



14600 Minnetonka Blvd. | Minnetonka, MN 55345 | 952-939-8200 | eminnetonka.com

TO: Charter Commission
FROM: Corrine Heine, City Attorney
DATE: July 6, 2020
SUBJECT: Addendum to July 7, 2020 charter commission agenda packet

The addendum to the July 7 charter commission packet contains the following information:

- Item 4: Discussion: What problem(s) is Minnetonka working to solve with Ranked Choice Voting?

The following information was received after the distribution of the original packet:

- Demographic information on Minnetonka voters. Hennepin County elections staff provided the age groups for Minnetonka registered voters, which is attached.
- Summaries of academic articles. As mentioned in the original staff memo, the city attorney had invited residents who favor and oppose RCV (David Haeg and Marc Francis) to share academic articles that they had available to them.

Marc Francis provided one article, a summary of which is attached.

David Haeg responded that the most useful and objective information is data from cities that have adopted RCV. He provided links to post-election reports that Minneapolis prepared in 2009, 2013 and 2017. The 2013 election report and excerpts from the 2017 report were included in the March 17, 2020 agenda packet. An excerpt from the 2009 report, containing the cover page and summary of findings, is attached.

- Additional cost information. The original packet contained information on the differential costs between RCV and the current system, over five municipal election cycles. Commissioner Allendorf asked that those costs be expressed as a percentage of budget increase and as the net increase in annual taxes for the average-valued home in Minnetonka. That information is shown in the attached sheet. NOTE that the numbers were all calculated based on today's average-valued home (\$378,500), and that number will likely change in the future. Also, the percentage of budget increase is based on \$400,000 representing a 1% budget increase, and that number is also likely to change over the next nine years.
- Public comments. Public comments that were received since the packet was distributed are attached.

MINNETONKA VOTER DEMOGRAPHICS

Population (2016): 51,752
Avg. Household size (2016): 2.28 persons
Registered Voters (as of 7/1/20): 38,027

Age range	No. of registered voters	Percentage of registered voters
18-29	5,575	14.66%
30-49	10,871	28.59%
50-64	10,129	26.64%
65 and over	11,452	30.12%

SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC ARTICLE

“A Tale of Two Continents: Ranked Choice Voting in Australia and America,” paper prepared for session on ‘Electoral Reform in the U.S.: Domestic and Comparative Lessons,’ Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington DC, 29 August 2019.

Author: Prof. Benjamin Reilly, University of Western Australia

Purpose: The author performed a comparison of state legislator elections in two Australian states with RCV elections in Maine, in order to show how the recommendations that candidates make to their supporters about ranking other candidates can have an impact on electoral outcomes.

Differences in systems: Australia has used ranked choice voting since the early 1900’s for state and federal elections. In Australia, both voter registration and voting are compulsory, where U.S. voters may choose not to register and, even if registered, may choose not to vote. For the federal government and all but two states in Australia, voters are also required to rank all preferences – ballots are rejected if all candidates are not ranked. But two Australian states (Queensland and New South Wales) allow voters to opt not to rank all candidates. Those two states provided a comparison with elections in Maine, where voters are also allowed to rank as many or as few candidates as they like. The author noted that all of the elections in the comparison were mass-level partisan elections to a state legislature, which provided a better framework for comparison between Australia and the U.S. than would have non-partisan city RCV elections in the U.S.

Results:

1. An analysis of voting in the Australian state elections showed that party recommendations impacted voters’ decisions to rank all or less than all candidates. Minor parties were more likely to recommend that their voters exercise all rankings, whereas major parties sometimes adopted an election strategy of “bullet voting” – voting for only that party’s candidate and not ranking other preferences. Parties were more likely to recommend preference voting for other candidates in close contests, where the outcome was uncertain. In those cases, major parties would identify a minor party for preference voting, often negotiated at the party level rather than candidate level.

