



## Legislation Text

File #: 2016-905, Version: 1

### Report to Mayor and City Council

Thursday, August 11, 2016

Discussion

#### **SUBJECT:**

**CONSIDERATION OF CONSOLIDATION OF THE CARSON GENERAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION WITH THE STATEWIDE GENERAL ELECTION TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2016**

#### **I. SUMMARY**

In order to increase voter turnout, on June 8, 2016, the City Council adopted an ordinance to move the date of the Carson General Municipal Election to the date of the statewide General Election held in November of even-numbered years. On June 9, 2016, the City Clerk forwarded the ordinance and a request for approval to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

On June 14, 2016, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved the consolidation of Carson's General Municipal Election with the Statewide General Election to be conducted by the County on November 8, 2016.

On July 5, 2016 the City Council adopted Resolution 16-085, which called the General Municipal Election to be concurrent, but not consolidated, with the statewide General Election to be conducted by the County of Los Angeles on Tuesday, November 8, 2016. The City Council expressed concerns about a consolidated election, including voter confusion and a potential drop in voter turnout for the election because this is the first year Carson is changing its election date and the Statewide General Election has an unusually long ballot.

Subsequently, the County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk expressed concerns about voter confusion in conducting a concurrent election on the same date as the Presidential General Election and indicated that the action to do so conflicted with the approved action of the Board of Supervisors on June 14, 2016 for consolidation.

The City Clerk, along with the City Attorney then met with Mr. Dean Logan, the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, his staff and County Counsel, in order to discuss the Carson General Municipal Election. The City Clerk and the City Attorney expressed concerns of the City Council regarding a potential consolidated election. As a result of

these discussions, the County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk suggested certain collaborative efforts if a consolidated municipal election were to occur which the City Clerk believes should fully address the City council's concerns raised at the July 5, 2016 Council meeting.

The City Clerk and the County would coordinate and collaborate to fully notify Carson residents by special notices that the City election date has changed and to highlight the pages on the pamphlets dealing with the City election issues. The City Clerk and the County would also collaborate on media releases and other voter outreach as will be discussed in this memo.

## **II. RECOMMENDATION**

1. CONSIDER adopting Resolution No. 16-111 confirming and affirming the consolidation of the Carson General Municipal Election with the Statewide General Election to be conducted by the County of Los Angeles on Tuesday, November 8, 2016.
2. REPEAL Resolution No. 16-085, "A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CARSON, CALIFORNIA, REQUESTING THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES TO RENDER SPECIFIED SERVICES TO THE CITY RELATING TO THE CONDUCT OF A GENERAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE CITY'S ELECTION OFFICIAL AND HELD ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2016."

## **III. ALTERNATIVES**

TAKE another action the City Council deems appropriate consistent with the requirements of law.

## **IV. BACKGROUND**

### **A. The Election Date in Carson**

The general municipal election in Carson has historically not been held on the same day as statewide general elections. On June 8, 2016, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 16-1585 to change the Carson General Election Date from the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March of odd-numbered years, to the first Tuesday after the first Monday of even numbered years. This change means general municipal elections in Carson will now be held on the same day as the statewide general elections conducted by the County of Los Angeles. The election date was changed in order to increase voter turnout.

On July 5, 2016, the City Council adopted a resolution calling a General Municipal Election to run concurrent with the statewide General Election. The City Council chose to call a concurrent election, run by the City, because of concerns regarding potential voter confusion based on the new election date. The City Council was concerned about "voter fatigue", which involves a voter becoming confused or choosing not to vote in City elections due to the large number of national, state, and/or county elections also on the statewide ballot. The City Council was also concerned voter fatigue and confusion could lead to a drop in voter turnout

at the City's general election.

On June 14, 2016, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved the consolidation of Carson's General Municipal Election with the Statewide General Election to be conducted by the County on November 8, 2016.

