



**CBJ – Regular Municipal Election, October 6, 2020
Preliminary Election Report to CBJ Assembly,
November 16, 2020**

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Municipal Clerk/Election Official**

Below is a brief recap of the numbers associated with CBJ's October 6, 2020 By Mail Election. Following this recap is a more in depth report and cost comparisons.

Looking at the Numbers

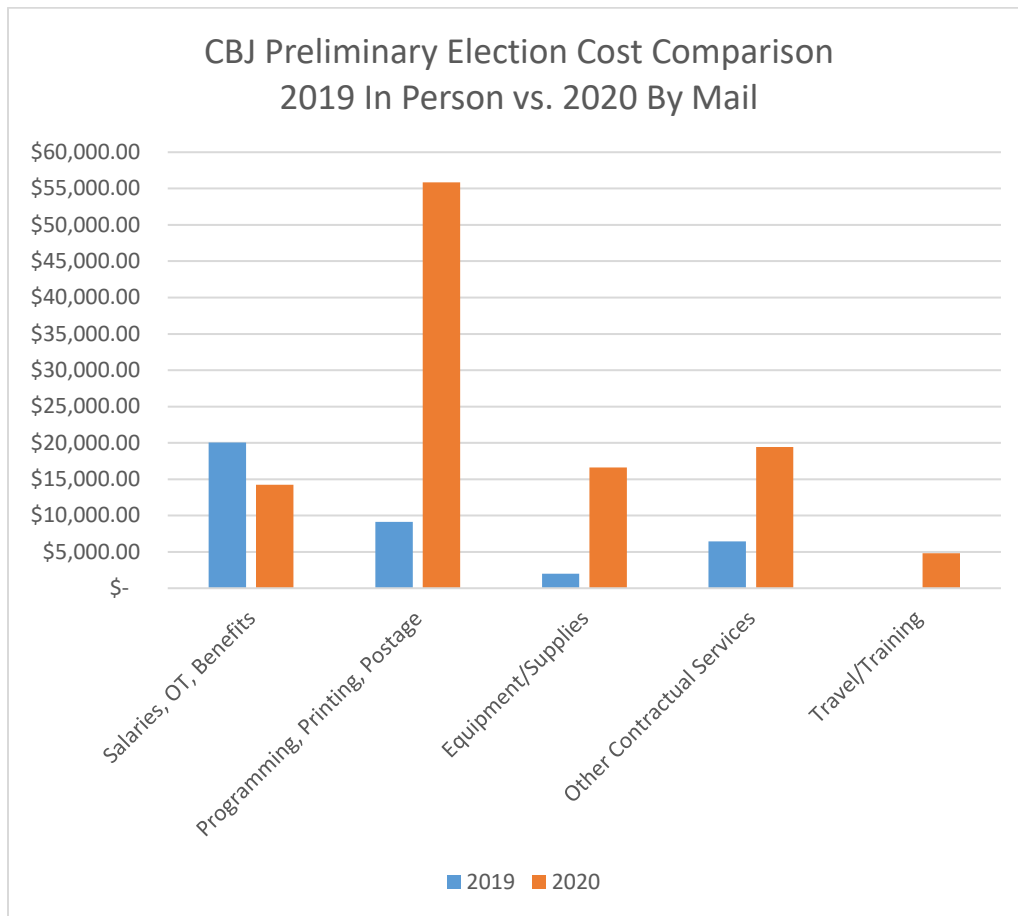
Total number of CBJ Registered Voters as of Sept. 6, 2020	27,789
Total number of ballots mailed¹	27,467
Number of ballots that were returned by Canvass Date of 10/20/20	11,988
Total number of ballots that were challenged	629
Total number of challenged ballots that were approved for counting	516
Number of rejected ballots	113
Final tally of eligible ballots that were counted by Canvass Board	11,875
Final voter turnout (counted ballots only)	42.70%
Total estimated cost (still awaiting some final invoices)	\$115,000

Below are cost comparisons for this election compared to the 2019 CBJ election.

