

## Madison Election Advisory Committee Annual Report for 2010

### Introduction

This report covers activities throughout 2010. The report reflects information shared, exploration of priority topics, and discussions regarding city election processes held among committee members, city officials, and staff in the clerk's office. The committee was generously supported by the City Clerk and her staff, along with our liaison from the Mayor's Office.

### Election Statistics

Four elections were held during this period: non-partisan February spring primary/April general election and partisan federal/state September primary/November general election. Statistics are provided to demonstrate the overall patterns.

	<b>February 2010</b>	<b>April 2010</b>	<b>September 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
<b>Voters</b>				
Number of Voters	9,229	22,242	32,312	109,671
Voter Turnout	6%	14%	20%	67%
Absentees Issued	1,902	2,546	3,343	12,121
Absentees Counted at Polls	1,313	1,984	2,528	11,309
Election Day Registrations	286	960	3,238	26,358
<b>Election Officials</b>				
Election Officials	510	513	561	1,151
Training Sessions	0	29	27	37
<b>Polling Sites</b>				
Number of Polling Sites	80	80	80	80

It was a busy year for voters, as well as staff in the Clerk's office and election officials (poll workers). Voter turnout increased with each election cycle, along with absentee voting and Election Day registrations. With 67% turnout in November for federal and statewide elections, voter participation was comparable to some of our Presidential Elections - 66% turnout for the 1996 Presidential Election, and 67% for 1992. Of the 12,121 absentee ballots issued for November, 11,309 (93%) were returned and counted at the polls. Training sessions for elections officials were generously scheduled prior to the April, September, and November elections at a variety of locations around the city and covering many topics that expand the opportunity for in-depth knowledge about the election process for all poll workers.

## **2010 Priorities for MEAC**

In response to recommendations from the City Clerk, MEAC members worked with the staff to explore opportunities in three priority areas:

(1) Voter education to reduce the number of rejected absentee ballots, to provide greater transparency, and to ensure successful voting:

Throughout the year, the committee, in dialogue with the Clerk and her staff, evaluated issues to support preparation for in-person absentee voting for 2010, particularly for the partisan November general election, including:

- hours and days in-person absentee voting available
- campaign to encourage voting on election day
- efficiency through equipment or supply purchases
- security improvements

The City Clerk and her staff initiated voter education campaign to reduce the number of absentee ballots that are rejected due to problems such as lacking a witness signature. The most frequent reasons for rejection were identified and an insert was developed to accompany absentee ballots. A presentation titled "I Am A Ballot" was developed to review how the voting process unfolds and how voters can successfully participate in this important public event. Staff utilized the presentation in support of public conversations with senior voters at retirement communities and the Senior Expo at the Alliant Center. A video presentation for the website is under production. The Clerk's website received updates with information on elections and a plethora of educational materials for the public.

(2) Strategies for diversifying election officials ranks, focusing on college communities and organizations representing people of color:

The committee discussed recruiting election officials using committee members and the City Clerk's outreach to persons associated with UW-Madison, Madison College, and the Urban League. Other potential contacts included neighborhood associations, service clubs, Communities United, Centro Hispano, and larger employers such as Oscar Mayer. Data from the September 14 primary did not show an improvement in the diversity of election officials. The Clerk reported in October that the Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. planned to staff a polling site and 100 Black men would assist in recruiting election officials. These opportunities appeared to contribute to increased diversity among election workers for the November 2010 election with African-Americans comprising a high of 5.6% of election officials. For comparison, 5.9% of Madison residents are African-American.

### (3) Election officials appreciation:

The committee was interested in appreciating the role of election officials and recognizing their public service contributions to assist with making the job more attractive to more people. Ideas included a newspaper ad and/or public service announcement thanking election officials for their work or sending thank you letters from members of MEAC. Discussion will continue in 2011.

## **Appreciating Innovations Impacting the Election Process**

### In-person absentee voting:

The City Clerk and her staff worked an extraordinary number of hours in October 2010 to keep the office open for extended periods of absentee voting, including nights and weekends, prior to the general election. Staff processed all voter registration and absentee ballots on the day they were received – a first time event. Internal process improvements from the Clerk and her staff demonstrated significant efficiencies for voters and staff.

### Printing ballots on Election Day:

The County Clerk's new contract for ballot printing specified that the printer would print ballots on election day when necessary. Although it takes approximately two hours for the printer to deliver ballots to the City Clerk's Office, the City of Madison successfully ordered additional ballots on Election Day for wards with exceptionally high voter turnouts.

### Accessibility:

Ward 39, Gates of Heaven, now has paved access to better accommodate all voters.

### Election Officials Guide and training sessions:

The Clerk and her staff continue to upgrade and improve materials for election officials and expand the types and frequency of pre-election training opportunities. New topics included upgrades to the statewide voter registration system and compliance with the federal MOVE Act regarding military and overseas ballots. Federal law and State Administrative Code require 6 hours of training for all chief inspectors in every 2-year cycle and the City Clerk requires all election officials to attend an hour of training prior to each election (one excused absence in each 2-year cycle). Performance of election official ward teams has greatly improved in recent years.

Clerk's Office staff training:

Every Clerk's Office employee participates in customer service sessions annually. Office staff is now cross-trained on all duties to improve their accountability and performance. Staff is trained as Chief Election Inspectors and is working on certification as Wisconsin Certified Municipal Clerks.

Our City Clerk provides outstanding leadership and creativity in the continuous improvement of all aspects of the election process while supporting collaborative team work and incentives for individual initiative and excellence among the staff. Together with the new opportunities for staff created under the Municipal Clerk series career ladder and the additional training required through this office reorganization, the election process in our city will be supported by a special highly trained and dedicated team in the Clerk's Office.

## **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 December 2010, the Committee consists of six (6 out of 7) appointed citizen members and two non-voting members, the City Clerk and the County Clerk.

Rosa Garner, Chair  
Andrea Kaminski, Vice-Chair  
Sybil Better  
Paul Malischke  
Jennifer Rubin  
Nicci Fite

Bob Ohlsen (Ex-officio, non-voting)  
Maribeth Witzel-Behl (Ex-officio, non-voting)  
Janet Piraino (Liaison with the Mayor's office)

Members who served earlier in 2010: Marlena Deutsch, Christian Odom, and Marilyn Williams