



## Response to Questions on the FY 2010 County's Line of Business & Schools Program Review Processes Fall 2008

**Request By:** Supervisor Bulova

**Question:** Please provide additional information on the costs associated with towns holding elections in May, instead of November.

**Response:** Currently, the Towns of Clifton (215 registered voters), Herndon (11,007 registered voters) and Vienna (11,110 registered voters) hold their elections on the first Tuesday in May. Clifton and Herndon elect their mayors and town council members in even-numbered years. Vienna has an election every year, however, since its council members serve staggered terms. Vienna elects its mayor and three council members in the even-numbered years and three council members in the odd-numbered years.

Costs for the May town elections include compensation for election officers, the programming and delivery of voting equipment, expenses related to absentee voting including printing and mailing paper ballots and the Saturday office hours for in-person absentee (AB) voting, and extended office hours on Election Day (5 a.m. to 10 p.m.).

### Cost of Town Elections

- Assumptions:**
- Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting machines used in precincts and for in-person absentee (AB) voting
  - Optical Scan ballots are not used in the town precincts
  - Staff hours during normal business hours are not included
  - Staff overtime hours are minimized by flexible scheduling

	Clifton	Herndon	Vienna	Comments
Election Officers	\$450	\$1,550	\$1,350	paid directly by towns
Machine Delivery	55	90	50	absorbed by warehouse
Machine Supplies	10	30	25	absorbed by agency
Precinct supplies	25	25	25	absorbed by agency
Printing Paper Ballots	20	30	30	absorbed by agency
Postage for AB Ballots	0	30	12	absorbed by agency
Saturday Hours for ABs			600	absorbed by agency
Election Day Extra Hours			600	absorbed by agency
Advertisement (required)			530	absorbed by agency

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**Total Costs      \$560      \$1,755      \$3,222**

Using the Town of Vienna election scheduled for May 5, 2009 as an example, the total cost of that election is estimated to be \$3,222. Of that amount the town pays \$1,350, or just under 42 percent. The \$1,350 reflects the cost of election officers working at the polling locations. Under past policy, the County would absorb the remaining \$1,872, or 58 percent of the costs. These costs include election supplies, delivery of materials to the polls, absentee and paper ballots, advertising costs and personnel charges for Election Day and the Saturday before for in-person absentee voting. In the future, the Office of Elections is planning on charging the towns for the costs of all supplies for the election and is researching the legality of charging for increased staff time. If the Office of Elections receives a favorable legal opinion, those costs will also be charged in the future. It should be noted that these cost estimates do not include the costs of printing pollbooks, the use of E-pollbooks, or the use of optical scan machines in these elections, which would further increase the expenses associated with holding the elections.

The time to hold an election is entirely up to the town and its citizens. Fairfax County is required to run those elections at the time desired by the town. For years, the County has subsidized the cost of the town elections held in May. Pending the legal review noted above, the Office of Elections will be presenting the towns with the information that the costs of holding an election will be increasing to reflect the actual cost of the election. If the towns elect to hold their elections in May, they will pay the full cost required. If the towns select to move their elections to November, the county will absorb the cost of the elections.

Moving the Town Elections to November will eliminate the cost to the towns for paying the election officers. Expenses currently absorbed by the agency would be incorporated into the normal November election expenses and would have little financial impact. The only small negative to moving the Town Elections to November is the necessity to operate a split precinct for the Clifton and Nottoway precincts in which only a portion of their voters are eligible to vote in the Town of Clifton and the Town of Vienna elections, respectively. The cost for the agency to operate two split precincts would be minimal. One very positive advantage to holding the Town Elections in November would be the potential to significantly increase voter participation, especially in Herndon and Vienna.

#### Towns - Historical Data

Election Year	Clifton		Herndon		Vienna	
	Reg. Voters	Turnout	Reg. Voters	Turnout	Reg. Voters	Turnout
2008	209	34.0%	10,223	24.0%	10,678	7.0%
2007					10,523	22.0%
2006	206	79.0%	10,203	26.0%	10,385	23.0%
2005					10,249	5.5%
2004	202	80.0%	10,091	20.0%	10,351	10.0%
2003					10,179	17.5%
2002	196	72.4%	9,866	16.9%	10,240	9.6%
2001					10,042	14.1%
2000	145	32.4%	9,465	17.9%	9,857	9.1%
<b>Average Turnout</b>		<b>59.6%</b>		<b>21.0%</b>		<b>13.1%</b>

***The following sections highlight the relevant sections of Virginia Code concerning Town Elections and are included as additional background information:***

§ 24.2-222. Election and terms of mayor and council for cities and towns.

The qualified voters of each city and town shall elect a mayor, if so provided by charter, and a council for the terms provided by charter. Except as provided in § [24.2-222.1](#), and notwithstanding any other provision of law, general or special: (i) any election of mayor or councilmen of a city or town whose charter provides for such elections at two-year or four-year intervals shall take place at the May general election of an even-numbered year and (ii) any election of mayor or councilmen of a city or town whose charter provides for such elections at one-year or three-year intervals shall take place at the general election in May of the years designated by charter. The persons so elected shall enter upon the duties of their offices on July 1 succeeding their election and remain in office until their successors have qualified.

§ 24.2-222.1. Alternative election of mayor and council at November general election in cities and towns. (in part)

A. Notwithstanding the provisions of § [24.2-222](#), the council of a city or town may provide by ordinance that the mayor, if an elected mayor is provided for by charter, and council shall be elected at the November general election date of any cycle as designated in the ordinance, for terms to commence January 1. No such ordinance shall be adopted between January 1 and the May general election date of the year in which city or town elections regularly are scheduled to be held therein.

B. Alternatively, the registered voters of a city or town may file a petition with the circuit court of the city or of the county within which the town is located asking that a referendum be held on the question of whether the city or town should elect the mayor, if an elected mayor is provided for by charter, and council members at the November general election date of any cycle as designated in the petition. The petition shall be signed by registered voters equal in number to at least ten percent of the number registered in the city or town on the January 1 preceding the filing.

§ 24.2-600. Cost of elections.

The cost of conducting elections under this title shall be paid by the counties and cities, respectively. The cost of town elections shall be paid by the towns.

§ 24.2-601. Town election process.

The electoral board and general registrar of the county within which a town, or the greater part thereof, is situated shall control the election process and carry out the applicable provisions of this title concerning towns. For November elections for town offices in any town split between two or more counties, the electoral board of the county in which the lesser part of the town is located shall (i) include town offices on the ballot for the county, and (ii) report the results ascertained for those town offices to the electoral board of the county in which the greatest part of the town is located for inclusion in the results of that county pursuant to § 24.2-671.

§ 24.2-701. Application for absentee ballot. (in part)

For the purposes of this chapter, the general registrar's office shall be open a minimum of eight hours between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on the first and second Saturday immediately preceding all general elections, except May general elections held in towns, and on the Saturday immediately preceding any primary election, May general election held in a town, or special election.