Recommendations To
Board of Registration & Elections
Respectfully Submitted By,
Chairman Pitts Elections Task Force

July 9, 2020

Election Task Force Subcommittees

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1 ABSENTEE BALLOTS – VOTE BY MAIL (VBM):

1.1 STRATEGIC:

1.1.1 Hire an experienced VBM manager, even for short term through November, whose job is devoted solely to VBM from beginning to end. Additionally, assign/hire sufficient staff dedicated only to VBM early with appropriate training on VBM.

1.1.2 Develop a process improvement plan for all VBM processes using Six Sigma experts. Establish/revise policies, procedures, and workflow, including security processes and procedures.

1.1.3 Investment in new technology for VBM "new normal" (i.e. ballot scanners with signature verification, ballot printers, high-speed scanners), subject to SoS guidelines.

1.1.4 Acquire or develop a technology solution that serves as information hub for voters to provide real-time status of VBM application and ballot – when application is received/processed, ballot mailed/received/ accepted.

1.1.5 Work with other metro county election departments to share best practices regarding VBM.

1.2 TACTICAL:

1.2.1 Create own easy to use portal, regardless of what SOS does regarding portal. Create as early as possible so it can be tested before November.

1.2.2 Sophisticated communications plan, including social media campaign and website upgrade, that promotes VBM and updates voters on VBM process. Communications plan should drive VBM voters to use portal. Have sample ballots on website early, and information for voters who do not receive timely applications or ballots.

1.2.3 VBM application process:

  1.2.3.1 Mail VBM application to all Fulton County voters (for November elections).

  1.2.3.2 Have rigorous 2-day turnaround for processing VBM apps.

  1.2.3.3 Create internal tracking system for all applications received so no lost applications.

  1.2.3.4 Use only one email address for emailed applications (if have to).

  1.2.3.5 Invest in e-fax solution that helps manage bulk faxes.

1.2.4   VBM ballot distribution process:

     1.2.4.1   2-day turnaround for processing ballots.

     1.2.4.2   Identify and retain third party vendor to print/mail/track ballots.

     1.2.4.3   Include in ballot package an information sheet showing all ways voter can return ballot – mail, certain EV sites, drop boxes, with locations of EV sites and drop boxes.

     1.2.4.4   Have staff person dedicated as liaison to USPS and to external vendor to troubleshoot mail and vendor issues.

1.2.5   Review and revise notification procedures to voters of rejected apps/ballots and timely cure process. Quick and meaningful outreach to voters to allow voters to cure mistakes.

1.2.6   Processing of VBM ballots received:

     1.2.6.1   Dedicated staff.

     1.2.6.2   Processing metrics established (e.g. 70% scanned by Election Day; 95% by Wednesday following Election Day).

     1.2.6.3   Invest in high-speed scanners.

     1.2.6.4   Create clear guidelines and processes for Vote Review Panels including reference check lists for panels.

1.2.7   For November, have extremely robust call center – outsourced given volume of expected calls.

1.2.8   Utilize and promote 20 existing drop boxes.

2 FACILITIES/LOGISTICS:

2.1 STRATEGIC:

2.1.1 Open a polling location at the Fulton County Jail (Rice Street Jail) to give the non-convicted and staff at that location the opportunity to vote.

2.1.2 Determine if we need Atlanta Public Schools facilities for August and/or November.

2.2 TACTICAL:

2.2.1 Have a clear understanding of the power capabilities at each facility. Ensure that WiFi is working at each location, have back up servers and generators on site in case of equipment failure.

2.2.2 Conduct a dry run of the power grids at every polling location at least 24 hours before the election begins and again on the day of election. This includes checking all outlets within the facility.

2.2.3 Have a clear understanding of the power requirement for the 2 and 4 unit cabinets.

2.2.4 Go back to the normal poll locations that were successful sites to see if they would be willing to serve as poll locations again regardless of COVID-19.

2.2.5 Ensure that there is a table or sign at all precincts so that voters can sign up for text messages to get Fulton County elections updates.

