

Memo

Date: April 23, 2010
To: City Council
From: Peggy Thomsen, Councilmember
Subject: Public Financing of Campaigns

Recommendation: 1) In the November 2010 election, that the Albany City Council approve the incentive of public financing of a candidate statement above the \$80 charge for any candidate who agrees to limit his/her campaign expenditures to a total of \$.70 per registered voter, and 2) that the Albany City Council put a measure on the November 2010 ballot to give voters a choice of whether and how to continue to provide public financing of ballot statements in future elections.

Background:

In 2009 the City Council received a report from the council's Ad Hoc Committee on Campaign Finance Reform. The committee informed the council that during their research they discovered that the taxpayers of Albany have been financing through the city's general fund candidates' statements above the approximate \$80 the city charges candidates. The public financing amounts to approximately \$525 per candidate; the total general fund expenditure for the 2008 election was between \$5,000-\$6,000.

Previously, the City Council directed the Social and Economic Justice Committee to make recommendations regarding campaign finance reform. The committee recommended to the council that the council provide incentives to candidates who accept a limit on campaign expenditures equal to \$.70 per registered voters.

The Future:

Since the financing of the campaign statements is paid for by taxpayers, the recommendation is that voters be given the choice of whether and how to finance the campaign statements at the November 2010 election. The measure may ask the following:

Should the taxpayers of Albany:

- 1) Fund the campaign statements above the \$80 threshold of all candidates for elective office in the city of Albany who agree to limit campaign expenditures to \$.70 per registered voter?
- 2) Fund the campaign statements above the \$80 threshold of candidates for elective city offices in the city of Albany who agree to limit campaign expenditures to \$.70 per registered voter?
- 3) Fund the campaign statements above the \$80 threshold of all candidates for elective office in the city of Albany?

- 4) Fund the campaign statements above the \$80 threshold of all candidates for elective city offices in the city of Albany?
- 5) Provide no public funding for campaign statements of candidates for elective offices in the city of Albany?

The City Council may consider directing the Charter Review Committee to discuss and make recommendations about the ballot measure and language.

There are currently 9,887 registered voters in Albany, as of January 5, 2010; a campaign expenditure limit of \$.70 per voter x 9,887 voters = \$6,920.90.

Financial Impact:

Depending on the number of candidates in a given election and the total costs of the campaign statements, the city may incur costs of approximately \$3,000-10,000 per election.