2. The 2018 election was the first use of RCV in Maine, and the election for the 2nd Congressional district was the only race that utilized second preferences, because the winners of the other two districts claimed a majority of first-choice votes on the first count. The two leading candidates in the 2nd Congressional race had adopted different strategies: the Republican chose not to ask for second or third choice votes while the Democrat had pledged with two independent candidates to preference each other. Most voters followed their chosen party’s signals on preferencing. Two-thirds of Republican voters cast a single vote for the Republican candidate only, and 60% of Democrat voters ranked at least one other candidate. The Democrat received more than twice the number of second-round preferences as the Republican, resulting in the Democrat winning the seat.

3. The author concluded that party recommendations can greatly affect how voters choose to express their preferences in partisan elections. Especially in close elections, it is rational for parties to campaign for and offer second preferences.

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY SURVEY RESEARCH REPORT

RANKED CHOICE VOTING 2009 CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Prepared
for
Mr. Patrick O'Connor
Elections Director
City of Minneapolis, Minnesota



REVISED FEBRUARY 2010

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY SURVEY

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Dr. Stephen I. Frank
Department of Political Science
302 B-51
320-308-4131
sfrank@stcloudstate.edu

Dr. Michelle Kukoleca Hammes
Department of Political Science
303 B-51
320-255-4130
mhammes@stcloudstate.edu

Dr. David H. Robinson
Department of Statistics and Computer Networking
237 Engineering and Computing Center
320-308-2149
dhrobinson@stcloudstate.edu

Dr. Sandrine Zerbib
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
266 Stewart Hall
320-308-3046
sazerbib@stcloudstate.edu

Dr. Steven C. Wagner
Department of Political Science
304 B-51
320-308-5423
swagner@stcloudstate.edu

SCSU SURVEY HOMEPAGE
[HTTP://www.stcloudstate.edu/scsusurvey](http://www.stcloudstate.edu/scsusurvey)

The SCSU Survey principal investigators are members of the Midwest Association of Public Opinion Research (M.A.P.O.R.) and the American Association of Public Opinion Research (A.A.P.O.R.) and subscribe to the code of ethics of the A.A.P.O.R.

REPORT OVERVIEW

- - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS - -

The SCSU Survey is pleased to present this report to the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The report details the survey used to examine citizen views toward Ranked Choice Voting, the survey constructed to gather office candidate views toward RCV and the survey used to obtain views how election judge thought the RCV process functioned for the 2009 municipal election.

In terms of city residents, the SCSU Survey surveyed 1,210 residents. Of those, 683 voted in the November 2009 municipal election and experienced RCV first hand. The remaining respondents (521) were registered voters but did not vote in the election. Respondents were contacted via both land (n=941) and cell phone (n=270) lines. The response rate was 19.1 percent and the cooperation rate was 79.3 percent.

Key findings from the survey of voters show:

- The overwhelming majority of voters voted in person, not absentee. Gender makes no difference in how respondents voted but younger voters were much more likely to vote absentee than older voters, as were less formally educated voters and voters of color. Although income is a determining factor, no real pattern emerges. Lower income, middle income and upper income voters voted in person and absentee.
- Most voters---8 of 10---knew they would be asked to rank their vote choices. Gender was not an important factor but older voters were more likely to know about RCV in advance of Election Day than younger voter, as were more formally educated voters, white voters and wealthier voters.
- When asked about how voters learned about ranked choice voting, Table 4 shows many options were available to respondents but the most often cited sources of RCV information were the newspapers and television news. Mailed brochures, friends and neighbors and radio news were also important but not used as much. Least likely to have been used was the City Website and the door to door information campaign.
- For most voters (see table 5), they reported they understood how RCV functions perfectly well or fairly well. Gender has no influence on understanding how RCV functions. Older and middle aged individuals seem to understand less than younger voters. The greater the number of years of formal education, the better understanding of how RCV functions is reported. Persons of Color are more likely to understand how RCV functions better than White voters. Findings regarding income are mixed. Lower income family voters were more likely to perfectly understand how RCV functions but higher income family voters were more likely to understand how RCV functions fairly well.

