

## Madison Election Advisory Committee Annual Report for 2007-08

### Introduction

This report covers the period from October 2007 – September 2008. As in the committee's first annual report, this one deals with the entire election process particularly improvements made by the City Clerk during the past year.

### Election Statistics

Three elections were held during this period: a Presidential primary in February 2008, a general election in April 2008 and a primary election in September 2008. In addition, planning for the November 2008 presidential and congressional elections was well underway.

	<b>February 2008</b>	<b>April 2008</b>	<b>September 2008</b>
<b>Voters</b>			
Number of Voters	87,992	35,087	9,870
Voter Turnout	54%	22%	6%
Absentee Ballots Issued <sup>1</sup>	7,193	5,149	3,250
Absentee Ballots Counted at Polls	4,847	2,629	1,872
Election Day Registrants	25,043	396	806 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Election Officials</b>			
Election Officials on Payroll <sup>3</sup>	850	550	564
Training Sessions	20	12	6
<b>Polling Sites</b>			
Number of Polling Sites	79	79	79

As the preceding table shows, voter turnout has varied greatly over the past year. The presidential primary in February 2008 generated much voter interest with a large turnout. In addition, this election generated many Election Day registrants (28.4% of those casting votes at the polls). By contrast, turnout for the April 2008 local elections was much lower with only 35,000 voters or 22% of the electorate voting. Furthermore, only 1.1% of these voters registered at the polls on Election Day.

<sup>1</sup> This is the number of absentee ballots requested and issued. However, not all ballots are returned to the Clerk's office and then counted at the polls.

<sup>2</sup> Election Officials registered 806 voters at the polls. Of these registrants, 494 voted in the September election and the remaining 312 registered but did not vote in the September election.

<sup>3</sup> This number excludes those election officials who served as unpaid volunteers or who were paid by their employer to work at the polls.

## **Completed and Ongoing Improvements and Changes in Election Administration**

### Registration

- With the cooperation of the Government Accountability Board, Madison's voter rolls were purged of those residents who had not voted in the past four years (and who did not ask to be kept on the polls).
- Worked to encourage more people, particularly students, to register prior to Election Day.
- Registered an exceptionally large number of voters for the February 2008 presidential primary.

### Poll Workers

- Intensified poll worker recruitment efforts including use of public service announcements and city department websites.
- Enhanced election official training by offering smaller classes with different types of training focusing on the needs of different officials (e.g., beginners, more experienced workers). All election officials were required to attend a training session.
- Began development of a program to recognize poll workers.

### Polling Places

- Addressed accessibility issues at two polls identified by the Legislative Audit Bureau as well as other issues identified by City of Madison building inspectors, assessors, librarians, Civil Rights staff, and election officials.
- New polling places were established for Wards 5, 18, 83, 110, 112, 119, 120 and 129.
- Acquired sealable bags for the delivery of absentee ballots – and in general implemented new security requirements from the state.
- With the assistance of the Mayor's staff, approached the Madison Public Schools about enhanced coordination to permit greater use of school buildings as election sites (e.g., possibility of the school district scheduling in-service on election days).
- The Clerk's office established a program to assess the effectiveness of voting procedures during the February 2008 elections.

### Others

- Hired a deputy clerk. The Madison Election Advisory Committee wrote to the Common Council on the importance of this position for well-run elections in Madison.
- At the committee's recommendation, the Common Council decided to forego meetings on election evenings.
- With the cooperation of the Government Accountability Board, updated the State Voter Registration System (SVRS) so that the clerk's office could use it to issue absentee ballots.

- Replaced the front counter and ballot shelf to make the Clerk's office more accessible.
- Recommended to the county clerk that misprinted September 2008 primary ballots be reprinted to ensure election integrity. Many, although not all, ballots were reprinted. The state's Government Accountability Board allowed written changes to some of the misprinted ballots.

### **Future Challenges**

- Continue to identify new polling sites to address issues of accessibility, crowding, etc. A number of changes are scheduled to go into effect for the November 2008 election.
- Continue dialogue with the Madison Public Schools about scheduling in-service on election days so that the public schools can better serve as polling sites.
- Address the reliability of the AutoMark machine.

This report was approved by the Madison Election Advisory Committee at its September 10, 2008 meeting.

## **Appendix**

### **Charge**

The Madison Election Advisory Committee was created in 2006 with the following charge:

- Evaluate current procedures for elections.
- Make recommendations for improvements in registration, polling places, voting equipment, election official training, ballots, absentee ballots and tabulating votes.
- Monitor elections for optimal and appropriate accuracy, convenience, fairness and legality.
- Evaluate and make recommendations on State and Federal law changes if they relate to elections.
- Recommend methods to maintain proper balance between the security of elections, openness of the process and the right to a secret ballot.
- Solicit public comments and recommendations.
- Forward an annual report to the Council, Mayor, or City Clerk.

### **Membership**

As of September 2008, the Committee consists of the following six appointed citizen members and two non-voting members, the City Clerk and the County Clerk.

Sybil Better, Chair  
Valerie Brown  
Marlena Deutsch  
Rosa Garner, Vice-Chair  
Paul Malischke  
Marilyn Williams  
Bob Ohlsen (Ex-officio, non-voting)  
Maribeth Witzel-Behl (Ex-officio, non-voting)  
Janet Piraino (Liaison with the Mayor's office)

### **Meeting Schedule**

Severe winter weather and scheduling conflicts forced the cancellation of several committee meetings. The Committee met in November 2007 and March, April, July, August and September 2008.