



2009 Spring Primary Debriefing prepared by the City Clerk for the Madison Election Advisory Committee

Overview

The City of Madison had a voter turnout of 7 percent on February 17, 2009. There were 13,362 votes cast. Election Officials registered 253 voters at the polls.

For comparison, the City of Madison had a voter turnout of 7 percent in February 2005, with 13,887 votes cast. Election Officials registered 198 voters at the polls in February 2005.

Training

We offered a total of 21 training sessions over a two-week period and tried to accommodate a variety of learning styles.

Eight of the training sessions were Power Point presentations regarding the importance of Election Day paperwork, and how the paperwork is used to certify the election results.

We also offered ten sessions of hands-on tabulator training. These sessions took place during our tabulator testing, with a capacity of six Election Officials per session. Based on the positive feedback we received from Election Officials who took this training, we will continue to offer hands-on tabulator training before every election.

The final training opportunities were at the Board of Canvassers meeting, where Election Officials were able to see first-hand how their Election Day documentation is used to certify the election results. Those in attendance were primarily Chief Inspectors, who reported that it was helpful to see more of the big picture.

Canvassers Reports

This is the first election where we included a "Canvassers Report" in the supply tote for each polling place. The report indicated whether the paperwork for that polling place was complete for the November election, including signatures on results tapes, information required on the Inspector's Statement, documentation and use of security seals, poll book certification, write-in tally sheets, and proper completion of voter registration applications.

There were 18 polling places that submitted perfect paperwork in November. Those Election Officials received treats in their supply totes for the February Primary (not at city expense).

We have prepared Canvassers Reports based on the February 17 Primary, to be given to Election Officials at the April 7 Election. For this election, there are 69 polling places that will receive treats (not at city expense). The polling places that were not quite perfect were only off by one item. Six polling places indicated that they had zero optical scan ballots, one polling place forgot to indicate the number of absentee ballots that were counted, two polling places forgot to list the seal number from their ballot bag, and two polling places left the AutoMark memory card in the AutoMark terminal.

Absentee Ballots

The City of Madison issued 2,277 absentee ballots for the Primary. Of the 1,547 absentee ballots returned to the Clerk's Office, 230 were either rejected at the polls or were received after Election Day. Most of the late ballots were received the day after the election, and probably would not have been late if the election did not take place the day after a federal holiday (President's Day).

We have taken this data and the data on rejected absentee ballots from November, and have added the following notice to our website:

Make Sure Your Absentee Ballot Gets Counted!

Ten to 15 percent* of absentee ballots do not get counted. Absentee ballots are rejected for the following reasons:

- Ballot has not been received by the Clerk's Office until after Election Day.
- Voter has not signed absentee certificate envelope.
- Voter has not had a witness sign the absentee certificate envelope.
- Voter has not registered to vote at their current address.
- Voter has not sealed the absentee certificate envelope.

The City Clerk's Office strongly encourages absentee voters to take the following precautions:

- Either vote absentee in the Clerk's Office, or carefully read the instruction letter that you receive with your absentee ballot.
- Mail your absentee ballot back to the Clerk's Office as early as possible. The postmark does not make a difference here; in order to be counted, your absentee ballot needs to be delivered to your polling place on Election Day.
- Make sure you sign the certificate envelope on the line marked "Signature of Voter."
- Have your witness sign the certificate envelope on the line marked "Signature of Witness."
- Make sure the envelope is sealed.
- If you have moved, you must register to vote at your new address. Crossing out the address on your absentee label and writing in your new address does not update your voter registration.

*In November 2008, 331 of the 29,000 ballots sent to City of Madison polling places were rejected. An additional 3,343 ballots were not received by Election Day.

*In February 2009, 230 of the 1,547 absentee ballots returned to the City Clerk's Office were either rejected at the polls, or not received by Election Day. An additional 730 ballots were not returned to the City Clerk's Office at all.

Preparations for the Spring Election

There is one polling place change for April. Wards 79 and 80 will be voting at the Lussier Community Education Center instead of Jefferson Middle School.

Because the election takes place during Spring Break for the Madison Metropolitan School District, we will be open for voting from 9 a.m. to noon for the two Saturdays prior to the election. We also will extend our office hours to 6 p.m. Monday – Thursday the week before the election.

We have hired Elena Berg as our Elections Clerk, a position that had been vacant since September. Elena has completed training with the Statewide Voter Registration System, and is prepared to oversee issuance of absentee ballots.

Jean, our new Records Clerk, has found a way to extend the life of the AutoMark ink cartridges. This will save us up to \$5,000 per election.

We have been fortunate to have light duty help as we prepare for the April 7 Election. This extra assistance from Madison Metro, Monona Terrace, and the Parks Department has enabled us to prepare the election supply totes during normal work hours.

Post-Election Projects

The Government Accountability Board has taken on the responsibility of conducting the four-year purge of voter registrations. Individuals who have not voted for the past four years will remain on the April poll books, and will not be inactivated until after the April Election. Once the four-year purge is complete, we should have a more manageable number of potential voter matches to confirm or deny in SVRS.

We will need to verify all address ranges in SVRS again this summer. Keeping the address ranges up-to-date helps expedite the processing of voter registration applications.

After this election we will be updating the City of Madison Election Day Guide to make it more user-friendly and to include photographs where possible.