

Submitted July 2, 2022

I write to express comments regarding the Adopting Ranked Choice Voting item on your July 5, 2022 meeting agenda.

There are both different types of ranked choice voting (RCV), and different ways of counting votes within various versions of RCV. However, almost all cities and counties in the United States which use RCV use a version called instant run off voting, in which the winning candidate is ultimately required to get 50% +1 of the vote.

The language drafted by the county attorney reads: "No later than 2026, and except as provided in section 4.50 for elections to fill a vacancy, all elective county officers will be elected at the general election using ranked choice voting. Ranked choice voting means an election method in which electors rank candidates for an office in order of electors' preferences and ballots may be counted in rounds."

I understand that there is no further language specifying which type of ranked choice voting and which method of counting votes are to be used. If correct, that lack of specificity leaves a lot up to elections officials and others as to what version of ranked choice voting method is to be used as well as how votes are to be counted, which is sure to lead to unnecessary conflict.

Instant runoff ranked choice voting, according to FairVote, a pro-RCV organization, means:

"If a candidate receives more than half of the first choices in races where voters elect one winner, that candidate wins, just like in a single-choice election. However, if there is no majority winner after counting first choices, the race is decided by an "instant runoff." The candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and voters who picked that candidate as 'number 1' will have their votes count for their next choice. This process continues until there's a majority winner, or a candidate won with more than half of the vote."

(see https://www.fairvote.org/rcv#where_is_ranked_choice_voting_used)

Recommendation: Request a redraft of the charter language so that the method of RCV voting to be used is clarified, such as the following language: "Ranked choice voting means instant runoff ranked choice voting in which electors rank candidates for an office in order of electors' preferences. If there is no majority winner after counting first choices, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and voters who picked that candidate as their first choice will have their votes count for their next choice. This process continues until there is candidate with a total vote of at least 50% +1."

In addition, ranked choice voting should only apply in elections in which there are three or more candidates running for a single seat, as there is no reason to use RCV if only two persons are running for one seat.

Submitted by Bob Weinstein