2.2.6 Install weather related tents outside facilities to give voters access to water, seating, etc. in the event of long lines.

2.2.7 In the event of obstructing entrances with roadwork or construction planned, generate appropriate directional signage for all polling locations.

2.2.8 List of early voting locations must be solidified by July 13th and mailing of locations out to households no later than July 14th

2.2.9 Additional personnel at each location:

 2.2.9.1 *Appoint a designated person to monitor and ensure that social distancing is taking place throughout the venue.*

 2.2.9.2 *Appoint an escalation manager at each location to handle and escalate any issues that arise.*

2.2.9.3   *Appoint a technical/technology supervisor at each location to handle any technical issues.*

3 PERSONNEL/LOGISTICS:

3.1 STRATEGIC:

3.1.1 Recruit more and better qualified poll workers.

3.1.2 Improve training.

3.1.3 Improve poll worker instructions and election day materials.

3.2 TACTICAL:

3.2.1 Develop a PR Campaign to emphasize poll working as a public service:

3.2.1.1 A way to serve the community.

3.2.1.2 A vital function to protect our most basic constitutional right.

3.2.1.3 Appeal to professional organizations and businesses.

3.2.2 Create incentives as opposed to requiring or badgering:

3.2.2.1 Give Employees a day off to work.

3.2.2.2 Continuing education credits for professionals (lawyers, realtors, etc.) and education credit for college students.

3.2.3 More hands-on training with Dominion 5.5 system.

3.2.4 Teach Managers to promote a positive work environment:

3.2.4.1 Be sure to provide breaks for lunch, etc. as volume of voters allows.

3.2.4.2 Back up poll workers when dealing with unhappy voters.

3.2.4.3 Stay cool even when there are problems.

3.2.5 Rewrite, consolidate and simplify various poll worker materials.

3.2.5.1 Rewrite SoS manual, Fulton County handouts to simplify, consolidate and present in an easy to reference format.

3.2.5.2 Include basic trouble shooting tips that don't require a tech person.

4   EQUIPMENT/TECHNOLOGY:

4.1   STRATEGIC:

4.1.1   Hire a dedicated IT Manager/Staff for elections. Fulton County IT Shared Resources policy cannot adequately support election staff because of a lack of manpower.

4.1.2   Moving software functions internally to the Department of Registration and Elections would be most effective.

4.1.3   Standardization of Early Voting Equipment: currently, Fulton County has multiple platforms for Early Voting. Under less stressful conditions, this equipment would function nominally; under our present conditions, the hardware mismatch causes numerous printing issues.

4.1.4   Fulton County should outsource to an IT Firm to address the need for computer literate poll workers. Poll Managers can utilize people in the IT Field to address technology issues on the spot.

4.2   TACTICAL:

4.2.1   More rigorous training of Poll Managers and Assistant Poll Managers on state of Georgia's new voting systems (Dominion Voting's ICX Ballot Marking Device, ICP Ballot Scanner, and KnowInk's Poll Pad).

4.2.2   Train a cadre of Fulton County Technicians to be deployed to every precinct. Develop a curriculum for Fulton County Election Day Technicians for the November elections.

4.2.3   In the case of a Poll Pad malfunction have the most updated paper copies of Fulton County's registered voters for that precinct (including inactive voters); the same information that would be available on a fully functional Poll Pad.

4.2.4   Establish a protocol with Poll Managers on how to report equipment issues. Every Poll Manager is provided with a smartphone for Election Day. They have the ability to text the call center/help desk and/or election headquarters to report equipment failures. Help Desk staff can "triage" the situation and either directly communicate a solution to the issue or escalate it to a regional tech.

4.2.5   Create "Mock Precincts" so Poll Workers can react in real time, in a controlled, training scenario, to any technical issues that may occur.

4.2.6   Conduct a thorough Risk Limiting Audit (RLA) within the time frame of the election and the date of election certification, for the General Election.

4.2.7　Follow CDC Guidelines with regard to equipment on hand (gloves, masks, hand sanitizer, wipes, etc.). In addition, during the hourly equipment check in the precinct, incorporate cleaning all equipment thoroughly.