<u>Type of Expense</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Salaries, Overtime, Benefits	\$20,050	\$14,250
Programming, Printing, Postage	\$ 9,150	\$55,850
Equipment/Supplies	\$ 2,000	\$16,600
Contractual Services	\$ 6,450	\$19,450
Travel/Training	\$ -0-	\$ 4,800
Totals	\$37,650	\$110,950

¹ **CBJ Code 29.07.360 ... (emphasis added)**

(c) When the election official conducts an election by mail, he or she shall mail a ballot to each person whose name appears on the voter registration list prepared under AS 15.07.125 for that election. The ballot shall be sent to the address stated on the official registration list unless the voter has notified the election official in writing of a different address to which the ballot should be sent. ***The election official is not required to mail a ballot to any voter who does not have a valid residence address, or is in the condition of purge notice (PN), undeliverable (UN), or list maintenance undeliverable (LU), as described in AS 15.07.130.*** Any qualified voter not mailed a ballot will not later be refused a ballot when requested, but may be required to vote a questioned ballot. The election official shall send ballots by first class, nonforwardable, mail, on or before the 21st day before the election.



Note: Most of the October 6, 2020 expenses are being paid for from CARES Act funds since the COVID-19 pandemic was the reason for switching to a by mail election. Some one-time purchases such as \$8,800 for ballot drop boxes will be used in future elections, whether held in person or by mail.

Background

How the decision was made to hold a By Mail Election

The CBJ Assembly and administration, working diligently to address public health and safety in light of the Coronavirus pandemic, considered how best to conduct the annual local municipal election while keeping the health and safety of voters and election workers at the forefront. In late April and early May, it became apparent that changes to election procedures were needed to balance the safety of voters and poll workers with the voters’ rights to vote. Elections take significant advanced planning, and the Municipal Clerk’s Office reviewed three options: status quo with a traditional precinct polling place election, a by mail election, or a hybrid of an expanded absentee by mail election with some polling places open.

At the same time, the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) offered its election equipment and expertise to CBJ for conducting the 2020 regular election as a by mail election. Since 2018, the MOA has held 3 consecutive by mail municipal elections on the first Tuesday in April plus one special election in August 2018. Generously, MOA offered its idle mail ballot processing equipment as well as salaried staff time to assist fellow Alaskan communities in recognition of the difficulty of conducting an election during a pandemic.

The Municipal Clerk researched the Anchorage proposal and presented the idea to the Assembly Human Resources Committee on May 18, 2020. As provided in CBJ Code 29.07.360, the Assembly could, by motion, direct that an election be conducted by mail. The Assembly adopted a motion by unanimous consent at the May 18, 2020 regular Assembly meeting, directing the Municipal Clerk to enter into an agreement with the Municipality of Anchorage to conduct the October 6, 2020 election “by mail.”

Code Changes

In 2007, the Assembly amended the CBJ Code to provide for elections by mail at the direction of the Assembly. This code section needed updating to provide additional structure to the conduct of a mail election. The following ordinances were adopted between June and September to implement the changes necessary to conduct of the 2020 By Mail election:

Ordinance 2020-24(b) An Ordinance Amending the Elections Code Relating to Vote by Mail for City and Borough of Juneau Municipal Elections. *Adopted June 29, 2020.*

Emergency Ordinance 2020-30 An Emergency Ordinance Amending the Elections Code Relating to Candidate Nomination and Write-in for the Vote by Mail October 6, 2020, City and Borough of Juneau Municipal Election. *Adopted June 29, 2020.*

Emergency Ordinance 2020-50 An Emergency Ordinance Suspending Enforcement of Witness Signatures on By Mail Ballots for the 2020 Regular Election of the City and Borough of Juneau. *Adopted September 21, 2020.*

Implementation of a by mail election

The CBJ Municipal Clerk’s Office formed an election team with contractors made up of Municipality of Anchorage Municipal Clerk staff, Resource Data Inc. (signature verification and by mail election consultant), Dominion Elections (ballot programming), and K&H Printing (ballot and election material printing and mailing).

