Adam A. Donaldson @adamadonaldson

May 7, 2024 • 106 tweets • adamadonaldson/status/1787900906769351096

Coming up at 2 pm, it's this month's Committee of the Whole meeting at city council. The agenda:

Committee of the Whole Preview – What's on the Agenda for the May 7…
Committee of the Whole this May will have what's expected to be one of the spiciest debates of the term, and it's all about how the next city council will be elected. The staff from the…

https://guelphpolitico.ca/2024/04/26/committee-of-the-whole-preview-whats-on-the-age…

There was a closed session:
1) Service Rationalization Review – Centralization of Back-Office Support Functions - Follow Up Review
2) 1859 Victoria Road South – Ontario Land Tribunal Update , 2024-181.

Direction was given to staff on both counts.

Mayor Guthrie has called the open meeting to order.

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof? None.

This month's staff recognitions:

Leadership Academy
Supervisors and Managers Program

Cohort 3 Participants
Jeff Beaton
Viva Batista
Marcus Bell
Evan Bonnah-Hawkes
Laura Catalano-Bragues
Kyle Gagne
Stacey Hare
Alex Jaworiwsky
Luke Jefferson
Ashley Kassian
Jeremy Laur
Glen Lombard
Patty Pizziola
Kristin Pressey
Peggy Robertson

- Courses
- Triad work
- Pre / Post course work
- Capstone Project, Briefing note, Presentation to ET

Leadership Academy
Lead • Inspire • Engage

Guelph

LEAN GREEN BELT
Ashley Kassian
Business Licensing Approval Process

Service Area
Public Services

Sponsor
Doug Godfrey, GM

DCAO
Colleen Clack-Bush

Core Team
Rebecca Smith
Hannah Street
Claire Collinson
Osiris Gracias
Sandra Lazdowski

Improvement Achieved
Reduced the average number of business days to complete the fire inspection process for new businesses by 94 per cent

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Guelph

LEAN GREEN BELT
Harjeet Sehgal
Greening Parks Small Equipment Fleet

Service Area
Public Services

Sponsor
Gene Matthews, GM

DCAO
Colleen Clack-Bush

Core Team
Lee Merner
Dave Boehmer
Brad Bauman
Andrea Harris
Victor Silveira
Ed Wierstra
Brian Scott

Improvement Achieved
Increased the Parks department small electric hand tools/equipment by 100 per cent from six per cent to 12 per cent of total Parks equipment fleet

LEAN GREEN BELT

Amarjit Singh

Improving Asset Data Completeness

Service Area
IDE

Sponsor
Adam Fisher, GM
Lily Yan (previous)
Greg Clark (previous)

DCAO
Jayne Holmes

Core Team
Kevin Nelson
Babawale Oke
Patrick Cole
Spencer Stroszka-Li
Bob Waechter

Improvement Achieved
Amarjit's project resulted in an increase in the asset critical data field completion rate from 43.1 per cent to 78.7 per cent within the sample

Recognitions continued:

LEAN GREEN BELT

Jennifer Burch

Improving the Work Order Management Process

Service Area
IDE

Sponsor
Wayne Galliher

DCAO
Jayne Holmes

Core Team
Mario Martinez
Marcus Bell
Kyle Gagne
Munshif Muccaram
Robert Page

Improvement Achieved
Seventy-one per cent of the work order management process steps achieved a maturity level of three or better, signifying a well-functioning process
(Prior score was 38 per cent)

LEAN GREEN BELT

Mathew Walden

Condition Inspection Process Improvement

Service Area
IDE

Sponsor
Reg Russwurm

DCAO
Jayne Holmes

Core Team
Tracey Lesage
Greg Rogers
Christopher West
Amanda Warne
Prasoon Adhikari
Adam Geldart

Improvement Achieved
Established a documented end-to-end condition inspection process along with an inspection result code action guide

