

## **COUNCIL PRESENTATION MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** John Nephew, Councilmember  
**DATE:** For the October 26, 2009 Regular Council Meeting  
**RE:** Item H1, Even Year Elections

### **Background**

In the October 2009 city newsletter, Councilmember Hjelle wrote:

I regret never pushing for “even year” City elections. Our current system of “odd year” elections favor the Unions and special interest groups that control a few motivated partisans that sway the election process. The current system also costs taxpayers extra money.

In the past, more government entities, such as the local school districts, also had odd-year elections and thus shared the costs. However, in the district that covers the largest part of Maplewood – ISD 622, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale – switched to even-year elections starting in the last election cycle. If we too switched to even-year elections, we might realize savings for our taxpayers compared to the cost of primary and general elections that the city now pays for entirely in most of its precincts.

While recent city elections have seen increasing turnout, it still remains much lower than even-year election turnout when state-wide and federal candidates are on the ballot. Switching to even year elections could thus mean more participation in city elections.

These arguments favor even-year elections. On the other hand, one might be concerned that even-year voters might not take as much time to familiarize themselves with city candidates and issues. One might also be concerned that a larger universe of likely even-year voters would increase the cost for candidates to run effective campaigns.

I'm not yet sold on the idea of even-year elections, but I'm interested in learning more, especially if taxpayer money could be saved by a switch.

### **Requested Action**

If the council is willing to have a discussion of this issue, I request that we direct staff to bring us an agenda report about a possible switch to even-year elections. Such a report would include:

- Information on the cost of elections; how that cost is currently borne, and how it would change with even-year elections
- Other pros and cons (e.g., odd-year elections provide a lower-key opportunity for training and practice of new election judges)
- Statutory requirements and procedures for changing from odd- to even-year city elections

With that information, we would be able to have an informed discussion about whether a move to even-year elections would be in the best interests of the City of Maplewood.