

Item Title: Acceptance and Appropriation of Grant Funds to Support the November 2020 General Election

Specific Action Requested:
That the Board of Commissioners:

- 1. Accepts and appropriates an additional allocation of \$1,000,000 of revenues and expenditures into the Grants and Donation Fund from the Center for Tech and Civic Life to prepare for and respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for 2020 elections related matters; and**
- 2. Authorizes the County Manager to execute a grant agreement with the Center for Tech and Civic Life, subject to terms and conditions acceptable to the County Attorney.**

Item Summary:

Purpose: In accordance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the Board of Commissioners must approve all amendments that increase the budget for a fund.

Background: As with many other urban areas responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, Wake County faces challenges carrying out a number of mandated services in a safe and effective manner, including the November 2020 general election. Earlier this summer, the County appropriated approximately \$885,000 to support the anticipated additional costs associated with conducting the 2020 general election. The Board of Commissioners has also supported the elections process through increased hourly wages for workers and other policy changes. This additional grant from the Center for Tech and Civic Life will help the County cover costs associated with additional staffing, PPE, cleaning, and facility modifications.

Board Goal: This action supports mandated County services, to fund costs associated with elections.

Fiscal Impact: This agreement provides up to \$1,000,000 to support staffing and other additional costs associated with carrying out mandated elections services. There are no matching funds requirement. The funds will be appropriated in the Grants and Donations Fund.

Additional Information:

For the general election, the number of total registered voters is approximately 765,000 (as of August 1, 2020), casting ballots split between the modes of voting.

The County anticipates absentee-by-mail turnout to be somewhere around 306,000 (or up to 40% of registered voters). Automation will be critical to efficiently and accurately manage ballot envelopes and ballots in the weeks leading up to Election Day and in the canvassing process afterwards.

To promote absentee by mail and early voting ahead of the November election, the NC State Board of Elections is planning a mailing to every North Carolina household in late September. As with any election, the Wake County Board of Elections works with the County's Communications Department to provide uniform communications to the entire community throughout the voting period.

Wake County plans to have 20 full-time early voting locations. These will be sufficiently staffed to limit worker turnover, handle a surge in voters before polls open, and manage sites in a pandemic environment.

Wake County is committed to working to ensure polling places are fully staffed on election day. In the General Election on November 3, we are planning to have approximately 206 in-person polling locations that will be staffed with approximately 2,400 poll workers.

Earlier this summer, the County appropriated approximately \$885,000 in funding from state Emergency Management Performance Grants and the County's allocation of Help America Vote Act funds to support anticipated additional costs associated with conducting the 2020 general election. Since that time, the State Board of Elections has notified local boards of elections of other grant opportunities, including the grant considered in this agenda item.

These grant funds will help the County cover costs associated with additional staffing, PPE, cleaning, and facility modifications.

Attachments:

1. Draft Funding Agreement
2. Budget Memo: Grants and Donations Fund