

City of Detroit
DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

Gina Avery-Walker
Director

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

Melissa King
Deputy Director

TO: Latisha Johnson, Councilmember
Detroit City Council

FROM: Gina Avery-Walker, Director
Department of Elections



DATE: March 20, 2023

RE: FY23-24 Budget Questions

Regarding your memorandum, the responses to the questions are as follows:

1. How exactly will the voter education/outreach funding be utilized?

Response: The Department plans to bolster voter education and outreach initiatives aimed to reach a diverse group of residents by partnering with various community organizations, high schools, colleges, and non-secular entities to raise awareness surrounding elections. Second, now that pandemic-era restrictions have largely subsided, the Department plans on conducting more in person voter registration drives. Third, in order to reach non-voters, younger voters, and combat voter apathy, we plan on concentrating our outreach efforts by conducting more digital and social media advertising campaigns. Making a robust effort to engage with Generation Z and Millennials on the platforms they frequent is pivotal to raising awareness and keeping them more civically involved.

2. What methods does the department plan to use to increase transparency?

Response: In addition to the items mentioned in our response to your first inquiry, the Department is exploring utilizing the City's GovDelivery system. We plan on disseminating election related bulletins to Detroit voters willing to subscribe to the service, making the latest election news more readily available.

3. How does the department plan to improve security at polling locations?

Response: Over the last two years, especially after November 2020, we've augmented our security in several ways at the polling places. We've worked with GSD to hire onsite security guards at polling locations. We've also partnered with DPD to reinforce our security posture by adding roving police patrols at the polling locations. Doing so has given us the ability to neutralize potential threats early before they could fully materialize not only in the precincts but with our absentee ballot counting operation as well.

4. How many more employees does the department need to fully staff elections?

Response: The Department has 35 vacancies. Many of the vacancies are due to retirement and resignations, which we are working diligently to fill.

5. How much has the department realized in savings since consolidating offices?

Response: We've realized considerable savings by obtaining the second facility because we no longer have to pay the exorbitant cost associated with conducting much of the voting equipment preparation at Huntington Place. Our main office lacks sufficient space to properly test and troubleshoot the voting equipment because we had to retool our building to accommodate the processing of more absentee ballots due to the pandemic. Now that we have a second facility, we no longer have to pay the cost of moving the equipment back and forth to Huntington, procuring 24-hour security, or renting rooms at prime rates. While all the costs have not been completely offset, the elimination of the aforementioned expenditures have decreased our expenses approximately 23% when compared with the cost of obtaining the second facility, in addition to giving us considerably more autonomy.

6. How will the proposed budget cut of \$273,000 affect your **Goals/Strategic Priorities to "increase voter participation in the election process by ensuring full disclosure of all scheduled and special election activities and implementing aggressive voter outreach programs?"**

Response: Operating expenses decreased in various cost centers due to utility and parking outlays being entirely transferred from our cost centers and appropriation. OFCO has opted to streamline the process and have every department's utilities and parking paid from one central account string placed outside their respective budgets. These are the bulk of the cuts year-over-year and will have minimal impact on our ability to attain the aforementioned goals.