LEAN GREEN BELT

Sharoon Patrick

Preventative Maintenance (PM) Process Improvement

Service Area
IDE

Sponsor
Tim Robertson

DCAO
Jayne Holmes

Core Team
Marcus Bell
Brad Kelloway
Dawn Hamilton

Improvement Achieved
100 per cent of the planning phase of the PM process within the Facilities, Water and Parks departments (for five assets) achieved a process maturity level of three or better

LEAN GREEN BELT

Janet Gerrath

JDE to Active Directory Process Improvement

Service Area
Corporate Services

Sponsor
Manjusha Pradhan

DCAO
Trevor Lee

Core Team
Amy Parker
Viva Batista
Kari Laursen

Improvement Achieved
Reduced high-impact incidents to 30.4 per cent (reduced by over 52 per cent)
Reduced high-risk incidents to 4.3 per cent (reduced by over 80 per cent)

On to council business! First item on the consent agenda: Ontario Health – Multi-Sector Service Accountability Agreement, Declaration of Compliance. This mostly applies to the Community Paramedicine program.

Recommendation:
That the Mayor be authorized to sign the Declaration of Compliance for the Ontario Health Multi-Sector Service Accountability Agreement for the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

Allt/Richardson move it and it's approved.

Chair Caron takes over for the one item here: 2026 Municipal Election Alternative Voting Methods and Accessible Voting Service Enhancements.

Stand by for...

Clerk O'Brien will present. Be begins with the 2021 council motion to investigation additional voting options, including the remote accessible vote option. He says that he and staff are here to give the best advice they can.

Jennifer Slater, Manager, Information, Privacy and Elections/Deputy City Clerk, takes over. Begins with the recommendation today:

Staff Recommendation

1. That Council approve free Guelph Transit service and free parking at Market Parkade on Election Day to support access and remove barriers to voting for the 2026 municipal and school board election.

2. That Council approve the use of vote tabulators in the 2026 municipal and school board election.

3. That Council approve the use of vote by mail and vote from home as the alternative voting methods for the 2026 municipal and school board election.

Slater says that this will uphold reliability and dependability while upholding the demands required of the Municipal Elections Act and are tested for safety, viability and risk.

After every election, staff gather feedback and she says that one of the things they heard was a request for an internet option. Staff investigated the options at comparator municipalities like K-W, Barrie and Burlington. Also looked to Toronto and Ottawa.

Community and Agency Stakeholders
Cdn Hearing Services
Community Living
Guelph Independent Living
Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Immigration Services Guelph Wellington
T2ACOI
Guelph Wellington Senior Association
A First Nations group who asked not to be named

Look at all this engagement with the AAC!

Engagement points with the AAC

April 18, 2023

- Engagement plan presentation

August 15, 2023

- Shared results from comparators and stakeholders

October 3, 2023

- Attempted workshop cancelled due to lack of quorum

November 14, 2023

- 2 Hour engagement workshop

December 19, 2023
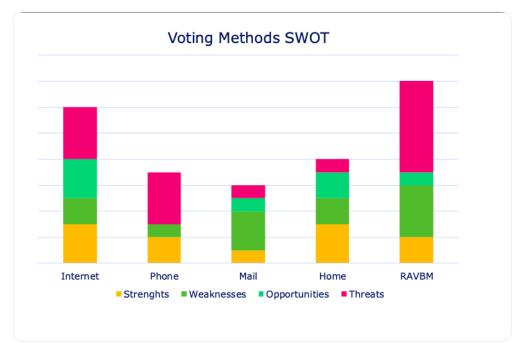
- AAC Recommendation

February 20, 2024

- Attempted to share staff recommendation

April 16, 2024

- Staff Recommendation shared with AAC

Slater notes that the AAC asked staff not to summerize their comments and direct council to check out the meeting videos. She notes that the AAC and staff are *not* on the same page when it comes to recommendations, which is okay, it's part of the process.

O'Brien takes over again to go thru risk analysis. First was principles of the Municipal Elections Act but also resourcing, staffing, budget, and past experiences. Also, the consideration from the AAC.