- In order to learn from voters how they viewed help from the election judges, we asked how helpful were the judges explaining how votes could be cast. Table 6 shows that we found that 40 percent found judges very helpful and a bit less, 38 percent, found the judges somewhat helpful. Overall, most voters, in other words, found judges helpful. Older, better educated, wealthier, and persons of color found the judges more helpful than other categories of voters.
- Of particular interest was whether voters actually ranked candidates. We found that 60 percent (see table 7) of the voters ranked some candidates. Women seemed more likely to rank candidates, as were older voters, better educated voters, white voters and wealthier voters.
- Of those that ranked candidates, we followed up and asked about the difficulty of ranking choices. Almost all voters who ranked their vote choices (see table 8), found it simple to rank choices. We found no differences across any of the demographic factors.
- We also asked the voters who did not rank candidates why they did not rank the candidates. Table 9 shows that some voters made sophisticated decisions. The most frequent reason mentioned by these voters was that they didn't know enough about the candidates to rank them; other reasons for ranking included not finding candidates acceptable and wanting to give an advantage to favorite candidates. Other voters, who might be less sophisticated, noted that they will always pick one candidate and didn't know they could rank candidates or didn't understand how to rank candidates.
- Table 10 shows opinion of voters regarding their preference for RCV and a more traditional method of voting. The data makes clear that a plurality (41 percent) prefers RCV and about a quarter of the respondent voters prefer the traditional system of voting. For an equal number of respondent voters, however, it doesn't matter which system is used. Although we found no differences on gender, we did find that older voters prefer RCV compared to younger voters. We also found that respondent voters with more years of formal education prefer RCV than those with less years of formal education. Level of formal education and preference for traditional voting system is not as clear but the more years of education seems related to a preference to traditional voting. For those who didn't seem to care which method of voting is used, lesser years of education is more strongly related than for those with more years of education. White respondent voters seem more strongly prefer both RCV and traditional voting than persons of color whereas person of color respondent voters are strongly related to not particularly caring one way or the other. Generally, the greater ones family income, the stronger is the relationship with RCV and a preference for traditional voting than not caring which method is used.
- For those respondents who preferred traditional voting, we followed up to determine if the current time delay in announcing the vote decision was a factor. Table 11 shows that almost seven of ten respondents would not change their view of RCV. Males are stronger in this view, as are younger voters.

- Table 12 shows that eight of ten respondent voters are very confident or confident that votes will be counted accurately using RCV. Of the voters, we found general confidence of accuracy increases with age and formal education and income. White respondent voters are more likely to be very confident of accurate counting compared to voters of color who are more confident. As family income increases, so does general confidence that votes will be counted accurately.
- Should RCV be used in the future? Table 13 shows that of the respondent voters, almost six of ten voters responded yes. We found no particular pattern for gender differences but did for age, education and income. Older voters are more strongly related to preferring RCV in used in the future, as are respondents with greater levels of education. The pattern for income groups is less clear but lower income voters have an association with preferring RCV than all other categories.
- Finally, we asked what respondent views toward RCV is if the election resulted in a different result than using traditional primary and general election processes. We found that a bare majority still prefer RCV because it is more accurate and a quarter prefers the more traditional election system. The older the voter, the stronger the relationship is age and preference with RCV, where as younger voters prefer traditional voting. Income, interestingly, shows that younger and older voters prefer RCV than middle aged individuals. Although income has a significant relationship with RCV vs. traditional voting, the pattern is not clear but respondent voters in the \$75-\$100,000 income range show the strongest relationship.

