



INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Commissioner Emma I. Darnell
District 5 Commission Office

JAN 6 2009

FROM: *[Signature]*
Lashary Williams
County Manager

(A)

DATE: January 6, 2009

SUBJECT: Election ^SAudit Report

Per your request, attached are the comments and recommendations on the specified punch list items for the Election Audit Report.

If additional information is required please do not hesitate to contact me.

SPECIFIC PUNCH LIST ITEMS

Comments and Recommendations

Identify and Document Manual Routines that Currently Support Automated and/or Information Systems:

The department has identified and documented the following manual tasks, some of which are supported by automated processes and, therefore redundant; others that could be automated to reduce duplication of effort by copying computer generated forms and manually entering data:

1. By mail and in person Absentee Ballot Applications (21-2-384)
 - These applications are state generated forms supplied to the county.
 - The law requires that the date the ballot is issued and date returned is recorded on the application. State also requires the recording of the date the application is received, voter number, precinct ID, district combination, reason for rejection and absentee clerk's signature.
 - State requires the entry of identical information into the State voter registration absentee ballot sub-system. Reports may be generated for this system based on the information entered (i.e. numbered list of voters, number of applications received, number of ballots mailed and returned by category of military and stateside)

2. Copying Image of voter registration card to compare signature on returned ballot 21-2-386(a)(1)(B)
 - Images of original voter registration cards are stored electronically via Sign-It imaging software system.
 - Law requires verification of voter signatures on absentee ballot applications by comparing to the image or the original card (if not yet scanned)
 - Law requires verification of voter signature on returned ballot envelope by comparing to the absentee ballot application and the original voter registration card (or image).
 - When absentee application signature is verified against the image or original card, a copy of the image or card is attached to the absentee ballot application for verification of the signature on the ballot envelope when returned.
 - Comparing the ballot envelope signature to both is a duplication of effort but requires a change in state law to eliminate this step (copying of original card for comparison).

3. Manual street index mapping and precincting
 - Currently, if a voter registration card or change of address is received from a voter in a new subdivision, the voter has to provide cross streets, we manually locate the street or general area on the aero atlas, look on large district and precinct maps to determine area, district and precinct location. The information is then manually entered

into the county system and the state street maintenance system to determine voter's precinct. This is not very accurate

- This process could be automated by GIS by providing new subdivision maps and annexation maps to them first. They have access to the district and precinct information and would provide more accurate precincting of the streets, which would be a more accurate determination of a voter's precinct.
- GIS provides the street, district and precinct information to us and we then enter it into the county and state systems.
- Process could be further automated by involving IT to work with the State to determine how the information could be pulled from the state system to the county system, which would eliminate entering identical information into two systems.
- IT uses the information in the county system to generate the precinct locators, master lists, and electors lists.

4. Copying computer generated Batch Report form

- The batch report form is generated electronically, printed and copied for manual use in tracking batched voter registration cards through the entry process. Information included tracks the following: Batch number, date batch was signed out, type and number of process completed (# of confirmations entered/date, scanned/date, indexed/date, verified-uploaded-deleted/date, other/date), quantity, Name of staff who entered, scanned, indexed, verified-uploaded-deleted, and comments. Staff is required to record start time, stop time and restart times if more than 5 minutes. This form is attached to the batch and follows through the completion of the process to filing. It could be set up for electronic entry by staff at each point and printed to attach to batch of applications.
- There is a batch sign-out form, which is generated on the computer, printed, copied and stored in a notebook for staff to sign out batched applications for processing. Information on the form includes: batch number, staff name, start date and end date for entry, scanned, indexed, verified uploaded and deleted. This form could be set up for electronic entry and tracking of application status.

Recommendation: By April 1, 2009, management perform a formal review of these forms and processes and make recommendations for revisions, if possible, to streamline the process.

Establish Standard Operating Desk Procedures:

1. There are existing written procedures for the critical tasks assigned to the Elections and Registration Divisions but more details are required and revisions needed.

2. A list of tasks and functions performed by each employee is recorded as part of their individual performance appraisals. Standard operating desk procedures for each employee have not been developed.
3. January of 2007, each employee was directed to list steps in the process for each task responsibility and to provide the completed information to their immediate supervisor. The purpose was to develop an electronic file of procedures for each position in the department to provide a layout to aid in understanding the myriad tasks in the elections process and the steps in processing. In addition, it was intended as a tool to train and retrain staff with the focus on improving the system performance.
4. This process was suspended due to elections beginning in March 2007 and a subsequent state investigation in April 2007, which required redirection of staff.
5. This item has not been completed due to lack of funding and staff availability as a result of on-going election preparation and conduct since 2006. Demands of conducting municipal elections in addition to federal and state elections have put a severe strain of staff time in the development and attention this item needs.
6. Additionally, the staff who had the most in-depth knowledge of office operations and laws governing elections has retired.

Comments: The rapid and effective development of current standard operating procedures in the R&E Dept. is critical to the proper running of the organization. These procedures control the quality of work performed by people not expert in a task and as such must be written in ways to promote maximum efficiency by someone who is knowledgeable of the process and steps involved and who can devote uninterrupted time to complete this task.

Recommendation:

TCBA recommended use of a consultant to complete this process. Department work with County Manager Performance Management and Internal Audit to develop SOPs by July 1, 2009.