## **B. Voter Turnout Data from Other Los Angeles County Cities**

As mentioned above, one of the City Council's concerns regarding consolidated elections was the potential for "voter fatigue" due to the large number of items and offices on the statewide ballot compared to the City ballot. However, there is data that suggests that turnout for city council elections is higher at consolidated elections than at off-cycle elections. Further, per Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, there is no data to indicate that turnout would be higher in a concurrent election model where voters would have to vote separate ballots and receive duplicate voting materials. And as indicated herein, the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk has now in good faith addressed the City Council's concerns on educating the voters on Carson changing its election date to November and is willing to provide additional noticing regarding the placement of the local election on the sample ballot and at the polls.

Cities that currently hold consolidated general elections in Los Angeles County include Alhambra, Downey, Pomona, and Santa Monica. Data compiled in a February 2015 report by Common Cause entitled "*Getting to 100% - How Changing the Election Date Can Improve Voter Turnout*", shows that these cities have experienced higher turnout for city council races during consolidated elections when compared with city council races in off-cycle years.

In the City of Downey, voter turnout for the 2008 Presidential race was 88%, and turnout for the city council races was 52%. However, turnout for the off-cycle city council races in 2010 was 42%. For the 2012 Presidential election, voter turnout was 70%, and turnout for the city council races increased to 49%.

In the City of Pomona, the overall turnout for the 2008 Presidential election was 76%, with 52% for the city council races. The off-cycle city council races in 2010 had a decreased 42% voter turnout. The 2012 Presidential election saw voter turnout of 62%, with the turnout for the city council races climbing to 49%. This is more than double the voter turnout for the city council elections in the City of Los Angeles in 2015, which featured voter turnout of 23%.

In the City of Santa Monica, there was 86% at the 2008 Presidential election, and 42% voter turnout for the city council elections. The 2010 off-cycle city council races experienced 31% voter turnout. The 2012 Presidential election saw 79% voter turnout, and the 2012 city council races saw an increase from the 2010 election to 49% voter turnout.

## **C. Discussions Between City Clerk and City Attorney and LA County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk**

The City Clerk and City Attorney have been in communication with Dean Logan, the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, his staff and county counsel regarding the City's concerns about a consolidated election.

Based on these conversations, the following collaborative efforts were discussed and agreed to. In the event of a consolidated election the County has agreed to take the following extra efforts to address the City Council's concerns related to a consolidated election:

- Notices will be provided in sample ballots and vote by mail instructions for Carson voters highlighting for residents that the City's municipal election has changed for the first time and is included in the ballot, specifying the page of the city election material. Similar signage will be provided at polls.
- The Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk will collaborate and consult with the City Clerk in the selection and assignment of polling places within the City of Carson. Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk will maintain final determination of locations.
- City staff will be assigned to serve as Precinct Coordinators within the City of Carson. City will cover the costs of the Precinct Coordinators; County will require and provide training and will have direct contact with the Precinct Coordinators on Election Day.
- Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk and City Clerk will collaborate on media releases, social media and voter outreach within the City of Carson highlighting inclusion of the municipal election on the General Election ballot. A consistent, unified message regarding the City's election will be emphasized.

## **V. FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds allocated for Regular election support is \$250,000, which are included in the FY 2016/2017 budget in account number 01-30-000-176-6018.

The cost to the City of holding a consolidated election with the County would be approximately \$87,000 plus additional direct costs for City-specific notifications/services as referenced above.

The cost to the City of holding a concurrent election would be approximately \$172,300.81 to contract with Martin & Chapman, as well as additional costs of approximately \$60,000 for additional staffing needs.

## **VI. EXHIBITS**

1. Resolution 16-111 confirming and affirming the consolidation of the Carson General Municipal Election with the Statewide General Election to be conducted by the County of Los Angeles on Tuesday, November 8, 2016. (Pgs. 5- 6)

Prepared by: City Clerk's and City Attorney's Offices