Key findings from the survey of registered voters who did not vote shows:

- In addition to gathering opinion on RCV, we first sought to find why registered voters didn't vote. Table 15 shows a plurality are regular voters but didn't vote. About one-third is occasional voters and another one-third, never vote. Following up, table 16 shows that the single one reason for not voting was lack of time. Others forgot about the election and simply don't care to vote in municipal elections. Younger voters were more likely to lack time, as were lower educated voters, person of color and middle income voters as their reason to not vote;
- Although almost evenly split, a slim majority (50% to 45%), of these respondents knew RCV would be used this election. Females, more than males, knew about the RCV method to be used this year, as did older respondents, those with more years of formal education, white voters and those with higher levels of family income;
- Of those that knew the election would use RCV, we asked how they learned about RCV. The most often reasons stated by the respondents were newspapers and television news. Following those was radio news and mailed brochures. The City website and door to door information came in last;
- We also asked, based on what they had learned, whether they thought the voting process would be difficult or simple. A majority noted they thought it would be simple. Higher income and higher education levels are related to this opinion;

- Table 20 shows that of these respondents, when asked if they prefer RCV or traditional voting, the plurality (39%) said it doesn't matter. Twenty seven percent, compared to 25 percent, noted they prefer traditional voting systems. Middle age respondents prefer RCV than do other age groups. Of those who prefer traditional voting, the strongest relationship is with older respondents. Interestingly, higher educational attainment has a stronger relationship with preferring RCV whereas high school graduates are strongly related to preferring traditional voting. White voters lean more toward RCV and persons of Color are more related to traditional voting systems. We also found that higher income respondents are more related to preferring RCV whereas middle income respondents have a stronger relationship with preferring traditional voting systems;
- Table 21 shows the "fairness" question about RCV. For these respondents, the majority think RCV is fair but only one of ten voters say RCV as very fair. Although differences exist among the many categories of demographic indicators, no clear trend is obvious;
- Table 22 shows a similar pattern. The majority, but a slim majority, are confident votes will be counted accurately using RCV. Yet, almost seven of ten respondents are very confident and confident in the accuracy of elections using RCV. Males are slightly more confident than female respondents, as are younger respondents, those with lower levels of formal education and family income;
- Table 23 shows the majority of respondents think RCV should be used in the future. But, a sizable minority, 23 percent just don't know and approximately the same percentages of respondents do not think RCV should be used in the future;
- Those who said they did not think RCV should be used in the future or didn't know were asked if there weren't time delays in announcing winners of the election would that change their minds. A plurality said, no. About a third said, yes and a quarter said, don't know. These results are found in table 24; and,
- Finally, we asked if the respondents are likely to vote in future Minneapolis municipal elections. Table 25 shows that almost three-fourths are very likely to likely to vote in future elections. But, approximately one-fourth noted they probably are not likely or not at all likely to vote in future Minneapolis municipal elections.

The survey of election judges was intended to seek information on the structure of the voting process, so we asked about judge training, whether voters were knowledgeable about RCV process, and how much time compared to traditional voting was consumed.

Key findings from this survey shows:

- Almost all respondent judges (93%) felt their training for working a ranked choice vote election was excellent or pretty good. The majority felt it was pretty good (table 26);
- When the judges were asked if voters were very knowledgeable or knowledgeable about RCV when they arrived to vote, seven of ten said yes. Importantly, the judges

noted that a quarter of the voters were not very knowledgeable or not at all knowledgeable (table 27);

- Interestingly, judges were almost evenly split when asked if voters need more time to complete ranked choice ballots, with 40 percent thinking more time was need and 45 percent not (table 29);
- When asked why voters needed more time, about a quarter of the judges said that voters needed to learn a new way of voting and 15 percent said that ranked choice voting generally takes more time and about three in ten judges said both factors were in play (table 30);
- Although RCV may take more time, the judges overwhelmingly (94 percent) said they were able to help the voters and answer questions about RCV and were able to do their other duties (table 31); and,
- Almost one-half of the questions the judges received were about how to file out ballots and far less were about how votes were going to be counted (11%), but a quarter of voters asked about both issues (table 32).

The survey of candidates was intended to determine whether candidates for office saw RCV as an advantage to their candidacy, was it fair and whether it should be used in the future.

