

Memo

Date: June 14, 2010
To: City Council
From: Peggy Thomsen, Council Member
Subject: Public Financing of Campaigns

Recommendation: 1) That the Albany City Council take action on providing or not providing public financing of city and school district candidate statements and enumerating the conditions if public financing is selected for the 2010 election and 2) that the Albany City Council put an advisory measure on the November 2010 ballot asking voters to advise the council about city funding of candidate statements in future elections.

Background:

At the May 3, 2010, meeting the city council discussed public financing of city and school district candidate statements. Council members requested further information, which staff provided at the June 7, 2010, meeting.

The first recommendation provides for city council action on whether and under what conditions to provide or not provide public financing of candidate statements for the 2010 election. The second recommendation offers voters the opportunity to advise the council on campaign statement funding in the future.

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 candidates statements in 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 should ask the following:

Should the taxpayers of Albany:

- 1) Fund the campaign statements above the \$80 threshold of all city and school district 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 only 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 city and school district 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 only 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.

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.