ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION/REPORT

Based on the Governor’s Proclamation and the Secretary of State election advisory information, the administration recommends that the Board of Trustees consider an order to move the May 2, 2020, Trustee At-Large uniform election date to November 3, 2020, uniform election date. In the March 18, 2020 press release from the Office of the Texas Governor (see press release), the following quote was included. “I strongly encourage local election officials to take advantage of these waivers and postpone their elections until November,” said Governor Abbott. “Right now, the state’s focus is responding to COVID-19—including social distancing and avoiding large gatherings. By delaying this election, our local election officials can assist in that effort.”

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Section 418.016 of the Texas Government Code, the Governor has issued a proclamation (see proclamation) suspending certain provisions of the Texas Election Code and the Texas Water Code to allow all local political subdivisions that are utilizing the May 2, 2020, uniform election date to postpone their election to the November 3, 2020, uniform election date. The Secretary of State Office has provided election advisories to election officials (see election advisories), detailing procedures that must be followed and in the latest advisory intensifies guidance. It says, “If you haven’t already moved your May 2nd election, you must take action to do so immediately! It further says, “If you don’t move your May 2nd election, you are subjecting voters to health risks and potential criminal violations. Failure to postpone your election will put your election at severe risk for an election contest.”

IMPACT OF THIS ACTION

This action will move the regular trustee election for the at-large positions scheduled for May 2, 2020 to November 3, 2020. All terms of Trustees will remain the same 6-year term as if elected in May 2020. All candidate filings for the election will remain valid for the election to be held on November 3, 2020, and the filing period will not be re-opened for the November 3, 2020, election date. According to the procedures, all Absentee Ballots by Mail (ABBM) for voters that are voting by mail due to being over the age of 65 or due to disability would still be valid for the postponed election, and ABBMs for voters who submitted ABBMs based on expected absence from the county would not be valid for the postponed election. Although prepared, Absentee Ballots by Mail have not been mailed awaiting consideration of the Governor’s proclamation by the entities scheduled to have elections in May which are the Big Spring Independent School District, City of Big Spring and Howard College.

BUDGET INFORMATION (INCLUDING ANY STAFFING IMPLICATIONS)

Adoption of the order will result in varying costs dependent upon the decisions of the other entities scheduled to have an election. During the specific agenda item provided, County Elections Administrator Jodi Duck will review this information (see attached).

MONITORING AND REPORTING TIMELINE

The President and staff will provide timely information to the Board of Trustees regarding decisions that must be made pursuant to this Order. The Board will need to meet by August 17, 2020, to make any necessary revisions to the original order to include the change of date, any change in location of the main early voting location, any changes to early voting dates and hours, including weekend early voting, any changes to the identity of the early voting clerk and their contact information or any changes to branch early voting locations. The major relevant dates for the November election, including the voter registration deadline (October 5, 2020), the deadline to submit an ABBM (October 23, 2020), and the dates for early voting (October 19, 2020–October 30, 2020) will be used.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Office of the Texas Governor Press Release//March 18, 2020
Attachment 2- Governor Greg Abbott Proclamation
Attachment 3- Election Advisory/Texas Secretary of State Ruth R. Hughes
Attachment 4- County Elections Administrator Cost Analysis
Attachment 5- Order to Postpone the May 2, 2020 Election to November 3, 2020

RESOURCE PERSONNEL

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