

CITIZEN COMMENT -- February 18, 2015 -- Janice Auger Rasmussen

Good evening.

Several neighboring cities have established a vote-by-mail protocol or are in the process of doing so. Such an example is Sandy City. This year they are starting a program as follows:

1. A voter information document will be mailed to every address in the city.
2. A mail-in ballot will be mailed to every registered voter.
3. At least one polling place will be open for people who choose to cast an electronic ballot. People will also be able to drop off their marked mail-in ballot at the polling place on Election Day.
4. A drop-box at City hall will be available for those who may not trust the mail.
5. Sandy intends to be fully converted to vote-by-mail by the year 2020.

Cottonwood Heights has changed to vote-by-mail, and I am providing you with some information about their experience.

I support implementing such a program in Taylorsville.

Vote-by-mail costs less. Vote-by-mail increases the number of people who vote.

Not only will the “quantity” of voters increase, but I submit that the “quality” of voters will also increase. When a voter enters a booth, there is a chance that he will run across a candidate or an election issue about which he is uninformed. Typically he will either skip over it – or, unfortunately, go the “eeny-meeny-miny-mo” route.

With a mail-in ballot, he has the opportunity to the issues – talk to candidates – speak with a trusted friend, or do further research on his own. That kind of quality voting provides priceless input.

In every election since Taylorsville began, candidates have had a platform statement about improving or increasing community involvement. Vote-by-mail is one of the better ways to accomplish that worthwhile goal.

For 47 years or so I have been a decision maker for various private and public entities. It is very easy to approve decisions that combine a lower cost with an improved outcome, which is perfectly exemplified by some form of vote-by-mail plan.

I strongly encourage you to take that path.

## Janice

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**From:** Kelvyn Cullimore Jr. <Kelvyn@dynatron.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 18, 2015 11:19 AM  
**To:** Janice  
**Subject:** RE: Voting by Mail -- Question  
**Attachments:** VJ May 2013 SIMPLIFYING VOTING.docx

Janice,

Hope all is well with you and your family. It is good to hear from you.

In answer to your question, we are unanimously in favor of the vote by mail. There is not a soul among the staff or elected officials who feel that the vote by mail was a mistake. It increased our voter turnout two years ago from an average of 15-20% on municipal elections to over 40%. Much more representative of the will of the people.

I am attaching an article I wrote relative to this issue. Hope it helps.

*Kelvyn H. Cullimore Jr.*  
*President & CEO*



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**From:** Janice [<mailto:janice@perfectregister.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 18, 2015 10:53 AM  
**To:** [kcullimore@ch.utah.gov](mailto:kcullimore@ch.utah.gov)  
**Subject:** Voting by Mail -- Question

This is Janice Auger (now Rasmussen). I have a very simple question -- is there anyone within the Cottonwood Heights "circle" of electeds or senior staff who thinks your change to voting by mail has been a mistake? I am hoping Taylorsville will go that way, and I'm doing some fact finding and opinion gathering. Quick answer is fine.

Hope all is well with you.

## SIMPLIFYING VOTING – VOTE BY MAIL

When pledging allegiance to the flag of our country we acknowledge our form of government when we say, "...and to the Republic for which it stands...". Indeed, the Constitution of the United States guarantees every state a Republican form of government. A Republic is similar to a Democracy in that both depend on the direct involvement of the citizens. In a Democracy, all sovereign power lies with the people who exercise that power as a group and vote on virtually every decision - majority rules. In a Republic, citizens elect representatives and delegate to them the sovereign powers of the people to govern. As citizens of a Republic, we have no greater duty than to participate in the selection of those to whom we delegate the power to govern. Yet, it is disappointing that so many choose not to exercise their right to vote.

Based on statistics for Salt Lake County, voter turnout in Presidential election years is always highest. In 2012, over 80% of registered voters cast a ballot. In 2008, over 70% of registered voters cast a ballot. However, in mid-term elections such as 2006 and 2010, voter turnout drops to approximately 50% of registered voters. In odd-years when municipal elections are held voter turnout drops dramatically. For Cottonwood Heights specifically, we realized 86% voter turnout in our first municipal elections in 2004 (of course, that was a presidential election year and municipal elections are not typically held on those years). In subsequent elections, voter participation dropped to an average of 40% in 2007, 20% in 2009 and 20% in 2011. While not all who are eligible are registered to vote, we do have about 24,000 registered voters in Cottonwood Heights which is a pretty high percentage of those eligible.

In an effort to encourage greater participation voting for elected officials, Cottonwood Heights volunteered to be a test market for voting by mail in this year's elections. In other words, there will be no voting at traditional polling places in Cottonwood Heights for either the primary election on August 13th or the general election on November 5th. What motivated us to consider this experiment is the rising popularity of voting by mail in our city. In the 2012 Presidential election, we had over 6,000 voters request mail ballots. Over 5,000 returned their ballots, or 84%. 6,000 voters represents over 25% of all registered voters and approximately a third of all votes cast in Cottonwood Heights in the election. The percentages grow even greater when applied to the low voter turnout in off-year municipal elections.

In addition to voting by mail, early voting has become more and more popular. It is estimated that between early voting and voting by mail, there are as many votes cast as there are in person on election day.

There are many distinct advantages to voting by mail and very few disadvantages. In the last election, a relative of mine called to review with me each provision on the ballot to be sure they were properly informed before voting. Voting by mail enables all citizens to carefully study the

issues and vote in an informed way in the comfort of their home at a time convenient to them. It allows voters to discuss issues and become educated. I compare it to taking an open book test at school.

Approximately 30 days before the election, ballots will be mailed to each registered voter that has voted at least once in the last four years. Those who have been "inactive" voters for the last four years will receive a postcard inviting them to request a ballot.

Voting by mail eliminates the costs of staffing early voting and election-day voting locations. This cost savings is partially offset by the cost of mailing ballots. However, we believe the outcome will be not only lower costs, but improved voter participation.

Some have expressed concern about voter fraud being more prevalent in a vote by mail process. Each ballot received bears the signature of the voter. That signature is compared to the signature on file in the County Recorder's office associated with that voter's registration. If the signatures do not match, the voter is notified. If you are like some that use an informal and a formal signature, be sure your signature on your ballot is consistent with the signature on your original voter registration form. If you forget to sign your ballot, you will be contacted and provided the opportunity to validate the ballot you sent. Every effort has been made to diminish the risk of voter fraud.

Ballots can be completed and mailed back to the County Clerk in the envelope provided or there will be ballot drop locations at county and city offices around the County. Mail ballots will be sent out weekly leading up to the election to accommodate those who newly register or have changed addresses. Ballots will even be mailed daily the week before the election in an effort to service all voters desiring to participate. For those who prefer the experience of voting at a traditional polling place, you may come to city hall on election day to cast your ballot.

Voting by mail requires that the ballot be postmarked the night before election day. All ballots properly post-marked will be counted. Ballots will be counted as received which allows for a more cost effective and accurate counting of votes. Results of the votes cast up to the day before the election will be posted at 8:00 p.m. on election night. While this may eliminate the fun and anticipation of watching poll results roll in throughout the evening in exchange for a single revelatory posting, it will also shorten the campaigning process as most candidates realize votes will be cast long before election day.

We are truly excited about being a test case for voting by mail. We believe the positive aspects far outweigh the negative. We are confident it will result in a significant improvement over the 20% average voter turnout we have seen in the last two municipal election cycles. We encourage your participation and welcome your feedback about the experience.