Voting Methods SWOT

Internet | Phone | Mail | Home | RAVBM

■ Strenghts ■ Weaknesses ■ Opportunities ■ Threats

O'Brien acknowledges that internet is the *most* accessible, but they cannot recommend it at this time due to the risk. Council can override, but Other factors including dependability and verifiability, need to be sure results cannot be called into question.

Tech concerns? A few.

Technology Concerns

2018 – Internet Voting, vendor bandwidth issues
- 51 Ontario municipalities impacted by system load issue[1]

2022 – Voters list database experienced temporary overload impacting many municipalities
- Guelph experienced this issue but voting location staff were able to continue to process elections, however this was not the case in other municipalities

Municipalities are increasingly targets for malicious actors looking to hold information for ransom
- Recent examples include the Toronto Public Library and the City of Hamilton

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[1] Online voting in 51 Ontario municipalities marred by election-day 'system load issue'

O'Brien says it would be ideal If there were some kind of internet voting standards in the province, and that's in progress right now, but it might not be ready by 2026. He also notes Dominion has pulled out of internet voting and said that paper ballots are the gold standard.

There's also a vender that's going though insolvancy right now, one used by a number of larger municipalities, and leaves a smaller number of available vendors. Control is essentially the issue.

O'Brien says issues related to bandwidth or servers crashing cannot be tested for. Subvendors can't be tested, and that creates blindspots. He says this impacts the availability and reliability of elections services.

So instead we get these enhancements:
• Accessible Voting Equipment
• Magnifying sheets
• Braille sleeves
• Masked/Scent-free location
• ASL translation
• City Hall Central Hub

O'Brien says again that they value the input of the AAC and throws it to Chair Root.

Root says that she's spoken a number of times on this for the last decade and notes that she hasn't been able to vote independently since 2014 (the last time there was internet voting). She's a digital accessibility specialist in terms of her day job.

She points to the 2 motions passed by the AAC:

AAC Recommendation
Passed December 19, 2023

In order to accommodate independent voting for all residents of Guelph, the AAC recommends that the city offer Online/Internet Voting, Remote Accessible Vote by Mail, Vote by Phone, Vote by Mail, and door-to-door vote from home options for upcoming municipal elections. The AAC feels that leaving any of these options out will leave some disabled voters without access to a confidential and independent way to mark their ballot. Providing all options will help the city meet their duty to accommodate those individuals under the Ontario Human Rights Code. Furthermore, the AAC would like to highlight the importance of specifically RAVBM and Internet voting as the most universally accessible options, which would solve significant service gaps that have been present in the past two elections for many disabled individuals who have not had access to independent voting.

AAC Recommendation
Passed April 16, 2024

The AAC does not support the staff recommendation that vote from home and vote by mail be offered as the only alternative voting methods for the 2026 election. We believe that this leaves insurmountable barriers to accessibility and denies many members of the community access to a confidential, independent, and verifiable voting method. Failure to provide a voting method to disabled individuals serves to disenfranchise a vulnerable population.

The AAC recommends that council move forward with online voting and remote accessible vote by mail as the main alternative voting options, with vote from home and vote by mail remaining available as supplementary accessible options.

Root says that the options presented by the clerks still leave many people unable to vote: people who can't hold a pen, need a digital reader, are visually impaired, and they also don't take into account the fact that some people have multiple disabilities.

She says making city hall a hub for accessibility is also a barrier, and as a result people are left to rely on others to mark their ballot, and violates their right to a private vote, which we're all entitled to. Root says a number of people in Guelph have been disenfranchised.

Root says that multiple AAC members have expressed "grave" human rights concerns. Notes that despite her level of engagement and digital literacy, there's something very wrong that she's still struggle to get voting access. A serious human rights violation.

As for security, Root notes the shift away from MPAC, but about malicious actors it's not noted as a concern with other voting methods, and there is a chance for malicious actors with lo-fi methods too. To ignore that is privilege.

Root notes that in 2017, clerks presented internet voting and that it's the clerks' office's job to mitigate risk. She also notes that there's no examples of substantiated claims of fraud. In 2022, more than half of Ontario's municipalities used it.