Key findings from this survey shows:

- Six of ten respondent candidates think RCV should be used in future elections (table 42);
- Similarly, six of ten respondent candidates report they prefer RCV to traditional methods of voting (table 39) but more, 70 percent, see RCV as very fair to a fair way to count votes (table 41);
- 70 percent of the respondent candidates reported they are very confident to confident votes will be counted accurately (table 38);
- Almost one-half of the candidates thought RCV positively impacted their campaigns (table 34) but more, 60 percent, saw it as advantage to candidacy (table 35);
- One-third of the candidates saw RCV as an advantage to political party (table 36); and,
- One-half of the candidates adjusted their campaign strategy due to RCV (table 37).

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2027</u>	<u>2029</u>
Current System Primary & General	\$ 60,991.42	\$ 235,000.00	\$ 101,402.00	\$ 180,000.00	\$ 110,924.00	\$ 115,046.00	\$ 119,170.00	\$ 123,298.00
RCV Estimate			\$ 169,255.88		\$ 169,724.49	\$ 164,905.33	\$ 169,869.27	\$ 171,928.72
Difference			\$ (67,853.88)		\$ (58,800.49)	\$ (49,859.33)	\$ (50,699.27)	\$ (48,630.72)
	% increase in budget		.17%		.15%	.12%	.13%	.12%
	\$ increase in annual taxes		\$2		\$2	\$2	\$2	\$2
	for home of \$378,500							

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2027</u>	<u>2029</u>
Current System General	\$ 60,991.42	\$ 63,192.00	\$ 65,252.00	\$ 67,313.00	\$ 69,375.00	\$ 71,439.00
RCV Estimate		\$ 169,255.88	\$ 169,724.49	\$ 164,905.33	\$ 169,869.27	\$ 171,928.72
Difference		\$ (106,063.88)	\$ (104,472.49)	\$ (97,592.33)	\$ (100,494.27)	\$ (100,489.72)
	% increase in budget		.27%	.26%	.24%	.25%
	\$ increase in annual taxes		\$4	\$4	\$3	\$4
	for home of \$378,500					

Notes:

1. The above is a summary of detailed costs shown on the last two pages of this attachment,
2. Even-year costs are provided as a basis of comparison. Costs are higher in 2020 than 2022 because of the presidential primary.
3. Numbers shown for % increase in budget and \$ increase in annual taxes are based on the 2020 budget, levy and averaged-value home. They may not be accurate for future years and are provided for information only.

Corrine Heine

From: Linda & Michael Halley <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, July 2, 2020 5:16 PM
To: Corrine Heine
Subject: Ranked Choice Voting

Greetings Minnetonka Charter Commission,

Thank you for continuing to work on the issue of Ranked Choice Voting.
We encourage you complete your work so the voters can decide this issue in November.

We believe that 4% turnout primaries are unacceptable and support RCV because:

1. It saves taxpayer dollars (eliminates low-turnout primaries)
2. It gives more voter choice with more diverse candidates (no candidate is weeded out prematurely)
3. It is more inclusive (it encourages candidates to reach out to more people)
4. It ensures spoiler-free elections (people are able to support their favorite candidate without worrying they are throwing away their vote).
5. It is an easy to use system.

These facts far outweigh any of the concerns that have been discussed regarding RCV.

We feel that the city of Minnetonka has done a good job in many areas, but we should not become complacent.
We can always strive to be even better.

Making our elections easier, less expensive and more inclusive seems like a good goal to us and the voters should have the opportunity to make this decision.

We are long time (45 years) residents of Minnetonka who raised our 3 children here ~ all graduates of Hopkins High School.

