntington Beach from Friday, October 30, 2020 through Tuesday, November 3, 2020.

Alternative Action(s):

Deny the request and provide staff alternate direction.

Analysis:

The California *Voter's Choice Act*, passed in 2016, allows counties to conduct all-mailed ballot elections to provide greater flexibility and convenience for voters, so that elections are no longer a one-day event. In February 2019, the County Board of Supervisors voted to enact the Voter's Choice Act, and starting with the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election, all voters in Orange County received a vote-by-mail ballot and could choose to: 1) return their ballot by mail (postage-paid) through the United States Postal Service; 2) drop their ballot in an official and secure Ballot Drop Box; or deliver their ballot to any four or eleven-day Vote Center within the County. The same process will be followed for the November 3, 2020 General Municipal Election and subsequent elections that follow, with the County electing to operate five-day Vote Centers only, rather than the four and eleven-day Vote Center options that were previously used.

Benefits of Vote Centers

Vote Centers are designed to improve the voter experience. While polling places have been a mainstay of voting for many years, the use of them has dropped dramatically in the past 20 years. Voters have gravitated towards more convenience, choosing instead to receive a vote-by-mail ballot and, in many instances, drop it off at a polling place, rather than vote in-person. Vote Centers adapt to these changes and offer many more conveniences.

<u>Features</u>	<u>Traditional Polling Place</u>		<u>Vote Center</u>	
Electronic voting system	X		X	
Drop off ballot at any site		X		X
Disabled access voting	X		X	
Ballot on-demand				X
Electronic secure check-in				X
Provisional ballots nearly eliminated			X	
Trained employees				X
Vote at any location				X
Multi-day voting			X	
Reduced costs			X	

Orange County Registrar of Voters (ROV) Neal Kelley and staff worked with City staff to assess and secure potential sites suitable to serve as five-day Vote Centers. Site selection considerations included Vote Center proximity to:

- Public transportation
- Communities with historically low vote by mail usage
- Population centers
- Language minority communities
- Voters with disabilities
- Communities with low rates of household vehicle ownership
- Low-income communities
- Communities of eligible voters who are not registered to vote and may need access to same day voter registration
- Geographically isolated populations, including Native American reservations

Other considerations include:

- Access to accessible and free parking
- The distance and time a voter must travel by car or public transportation to a vote center
- The need for alternate methods for voters with disabilities for whom vote by mail ballots are not accessible to cast a ballot
- Traffic patterns near vote centers
- The need for mobile vote centers in addition to the number of vote centers established pursuant to this section
- Room size and location
- Facility availability for multiple days and extended hours, including weekends

The City Clerk, Director of Community Services, and Director of Library Services worked with ROV representatives in the site selection process. In early August, the ROV provided a communication that requested specific site use for Vote Center purposes. Department Directors provided preliminary approval for use of the requested sites [Vote Center Entry Permit (License) Agreements approved as to form by the City Attorney are attached].

In response to COVID-19, the ROV has provided assurance that each in-person voting location will have detailed plans for disinfecting, maintaining physical distance, and will have personal protective equipment and increased signage on site.

Registrar of Voters Neal Kelley stated, "My priority is to provide safe voting options for all voters and safe working environments for our staff amid COVID-19. Whether a voter prefers to vote at home or in-person at a Vote Center, every effort will be made to ensure they have a positive experience that promotes health and safety." He continued, "Voters should consider voting safely at home using the ballot they will receive in the mail prior to the election."

The ROV's COVID-19 Election Response Report can be accessed at:

<https://www.ocvote.com/election-library/docs/2020%20COVID-19%20Report.pdf>.

County and City staff have also agreed to offer voters a drive-thru ballot drop off option at select locations (Edison Community Center, Michael Rodgers Senior Center, Murdy Community Center) to limit the number of voters entering each facility. Past voting data shows that many voters go to the nearest Vote Center/Polling Place simply to turn in their mail-in ballot. A map depicting the drive-thru ballot drop-off process is attached to each of the aforementioned license agreements.

Environmental Status:

Not applicable.

Strategic Plan Goal:

Non-Applicable - Administrative Item

Attachment(s):

1. Vote Center Facility Use Agreement - Huntington Beach Civic Center, Meeting Room B-7, 2000 Main Street, Huntington Beach
2. Vote Center Facility Use Agreement - Huntington Beach Central Library, Rooms C/D, 7111 Talbert Avenue, Huntington Beach
3. Vote Center Facility Use Agreement - Huntington Beach City Gym and Pool, 1600 Palm Avenue, Huntington Beach
4. Vote Center Facility Use Agreement - Main Street Branch Library, Blue Room, 525 Main Street, Huntington Beach
5. Vote Center Facility Use Agreement - Edison Community Center, Studio, 21377 Magnolia Street, Huntington Beach
6. Vote Center Facility Use Agreement - Rodgers Senior Outreach Center, Auditorium, 1706 Orange Avenue, Huntington Beach
7. Vote Center Facility Use Agreement - Murdy Community Center, Studio, 1900 Norma Drive, Huntington Beach