


City of Detroit
DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

Gina Avery-Walker
Director

JANICE M. WINFREY, *City Clerk*
Chairperson, Election Commission

Melissa King
Deputy Director

TO: David Whitaker, Director
Legislative Policy Division

FROM: Gina Avery-Walker, Director
Department of Elections 

DATE: March 10, 2024

SUBJECT: **RESPONSE: 2024-2025 Budget Analysis**

Per your memorandum, the responses to the issues/questions are as follows:

1. Please briefly explain the Department of Election's new expense initiatives, new capital funding requests, operational reform and savings proposals, and new revenue initiatives/proposals to be implemented in FY 2025. Please provide which appropriation/cost center the new initiative/request/proposal is impacting in FY 2025.

RESPONSE: The Elections Department does have new expense initiatives. Appropriation 28710 will be impacted in FY 25 primarily across cost centers 710010, 710013, 710041, and 710042. The new initiatives will meaningfully affect numerous items ranging from increased absentee mailings, hardened security infrastructure to safeguard the ballots and early voting centers. The Department also has new contractual maintenance obligations stemming from a State of Michigan contract for voting equipment, an additional worksite, and a multitude of other Proposal 22-2 related outlays.

However, some expenditures related to staffing will be offset thanks to our Relia-Vote equipment that is expected to be fully operational prior to FY 25. The equipment automates the processing of absentee ballots, which will dramatically reduce the need for temporary staffing in that operation by nearly eighty percent while eliminating human error.

2. The Budget summary shows 33.5 vacancies as of February 9, 2024. Please briefly describe the difficulty of filling the vacancies. Also, please briefly explain the Department's strategy to fill vacant positions.

RESPONSE: The Department has vacancies due in part to retirement and resignations, which we are working diligently to fill. Vacancies are also due to staff being promoted, creating the need to backfill those positions. We have had difficulty filling them because potential candidates do not see the pay as competitive. Furthermore, attracting talent has been challenging due to rampant inflation and a tight labor market. To entice qualified prospects, we are working with the Human Resources Department to increase the pay ranges for multiple positions.

3. The Mayor's FY 2025 recommended total General Fund appropriations for Elections is \$20.1 million a \$6 million increase from the \$14.1 million in FY 2024. The budget increase in FY 2025 is primarily due to salaries and wage increase of 255,911, professional and contractual services increase of \$4.5million and operating services increase of 1.4 million. Please explain the increase in salaries and wages.

RESPONSE: The Budget Department has authorized a two percent increase for salaries and wages citywide affecting all FTEs. The \$255,911 increase simply reflects this cost-of-living adjustment.

4. Please explain the increases in professional contractual services.

RESPONSE: The expenditures increased for numerous reasons. First, the paradigm for administering elections has changed significantly due to the passage of Proposal 22-2 and a multitude of changes to election law by the Michigan Legislature. Chief amongst those new changes involves nine days of early voting, which is akin to voting in the precincts on Election Day nine days in a row. Also, there is eight days of processing absentee voters, which is completely novel in Michigan. The Department is now responsible for implementing the various initiatives resulting from Proposal 22-2.

Second, the Presidential Election Cycle is being held in FY25, which necessitates more funding given voter turnout is expected to far exceed the turnout in FY 24. Couple that with the fact that there was only one scheduled election in FY 24 as opposed to two in FY 25, the increase request reflects the changing dynamics.

Finally, the preparation for the Municipal Election Primary in August 2025 takes place well before it occurs. The Department will need to fund various items and services near the end of the fiscal year to ensure it is administered smoothly. Additionally, we have additional expenditures for the 2025 Municipal Election Cycle such as the cost of procuring ballots or staff for early vote centers. Typically, those costs are funded by Wayne County or directly reimbursed by the State of Michigan. However, the onus for funding these items fall squarely on the City when it is not a special, statewide, or federal election.

5. Please explain the increase in operating services.

RESPONSE: Operating services increased essentially for the same rationale listed in the response to question number 4. Having to implement the various initiatives stemming from Proposal 22-2, the election law changes, as well as administering two scheduled elections as opposed to one election year-over-year are the central reasons for the increase.

cc: Councilmembers

Auditor General's Office

Tanya Stoudemire, Chief Deputy CFO-Policy & Administrative Director

Steven Watson, Deputy CFO/Budget Director

Felix O' Aku, Agency CFO, Office of Departmental Financial Services

Rachel Schafer, Budget Analyst

Gail Fulton, Mayor's Office