4.2.8　Polling locations must have hotspot backups as contingency to network outages. This grants direct access to the internet, and via VPN access, a method to access Fulton County's network.

5 COMMUNICATIONS:

5.1 TELEVISION:

5.1.1   Work with all local affiliates to produce a "We're in this together" in-kind, public awareness campaign around voter education:

  5.1.1.1   This campaign would be inclusive of all stations

  5.1.1.2   Similar to mirroring the collaboration they did around COVID-19

5.1.2   The focus would be on a PSA campaign that would drive viewers to website with the strategic information voters need to be aware of.

5.1.3   The PSA's would engage the presence of main talent from each station (ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX), that would run on each station.

5.1.4   Television campaign would be connected to strategic interviews with election officials

5.2 RADIO:

5.2.1   Collaboration among all radio stations to produce public awareness messaging around voter education.

5.2.2   PSA messaging would be the same for each station but produced with each station's own talent.

5.2.3   Talking points to be provided by Fulton County.

5.2.4   PSA's would shift given the focus of the election cycle needing to be focused on:

  5.2.4.1   Early Voting

  5.2.4.2   August 11th run-off

  5.2.4.3   November elections

5.3 BILLBOARDS:

5.3.1   Voter education messaging to be placed on billboards around the county.

5.3.2   Messaging would drive constituents to a website with the relevant voter information.

5.3.3   **Note: There has been a vendor that is willing to offer some billboards in-kind.**

5.4   SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGING:

5.4.1   Create a catchy graphic that is easily readable.

5.4.2   Regular weekly communications via all social media platforms connecting to current information resources available.

5.4.3   Increase communications closer to each critical election date.

5.4.4   Communication to go out via various means:

5.4.4.1   Fulton County social media

5.4.4.2   Task Force members social media

5.4.4.3   Social media of media partners

5.4.4.4   Social media of TBD brand ambassadors/influencers

5.5   DEVELOP BRAND AMBASSADORS/INFLUENCERS:

5.5.1   Develop brand ambassadors (e.g. celebrities, local elected officials, civic leaders, religious leaders) to engage key influencers in the community to help drive message points to targeted constituencies.

5.5.2   Ambassadors would be utilized as a speaker's bureau to engage various audiences.

5.5.3   Ambassadors talking points would be specific to pertinent information needed given the timeline of the election cycle.

5.6   BLOGGERS:

5.6.1   At key dates during the election cycle, we would host a bloggers lounge to invite bloggers to get out time sensitive messaging.

5.7   TEXT MESSAGING CAMPAIGN:

5.7.1   Develop a Fulton Municipality PIO team to get time sensitive information out to constituents across the county.

5.7.2   Add process on voting website, an option for residents to opt into the text messaging for Fulton County to further build out the database.

5.8   OTHER TECHNOLOGY:

5.8.1   Develop a QR code that residents can have on their cell phone indicating their polling location.

5.8.2   Geofencing can be used over the course of the election cycle to message to targeted populations in targeted communities to share on-going messaging around the elections cycle to keep the elections in the forefront of residents.

5.9   CONSISTENT PRESS BRIEFINGS:

5.9.1   Regularly scheduled meetings with the press to update any information around the elections cycle:

   5.9.1.1   Bi-monthly zoom press briefings with all outlets invited.

   5.9.1.2   Consistent meet the chairman on all radio stations to get information out about the elections cycle.

5.10 WEBSITE REVIEW/UPDATE:

5.10.1   Website needs to more user friendly. Members of the task force are willing to work with Fulton County staff to help with this initiative.

5.10.2   Develop FAQ's for the website:

   5.10.2.1 FAQ's will be easy to read and understand.

   5.10.2.2 FAQ's will be topic specific (i.e., Absentee Ballot info, Poll Watcher info, Early Voting inf, etc.)

   5.10.2.3 Info specific FAQ's will also need to be included in any information that is sent to voters pertaining to that specific subject-matter