The Candidate filing period was open July 17 – 27 in accordance with Emergency Ordinance 2020-30.

In July, Resource Data and the MOA Election Team scanned all available CBJ election precinct registers from the past few years for use in the signature review process.

Ballots were mailed out by K&H Printing from Seattle, WA on Tuesday, September 15. Ballot drop boxes were installed and opened to receive ballots 24/7 starting September 17 through Election Day at 8p.m. and the two Vote Centers located in the Assembly

Chambers at City Hall and the Mendenhall Library were open beginning on September 21 through Election Day October 6.

Before the close of polls on Election Day, 10 cases of ballots had been mailed to the MOA Election Center via Alaska Air Cargo. Following the close of polls, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen and Admin. Assistant Lacey Davis traveled to Anchorage with the remaining ballots to be counted. Special accommodations were made with the airlines and TSA to ensure security measures and chain of custody was followed for all ballots and election materials during transportation to Anchorage.

The first round of ballots were reviewed and counted on Friday, October 9 and preliminary unofficial results were conveyed via Zoom/Facebook Live feed that night at 6p.m. Additional preliminary results were then updated to the CBJ Election webpage on October 10 and again on October 16. Beth McEwen returned to Juneau on October 17 with those ballots that were challenged and not yet approved and on October 20, the Canvass Review Board reviewed the challenged ballots, adding ballots deemed eligible to the final count and certified the election on October 20.

Following certification of the election, final results were made available to candidates, the public, posted to the website and information releases were sent out. Certificates of election were distributed to newly elected members. The new School Board members were sworn in on October 21, and the Assembly Reorganization meeting was held on Monday, October 26.

Municipal Clerk staff completed the post-election work including sending out 113 ballot rejection letters, compiling the preliminary election report, and provided voter information to the State Division of Elections for updates to voter history records.

Public Relations and Voter Education

In July, postcards were mailed to all eligible Juneau registered voters' permanent mailing address listed in the State of Alaska Division of Elections voter registration database letting them know the CBJ Regular Municipal Election would be held by mail. Voters were encouraged to update their voter registration information as needed by September 6, 2020 and offered the opportunity to request a ballot be mailed to an alternative temporary address, as ballots would not be forwarded.

In July, we launched the Election Call Center staff and responded to voter calls, emails, and faxes through the certification of the election in October.

Clerk staff worked with CBJ Public Information Officer Lisa Phu and her team to ensure the public was well informed of the switch to a by mail election. Public outreach included developing FAQs, updating the Clerk and CBJ homepage with frequent election news and information, social media posts, radio interviews, participation in multiple candidate forums, and contracting for an informational video to be produced on how to cast a vote by mail ballot.

Looking to the future

CBJ should consider how it would like to conduct elections in the future. The Municipality of Anchorage has stated they were amenable to partner again with CBJ for conducting CBJ regular elections by mail. However, that would be limited by any special elections that either municipality may need to hold during the election cycle of the other municipality. As shown in the cost analysis above, the expense of conducting a by mail election is substantially more than the expense of holding in person precinct based elections. The other key factor to consider when comparing in person vs. by mail elections is the timeframes associated with election calendar. By mail elections require the candidate filing period as well as the ballot preparation and mail out timeline moved up by one to two weeks earlier than in person elections. By mail elections also delay the initial count reporting of election results with no results made available on election night but rather having preliminary results posted on Friday after election day and certification of the election falling two weeks after election day to allow the time necessary for the voter signature cure process. In contrast to that, in person precinct based election certification is held one week after election day.

During the FY21 budget cycle, funds were approved to purchase new election equipment. The State of Alaska Division of Elections does share some of their voting equipment with CBJ and will continue to do so for future elections. However, the Division of Elections will not be sharing their accessible voting devices so we still plan on purchasing that equipment from the FY21 approved funds along with the necessary server, ballot scanner, and programs for processing ballots using the state's new equipment.