

ACTION FORM BRYAN CITY COUNCIL

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| DATE OF COUNCIL MEETING: April 14, 2015 | | DATE SUBMITTED: March 31, 2015 | |
| DEPARTMENT OF ORIGIN: City Secretary | | SUBMITTED BY: Mary Lynne Stratta | |
| MEETING TYPE: | CLASSIFICATION: | ORDINANCE: | STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BCD | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC HEARING | <input type="checkbox"/> 1ST READING | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC SAFETY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SPECIAL | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT | <input type="checkbox"/> 2ND READING | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SERVICE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STATUTORY | | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMIC DEVELOP. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WORKSHOP | <input type="checkbox"/> REGULAR | | <input type="checkbox"/> INFRASTRUCTURE |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> QUALITY OF LIFE |
| AGENDA ITEM DESCRIPTION: Resolution – Support of Application for Vote Centers | | | |
| <p>Adoption of a resolution indicating the City Council’s support of Brazos County’s application to the Texas Secretary of State to establish election day county-wide polling places, or vote centers, in lieu of individual precinct polling places for all future elections.</p> | | | |
| SUMMARY STATEMENT: The Texas Legislature passed legislation that allows counties to apply for the use of election day county-wide polling places. These are sometimes called super precincts or vote centers. Basically, election day voting would work in the same manner as early voting by personal appearance: voters could go to any voting location on election day and cast their ballot rather than being required to appear in their own precinct polling place. This allows voters to vote close to their work, school, grocery store, etc., rather than just in their home precinct. | | | |
| <p>In counties that have already been using vote centers, surveyed voters have consistently expressed happiness with the flexibility, convenience and ease of voting that going to any of the polling places provides. Although the number of polling places decreases, being able to vote at any location throughout the entire county on election day has proven to be more convenient for voters, and greatly reduces the amount of confusion on where to vote on election day, and has also decreased the number of provisional ballots where voters vote in the wrong precinct (and their ballots are not counted because they voted in the wrong location).</p> | | | |
| STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION: Based upon input from voters in other counties using vote centers, it is clear that voters enjoy the convenience of voting at any polling place on election day. Brazos County already owns the equipment needed to deploy election day vote center voting here (DRE voting system and e-poll books). Before the change is implemented, an extensive voter education campaign will be needed to ensure voters are well educated about the change. It is believed that by having vote center voting on election day, voter confusion will be greatly reduced. For example, during last year’s November election, some voters stood in line at the Brazos Center to cast their ballot. They reached the check in table right before 7:00 p.m. to be told they were in the wrong precinct. Their two choices were to try to reach their correct precinct voting location (not enough time) or vote provisionally, which would not be counted since they voted in the wrong precinct. Vote center voting would eliminate this problem. Registered voters would be accepted for voting at any precinct county wide on election day, the same as in early voting by personal appearance. | | | |
| <p>As to future expense, it is anticipated the City’s expenses for participation in vote center voting would decrease two out of every three years and increase in the year when typically only two single member districts on the ballot. In other words, when the City has city-wide races on the ballot, the City would be paying one-fifth of 18 polling place locations expenses, versus one-third of sixteen as is the current practice. Every third year when the City would typically have only two single member districts on the ballot, the City would still pay one-fifth of 18 polling places</p> | | | |

expenses, when the City would have paid one-third of six polling place locations expenses under the old plan. This assumes that none of the local entities cancel their elections due to no contested races or no measures on their ballot. However, it is believed the convenience to voters is worth the added expense in that third year of the City's election cycle.

The County Clerk is forming a committee to proceed with the plan and an application to the Secretary of State's Office. It is recommended the Council adopt this resolution, expressing its support of Brazos County's application. If approved, the City will embark upon a major education and publicity campaign to educate voters about this change prior to implementation.

The convenience to voters and the reduction in voter confusion addresses the Council's strategic initiatives of service and quality of life.

OPTIONS (In Suggested Order of Staff Preference):

1. Adopt the resolution.
2. Modify the resolution.
3. Do not adopt the resolution.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
2. PowerPoint presentation provided by County Clerk (separate pdf file)

FUNDING SOURCE: City Secretary's Election Budget

APPROVALS: Mary Lynne Stratta 3-31-15; Hugh R. Walker, 04/06/2015

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL: CITY MANAGER Kean Register, 04-06-2015

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL: CITY ATTORNEY

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BRYAN, TEXAS, INDICATING ITS SUPPORT OF BRAZOS COUNTY'S APPLICATION TO THE TEXAS SECRETARY OF STATE TO ESTABLISH ELECTION DAY COUNTY-WIDE POLLING PLACES, OR VOTE CENTERS, IN LIEU OF INDIVIDUAL PRECINCT POLLING PLACES FOR ALL FUTURE ELECTIONS; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the 79th Texas Legislature approved a pilot program to evaluate the use of election day county-wide polling places as an alternative to restricting voters to voting only at the precinct polling place where they are registered to vote; and

WHEREAS, subsequent Texas Legislatures have approved the expansion of the program to counties applying for vote center voting status based upon the success of the program in the pilot program counties; and

WHEREAS, several municipalities have participated in this program in cooperation with their respective counties; and

WHEREAS, surveys of voters utilizing county-wide polling places, or vote centers, on election day have expressed support for the continued use of said vote centers due to the convenience to the voters; and

WHEREAS, an exit survey of voters in Lubbock County indicated that 95 percent liked the vote center concept, 91 percent found the vote centers more convenient than voting at their home precinct, 94 percent found the vote centers easy to locate, and over 95 percent wanted vote centers used in future elections; and

WHEREAS, similar results were indicated by voter surveys in other counties utilizing vote centers, such as Brazoria County, Galveston County, Collin County, Lampasas County, Swisher County, Erath County, Gaines County and Midland County; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of State filed a report with the Texas Legislature reporting that the pilot program was well received and liked by voters and election workers;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BRYAN, TEXAS, THAT:

Section 1.

The Bryan City Council hereby voices its support of Brazos County's application to the Secretary of State for permission to implement election day county-wide, or vote center, voting, effective with the November 2015 election.

Section 2.

The City Secretary is hereby instructed to forward a certified copy of this Resolution to the Brazos County Commissioners for inclusion in the submission to the Secretary of State's Office.

Section 3.

This resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

Adopted by a vote of the Bryan City Council at its regular meeting held on April 14, 2015.

ATTEST:

CITY OF BRYAN, TEXAS

Mary Lynne Stratta, City Secretary

Jason P. Bienski, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Janis K. Hampton, City Attorney