



Mike Kieffer <mkieff@gmail.com>

City to Conduct Vote by Mail for 2017 Municipal Election

1 message

Eagle Mountain City <noreply@everbridge.net>

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Reply-To: Eagle Mountain City <conf-58e2b7afe4b008d6631ca1a6-58e2b7a8e4b0a6d62366653d@smtpic-ne.prd1.everbridge.net>

To: "mkieff@gmail.com" <mkieff@gmail.com>

The Eagle Mountain City Council recently adopted a resolution to conduct Vote by Mail (VBM) for the 2017 Municipal Election. The resolution passed by a 3:2 vote.

While it is not Utah County's responsibility to administer municipal elections, the County Elections Office has offered to conduct VBM for all municipalities in the County that enter into an interlocal agreement. Currently, 17 municipalities will participate with VBM. The County can offer significant savings for this kind of election as they qualify for a reduced, bulk rate mailing. Several counties throughout the state offer this same service.

All active, registered voters will receive a ballot mailed by the Elections Office three weeks before the election. An active voter is a voter that has voted at least once in the last four years. Inactive voters will need to update their voter registration to receive a ballot in the mail. The fastest way to update your information is in person at the Utah County Elections Office in Provo or online at the following link: <https://secure.utah.gov/voterreg/index.html>

Updates can also be made by mailing a registration form to: Utah County Clerk, Elections Office, 100 East Center Street, Rm 3100 Provo, Utah 84606.

Please be aware that any updates made at the Department of Motor Vehicles may take a while to process and should be done well in advance of the election. If you have moved, you will need to update your address in order to receive a ballot in the mail. Ballots will not be forwarded.

Voters will have the convenience and satisfaction of voting in the comfort of their homes where they can research those candidates running for election. Once the ballot has been filled out and placed in the secure envelope, it can be mailed back to the County for processing. For those who prefer to bypass the mail and submit their ballots in person, they may securely do so at either the County or the Eagle Mountain City Recorder's Office. Additionally, votes may be cast in person by provisional ballot at City Hall on Election Day.

Once the County has received the ballot, signatures are checked and verified before the ballot is counted. If the ballot cannot be verified it is passed to another team member before it is rejected. If a voter's signature cannot be verified, the voter will be contacted and can correct the error prior to the canvas. Additionally, the Lieutenant Governor's Office is required to do an audit of the clerk's signature verification process. The ballot is not removed from the envelope until the signature has been verified, maintaining the secrecy of the ballot. Every paper ballot is treated with great care and at no time is handled by a single person as there is always a second set of eyes overseeing the processing of submitted ballots.

In the 2016 General Election, 21 of 29 counties in Utah conducted VBM. Research shows that on average, voter turnout increases 10% to 15% with VBM. Some municipalities have experienced even higher results. For example, in

2013 West Jordan tested VBM and the City's turnout increased from 14% to 35%. In 2015, the return rate dropped slightly to 31.60%; however, the comparative voting rate was still more than double that of traditional elections.

Similarly, Riverdale City's voter turnout increased from 24.02% to 47.85% and has maintained a similar increase in subsequent elections. Colorado, Oregon, and Washington conduct all of their elections by mail and always have high voter turnout.

Initially, Eagle Mountain had intended to contract with Utah County to use the same voting machines that were used in the 2015 election. However, the equipment is not licensed and the support is not available from the vendor to conduct this year's election using this method. Furthermore, the County is only offering VBM to those municipalities that choose to contract with them for elections. Given these circumstances, the City is moving forward with VBM for the 2017 election.

For additional information, please contact Eagle Mountain City Recorder Fionnuala Kofoed at fkofeed@emcity.org.