One of our children, a teacher and her family reside here now as well. We have always been proud to call Minnetonka our home and have voted in every election. We hope to continue living and voting here after retirement as well.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Mike and Linda Halley
18610 Clear View Drive
Minnetonka MN 55345

Corrine Heine

From: David Haeg <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, July 6, 2020 11:05 AM
To: Brad Wiersum; Dick Allendorf; Karen Anderson; John Cheleen; David Larson; John Northrup; Terry Schneider; Linnea Sodergren; LuAnn Tolliver; Corrine Heine
Cc: Barb Westmoreland
Subject: The Problems RCV Solves (please read)

Dear Charter Commission Members,

Please read this brief letter in full, as it is extremely relevant to the next Charter Commission meeting, in which you will be discussing the “problems RCV is intended to solve”. Because we are the de facto representatives for the group of residents which set this entire process in motion, your understanding of the problems we’ve identified will be paramount.

Ranked Choice Voting, by its inherent nature, solves the two most obvious problems in our Minnetonka City Council Elections. While there have been many other problems discussed, these two problems have been the focus of our advocacy since the beginning of our effort, and have been front-and-center on our website and in our presentations and outreach for nearly 2 years.

Problem #1: We have primary elections with extremely low and unrepresentative turnout - only 4% of registered voters participate.

Solution: Ranked Choice Voting eliminates the costly, low-turnout and unrepresentative primary election, and moves all candidates to the November ballot, when turnout is highest and most representative of our community, and yields a winner supported by a majority. It increases “effective voter participation”, since all November election voters have a more complete voice in the entire process. You may not think this is an important matter, since primary elections do not occur during every election cycle. But if you tell the average Minnetonka resident that we hold elections that engage only 4% of voters, they would be shocked and disappointed.

Problem #2: We have special elections that occur on a single day. This typically draws a slightly larger field of candidates and results in plurality winners, not majority winners, creating the potential to elect someone with a very small share of the vote.

Solution: Ranked Choice Voting allows for multiple candidates on a single ballot and still yields a winner supported by a majority. Even those who don’t like RCV largely agree that these single day elections are problematic, and several councilmembers cited their flawed nature as a key reason for appointing a councilmember in 2019 instead of holding a special election.

We undertook this effort because we believed that these two problems alone are sufficient reasons to reform our system. The nature of how RCV works unequivocally solves these problems - this is a fact, like $1+1=2$. But there are also other problems that Ranked Choice Voting may also help to solve - these are the whipped cream and cherries on top of the ice cream.

Problem #3: Too few candidates running. Many elections leave voters with few or no choices, giving voters less reason to participate in elections and engage with the community during the campaigns.

Solution: By ending our primary elections and holding a single election day in November with Ranked Choice Voting, it would make it simpler for more candidates to run and give them more time to campaign, instead of

being eliminated in a low-turnout primary election before most voters are paying attention. Indeed, the higher number of candidates in our previous single day special elections shows that removing the barrier of the primary election and having elections on a single day will draw more candidates.

Problem #4: Low voter turnout. For a city with very high participation in state and national elections, our 15% November election turnout is disappointing, and contributes to a decreasing sense of community disengagement.

Solution: It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that uncompetitive elections will attract fewer voters than competitive ones. By eliminating our primaries and having a single November election day, our elections will likely have more candidates - which will result in more campaigning, more resident engagement, and greater awareness of the upcoming election. While the overall data showing an increase in turnout under Ranked Choice Voting turnout is mixed, the most relevant data, from Minneapolis and St. Louis Park, shows a significant increase in voter turnout - which was confirmed by the city clerks of those cities.

Problem #5: The risk of negativity in our city council campaigns.

Solution: While many have pointed out, correctly, that our city council elections have traditionally been generally positive, it is impossible to ignore the increasingly polarized and caustic nature of politics, and how voter perceptions of negativity undermine faith in government. The mechanics of how RCV requires candidates to compete for a majority of votes and appeal to people outside their core supporter group makes it counterproductive to campaign negatively. It's said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and proactively adopting a voting system that disincentivizes negativity is simply a responsible thing to do.

Thank you for your efforts to study this issue,
Barb Westmoreland and David Haeg