

## Guide for establishing new polling places

### 1. Why do we need new polling places

#### a. Equity

- i. We want voters to be able to vote. One of the best ways to do that is to have their polling place as close to their residence as we can get – ideally within walking distance
- ii. Having polling places reachable only by car disenfranchises voters who do not have cars, having polling places reachable only by car or bus disenfranchises voters who do not have access to those means of transportation, etc.
- iii. Having polling places that are in the neighborhoods they serve gets us closer to one of our goals: when a voter goes to their polling place they should know or recognize at least one of the Election Officials working there – hopefully more than one
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#### b. Not an easy ask

- i. We are guests at all our polling places and are subject to the needs of our hosts
- ii. We do not compensate polling locations for letting us use their facilities
- iii. Being a polling place means between a few hundred and possibly 2000+ voters will be walking through their facility
- iv. Voters will use up parking around the facility making access more difficult for others
- v. Polling locations are set by Ordinance and are thus not changed easily unless in an emergency
- vi. Polling places must be welcoming to voters so want locations that are inclusive to all.
- vii. We need access at 6am until the election night paperwork is done (usually 8-9pm but can go much later depending). This means someone will have to unlock and lock the location or we will need keys
- viii. We need to be able to drop off three pieces of equipment between the Thursday and Monday before the election and pick them up either the Wednesday or Thursday after the election
- ix. Polling places need to be at **minimum 500 square feet** and hopefully much more

- c. Attrition
  - i. From time to time we lose a polling place due to changes in the leadership of the organization that controls the space
  - ii. Sometimes we need to leave a polling place due to intolerance on the part of the organization that controls the space
  - iii. We want voters to be able to vote. One of the best ways to do that is to have their polling place as close to their residence as we can get – ideally within walking distance
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- d. Bring the voting to the voters
  - i. We are in the business of removing rather than creating barriers to voting, making voting more welcoming and easier to do will help more to vote.

2. What are we looking for

- a. Within the ward (or one of the wards) served
- b. Large enough to accommodate the number of voters anticipated (we are proud of the relatively short voter lines at our location compared to other places in the state)
- c. Interior space allows for smooth flow of movement of voters from one station to another as they complete the process
- d. ADA accessibility requirements met such as: adequate width of doorways and halls, space to maneuver in a wheelchair around the voting area
- e. Doors to building and to the voting area are opened for election officials at 6 a.m., and remain open to the public from 7 a.m. to at 8 p.m. on election days.
- f. Tables and chairs are available for election officials to move and use as needed to accommodate tasks.
- g. A locked space for storage of the tabulator and accessible ballot marking machines from the delivery date (1-5 days prior to the election) through 6 a.m. Election Day, and at the end of Election Day through the time it is picked 1-2 days following the election (for the Tabulator and accessible voting machines).
- h. If the location does not have an accessible door, we DO have a bell call device available (a button on a stick that sounds an alert inside the polling place so someone can go catch the door)
- i. A space to store folded booths and signage (usually in the back of a closet, etc.) between elections.

3. Why we need you

- a. We have traditionally gotten the best results finding polling places when the Alderperson approaches the facility about becoming a polling location
- b. An Alder using their blog/newsletter/social media outlets to inform voters of polling places helps us alleviate voter confusion and anxiety as they know the information is from a trusted local source
- c. To add or change a polling place, an Ordinance change is required and we need the local Alder to sponsor it.

4. Suggestions

- a. When operating in your district, be on the lookout for potential polling places, you never know when we might lose one and need to replace it
- b. It always helps to know who is in charge of the location so a name, contact info, etc. are a big help when we are setting up a new location. We will also need the contact information of an individual we should call to alert when we are dropping off or picking up equipment IF the location prefers that
- c. Be as honest as possible when asking an entity to host voting, we strive to be as transparent in our operations as possible
- d. Please note: we send postcards to all registered voters if they are going to a new location one week in advance of the election.