Develop Policies and Procedures Manual (Departmental Protocols):

A departmental policies and procedures manual exists and is reviewed and revised regularly. This manual does not incorporate the extensive detail as recommended by the TCBA audit, i.e. established roles and responsibilities, state election laws and procedures, and development of strong budget proposals.

Recommendation: Existing manual should be reviewed and updated as part of the consultant's development of the Standard Operating Procedures, to include desk audits and items as outlined by TCBA. Internal Audit to conduct compliance audit and revise as appropriate by July 1, 2009.

Evaluation of Department Forms:

The department has identified all forms used in normal operation of business. These are categorized by state provided forms and internally developed forms. The forms provided by the State, while duplicative, would require their authorization to change or not use.

1. State Provided Forms

- Voter Registration Application (change of address included on form)
- Provisional Voter Registration Application (For use at polls)
- Change of Address Form (For use at polls)
- TS Absentee Ballot Application (For use with in-person voting)
- OS Absentee Ballot Application (For use with by-mail voting)
- Oath of Managers (Poll Managers)
- Oath of Assistants (Poll Clerks and Election Workers)
- DRE Recap Form
- Absentee Daily Recap Form
- Provisional Recap Form
- ExpressPoll Recap Form
- Provisional Numbered List of Voters
- Numbered List of Voters
- Voters Certificate
- Provisional Voters Certificate
- GA Voter ID Card Application
- Chain of Custody Forms
- Oath of Custody for DRE
- Not Returned Items to Elections Office Form
- Request to Relocate GEMS Server
- Consolidated Returns Form – Question
- Consolidated Returns Form – Election
- Write-in votes Certification Form
- Recall Petition
- Qualifying Affidavit
- Independent Candidate Petition
- Financial Disclosure Forms
- Declaration of Intent
- Pauper's Affidavit

2. Internally Generated Forms: These are being reviewed to determine if any forms may be combined to consolidate processes or can be set up by IT as on-line forms for completion electronically.

- Voter Registration Application Batch Log Report
- Voter Registration Application Batch Sign-out form
- OS Absentee Processing and Tabulation Checklist/Receipt/Certification Form
- TS Absentee Processing and Tabulation Checklist/Receipt/Certification Form

- Affidavit for Absentee Voter to Vote at Polls
- Check-in Center Audit Form
- Check-in Center Memory Card Audit Form
- Poll Manager Feedback Form
- Supplies & Equipment Receipt
- Fee Schedule
- Poll Reservation Form
- Confirmation List Form
- Poll Worker Application
- Problems on TS Unit Form
- Check-in Center Memory Card Receipt
- Check-in Center Verification of Memory Card Form
- Check-in Center Dispatch Station Tabulation Envelope Receipt
- Check-in Center Problem Precinct Form

Recommendation: A comprehensive review of all forms utilized by the department will be performed during this anticipated down time, beginning in January 2009; inclusive of a review for appearance, current utility, modification and legibility. Revised forms shall be included in procedures by July 1, 2009.

Department-wide IT Analysis, Workflow, Inputs and Outputs:

The Elections Division staff worked with the Department of Information Technology staff to streamline the Election Poll worker payroll processing. Management staff has identified several critical areas where analysis from IT would be beneficial in eliminating some manual processes.

1. Analysis of the integration of the voter registration database and imaging system to allow simultaneous access when verifying applications or petitions.
2. Analysis of integration with the state system to allow pulling street index information from the state as opposed to manually entering duplicate information into the county and the state system.
3. Development of an election management system, which would allow tracking of all election events and tasks. This system would help with management of deadlines, as well as track status and assigned responsibility.
4. Development of an online poll worker training program to reduce the number of practical hours of training for poll workers and provide a more effective means of review and testing.
5. Analysis of benefit of purchasing ballot mail processing equipment to automate certain aspects of ballot mail-out and ballot return process, as well as mass mailing of poll worker assignment and confirmation letters.

A department wide analysis would require an uninterrupted, dedicated period of time to devote to this task and IT support and participation in this process.

Recommendation: By July 1, 2009, County Manager Office of Performance Management and Internal Audit and department coordinate to initiate a department wide analysis of work flow processes and procedures that are or could be supported by internal systems.

Create a Training Program:

The development of a strong, effective training program is contingent upon the development of current Standard Operating Procedures. A departmental training program with designated staff for training within each division is crucial. Past practice for new employees coming on board has been a very abbreviated training of their job responsibilities, procedures for accomplishing tasks, and the laws governing the process. The process has been a learn-as-you-go training, which has resulted in critical errors.

1. Currently, training of new employees is conducted by the immediate supervisor on the specific duties of that position. The employee is provided with the performance appraisal form listing all required duties, a departmental policies and procedures manual and a training schedule.
2. Staff is provided an opportunity to attend training offered through Fulton County Personnel Training Program
3. The BRE, Director and most management staff attend certification training offered through the Georgia Election Officials Association (GEOA) and the Voter Registrars Association of Georgia (VRAG), which is held yearly. Generally, Georgia Secretary of State's staff conduct the training courses at these conferences, which have been problematic 2007 and 2008 with a new and transitioning staff in the Secretary of State's Office.
4. In non Federal and State election years, some management staff may attend the International Association of Clerk, Records, Election Officials and Treasurers (IACREOT).

Recommendation: Establish a training program as recommended in Item 7 of Short Term Recommendations, to begin process of specialized training for staff in the department.