

MEMORANDUM

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION
FROM: CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
DATE: March 18, 2019
RE: **Elections - Consolidation of Voting Precincts**

Authorization is requested to administratively combine several precincts in order to reduce the number of polling places to 12 for the 2019 election.

Prior to 2005, the Supervisor of Elections conducted all elections for city offices, which coincided with elections held for county, state, and federal offices. Elections for the other municipalities in the county were held in much the same fashion. The result was an administrative burden created by the multiple city issues to be monitored, with city limit lines continually changing, on top of the increasing volume of other county, state and federal matters on the ballot. The Supervisor of Elections had to administer dozens of different ballots depending on the location and the local issues to be decided. In response, the Supervisor of Elections decided that for their office to continue to support municipal elections, all cities would be required to manage their own elections, and they would have to be held during odd numbered years, either in the spring or fall. The Lakeland City Clerk, added "Elections Official" to her job description, and has conducted Lakeland's elections since then, with assistance from the Supervisor's office.

The administration of elections requires managing candidate qualifications, designating, and leasing polling places, hiring and training poll workers, managing the signature verification of mail in ballots, and then overseeing voting, and canvassing on election night. The City Clerk does this with a limited staff, every 2 years, at a cost of about \$75,000 per election, and has done an excellent job in doing so. She is always in search of efficiencies.

Precinct lines are established every 10 years by the County Commission and are reflective of population distribution rather than city limit lines. As a result, voters in some precincts are split between the city and county resulting in a fractional precinct. In those fractional precincts, where only a handful of city voters reside, a single polling place was designated to serve more than one precinct resulting in 25 polling places starting in 2009.

In the recent special election conducted in January, because of the compressed schedule, the City Clerk designated 12 polling places to serve all of the precincts in the city. That reduced costs by reducing the number of facilities

rented, reducing the number of poll workers and supply delivery fees. The election went well. Authorization is requested to maintain the same approach for the 2019 election.

Voter turnout is always a consideration. Voter turnout in the January Special Election was 12.01%, which is comparable to other non-mayoral city elections. The 2015 election turnout was 11.94%. In an effort to mitigate the potential for voter confusion, notices were sent to each voter advising them of their polling location. Also, the trend toward mail in ballots continues to increase, lessening the burden on the election day voting sites. Costs were reduced by 20%.

The results indicate that the consolidated approach works well. It is requested that the City Commission authorize continuing the same approach for November, 2019 election.