

# Memorandum

**REPORT TO:** City Commission

**FROM:** Mike Maas, City Clerk  
Jon Henderson, Assistant City Manager  
Chuck Winn, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** A Resolution Notifying Gallatin County of Mail Ballot Election with Return Costs Paid for November 2025 General Election

**MEETING DATE:** June 10, 2025

**AGENDA ITEM TYPE:** Resolution

**RECOMMENDATION:** Adopt a Resolution Notifying Gallatin County of Mail Ballot Election with Return Costs Paid for November 2025 General Election.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:** 1.2 Community Engagement: Broaden and deepen engagement of the community in city government, innovating methods for inviting input from the community and stakeholders.

**BACKGROUND:** The 2025 municipal election includes the election of a Mayor, two Commissioners, and a City Judge. Due to changes from the Legislature this year with [HB207](#), candidate filing had some changes to the established timelines. Per the Gallatin County Elections Manager:  
"...effective upon signing by the Governor on May 12th, the candidate filing period for municipal nonpartisan elections has been changed to fall between 105-90 days before the election. For the upcoming September 9th Municipal Primary, this bill has changed the candidate filing period window to May 27-June 11.  
Candidates who have already filed do not need to refile for this election. Those who had filed before the May 12th bill passage were accepted on the date that they filed. The few candidates who fall between May 12th and May 27th will not be formally accepted by our office until May 27th to align with this new law change."

The City Commission has historically in recent elections paid return postage for the municipal election. The indication is that the Gallatin County will not have a ballot issue and therefore, full costs for this election will be the responsibility of the City of Bozeman.

**City Manager's Recommendation:** The City Manager recommends holding a mail ballot election with return postage paid.

**Primary Election:** According to Gallatin County Election Office, a primary

election will occur if there are three candidates in two or more contests, or five candidates in any contest. If this occurs, the primary election will be held September 9, 2023.

**General Election:** The general election will be held on November 4, 2025.

### **Mail Ballot Elections**

In a mail ballot election, only active registered voters are mailed a ballot. This is according to Section 13-19-207, Montana Code Annotated.

**13-19-207. When materials to be mailed.** (1) Except as provided in 13-13-205(2) and subsection (2) of this section, for any election conducted by mail, ballots must be mailed no sooner than the 20th day and no later than the 15th day before election day.

(2) (a) All ballots mailed to electors on the active list and the provisionally registered list must be mailed the same day.

(b) At any time before noon on the day before election day, a ballot may be mailed or, on request, provided in person at the election administrator's office to:

(i) an elector on the inactive list after the elector reactivates the elector's registration as provided in 13-2-222; or

(ii) an individual who registers under the late registration option provided for in 13-2-304.

(c) An elector on the inactive list shall vote at the election administrator's office on election day if the elector reactivates the elector's registration after noon on the day before election day.

(d) An elector who registers pursuant to 13-2-304 on election day or on the day before election day must receive the ballot and vote it at the election administrator's office.

At this time there are 42,283 active voters. Based on \$.73 per piece of potential return postage cost, per the Gallatin County Election Department potential return postage costs are as follows:

- Using an overestimate high end of return rates for Bozeman Municipal Elections 50%
- For 42,283 active voters and an estimated 800 new registrations would amount to 21,542 returned ballots.
- At \$.73 per piece, this cost would amount to approximately \$15,725.30.

In 2023, the costs for election were:

- Ballots \$11,835.75
- Advertising \$599.80
- Postage \$18,893.53 (including Manhattan and West Yellowstone)
- Mailing \$9,568.36
- Materials \$8,381.50
- Personnel \$9,666.37

**Total: \$58,945.31**

Based on these anticipated costs, the total cost of the Municipal Election will be approximately \$80,000. If a primary election is required, these costs will increase.

### **Polling Place Elections**

A polling place election is approximately twice as costly as a mail ballot. The number of ballots the County Election Department uses for a polling place election is larger than a mail ballot election. All the annual absentee voters are mailed a ballot but a larger number has to be used for a base to figure the number of ballots to be printed since there is no way to know how many voters will show up at the polls. In addition, the setup charges for a polling place election are higher.

### **Summary**

If the City Commission opts to move forward with a mail ballot election for 2025, the City Clerk must submit a Resolution to the Gallatin County Election Department no later than June 11, 2025.

**UNRESOLVED ISSUES:** The City must make its determination prior to knowing whether a primary election is required.

**ALTERNATIVES:** As directed by the City Commission.

**FISCAL EFFECTS:** The City Manager's Recommended Budget contains \$160,000 for the conduct of the Municipal Election.

Attachments:

[Resolution Mail Ballots 2025.docx](#)

Report compiled on: June 3, 2025