TO**:** Anoka County Board of Commissioners and Staff

FROM: Anoka County Election Integrity Team (ACEIT)

DATE: June 27, 2023

SUBJECT**:** Request to Hand Count Select 2023 Elections

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**Introduction:**

We are requesting that the Anoka County Commissioners and their Elections Team collaborate with the responsible city and/or school board clerks and staff to implement a hand count process for the following upcoming November 7, 2023 elections of 2 Mayors, 5 City Council Members, and 12 School Board Members:

* City of Circle Pines Mayor (1)
* City of Circle Pines Council Members (3)
* City of Lino Lakes Mayor (1)
* City of Lino Lakes Council Members (2)
* Anoka-Hennepin Independent School District No. 11 School Board Members (3)
* Columbia Heights Public Schools Independent School District No. 13 School Board Members (1)
* Fridley Independent School District No. 14 School Board Members (4)
* Spring Lake Park Independent School District No. 16 School Board Members (4)

**Considerations:**

* ***Hand counting of elections is a tabulation method provided for*** by Minnesota Statute and supported in our state, county, city, township, and school board election guides.
  + Public Counting [Sec. 204C.19 MN Statutes](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/204C.19)
  + Minnesota Election Guides [Minnesota Secretary Of State - Election Guides](https://www.sos.state.mn.us/election-administration-campaigns/election-administration/election-guides/)
  + Counties [County Election Administrator Guide (state.mn.us)](https://www.sos.state.mn.us/media/4251/county-election-administration-guide.pdf)
  + Cities [City Clerk Election Guide (state.mn.us)](https://www.sos.state.mn.us/media/2310/city-clerk-election-guide.pdf)
  + Townships [Town Clerk Election guide (state.mn.us)](https://www.sos.state.mn.us/media/2311/town-clerk-election-guide.pdf)
  + School Districts [School District Election Guide (state.mn.us)](https://www.sos.state.mn.us/media/3287/school-district-election-guide.pdf)

NOTE: Anoka County has Joint Powers Agreements (JPAs) with 21 cities and 9 school districts for elections. The agreements are generally the same, with just a few differences. These JPAs do not rule out a hand count.

* Hand counting ***engages the citizens*** of each precinct in the election process. And while hand counting requires more citizen participation for timely tabulation (i.e. sort, stack, count), citizen interest has already been voiced and many civic groups are eager to support the county, cities, and school boards in securing the necessary support.
* Hand counting ***promotes transparency*** of vote tabulation and results, which would be a ***positive offset*** to the recent decision by the State to eliminate public access to the constitutional Cast Vote Records.
* Hand counting requires ***less technology devices*** and ***eliminates digital/access risks*** to tabulation inaccuracies.
* Hand counting ***eliminates significant time and steps as well as cost*** through:
  + Elimination of hardware and software purchases, maintenance, and upgrades
  + Elimination of system programming
  + Elimination of PAT – Public Accuracy Test
  + Elimination of PER – Post Election Review
  + Elimination of storage of hardware/machines/devices
* ***Now is the time***….odd-year elections typically have a lower voter-turnout rate and, thus, would be a lower risk time to reinstitute a hand count process.
* Reinstituting hand counting could be done as a replacement to system tabulation or could be done in parallel to system tabulation.

**Conclusions/Requests:**

* Hand counting ballots is a viable process used elsewhere across our state, nation, and world; and it is provided for in our Minnesota statutes.
* Hand counting is simpler, has fewer security vulnerabilities, is a remedy to the public’s concerns regarding transparency of tabulation. It engages citizens in process, which also promotes public confidence.
* We are requesting that the Anoka County Commissioners and their staff collaborate with the responsible city and school board clerks and staff to implement a hand count process for the November 7, 2023 elections occurring within Anoka County.