Questions for staff or Root? Goller asks about how internet voting offers more stability vs RAVBM. Root says AAC believes both are required b/c they both offer access, but internet does address most service gaps.

On recounts, Root says that happens when they think a tally has been done wrong, you can do internet recounts, but they would just be recounting the same numbers. Recounts don't mitigate fraud, recounts don't catch people stuffing a ballot box.

Goller asks for numbers, internet vs RAVBM. Root says she doesn't know, but RAVBM was presented after multiple conversations with staff and making an alternative to internet available. Not sure anyone can know the answer.

O'Brien adds that the federal election act has different nuances, and that the MEA requires a recount to be done in the same manner as the original count. That's how it was done in 2014. Also, a count may order Guelph to recount w/alt means if they feel manner led to error.

O'Brien says that staff don't say no to voting methods, that's council, staff only brings options forward and gives advice.

Caton asks Root about security of other voting options. Root says mail-in ballots can be filled out by people they're not address to, they can be damaged and intersected, someone can miss mark a ballot. Also, there's coercion, which is a reality for any vote.

Caton asks about self-disclosing a disability. Root says that it's not recognised in the Accessible Canada Act to make people disclose a disability. And who is the arbiter of that anyway, who gets to decide if you're disabled?

Caton asks about thoughts on written correspondences. Root says that some of the mentions are from 2014 or before and the tech has come a long way since then. People may not understand without tech insight or training.

Caton asks if there's anything Root wants to say as an independent citizen. Root says yes, for her internet voting is the most accessible and make her life difference. Also frustrated that some comparators like Sudbury had only one option, she'd be fine with advanced online only.

Root also says that she's tired and it can be demoralising to fight for human rights. We're all concerned about integrity of votes, no one wants to keep disabled people down, but she wants people to understand her frustrations as an active citizen who can't vote.

Caton asks staff about the number of people who voted by mail and late arrivals. 593 ballot kits sent out by mail, and 464 received in time to be counted. 54 received after deadline.

Caron says that council doesn't ask written delegates to offer their levels of expertise or experience when they write in.

Busuttil asks staff if the legislation directs what stakeholders need to be engaged. O'Brien says no, but the report reflects what he thinks is a robust engagement.

Busuttil says that she was surprised the four school boards were not consulted, since they have their own accessible panels. O'Brien says that's valid, but school board becomes active closer to elections, using facilities, student vote, etc. But decision on alt vote is council's.

Allt asks about cyber threats. Staff say that cyber security is getting better, but so is cyber crime. 45% increase in those crimes in the last few years, in 2022 $557 mn in ransomware lost, in 2023 it was over $1 bn. Nothing is certain though.

O'Rourke asks about what's in place for election cyber security. Slater says that there are 2 largest providers in the market & there are limits about who much they're willing to let staff "look under the hood." O'Brien says it's also about dependability of the system, bandwidth.

O'Rourke asks about the security of the websites that provides voter information. O'Brien says they monitor the City's cyber security on an active basis and they monitor other sites too and have had to correct candidate sites that offer wrong info.

O'Rourke asks about the RFP for internet voting, is that for ongoing security monitoring? O'Brien says penetration testing results would be a moment in time, and then they would evaluate risks with the vendor, but when it's live it's on the vendor to flag concerns.

O'Rourke asks about the benchmark for satisfaction with the system. O'Brien says a formalise standard for online voting would be a great step, but then there's a question about vendors in the marketplace and if they can uphold that standard. Maybe we're not there yet.

O'Rourke asks if its possible to have more accessible spaces on Carden. O'Brien says that they could work with the public services team to make that happen. Clack-Bush nods her head in a agreement.

Downer asks about voter I.D. requirement for online. Slater says in 2014 it was 2-step, registration (similar to vote by mail in '22) I.D. was verified & it was consistent with in-person voting and matched to list. There would be a pin on vote card to cast ballot.

Downer asks what happens if council approves internet voting and no vendor can meet standards. O'Brien said that they would have to come back to council with that info and pass a new bylaw. That's part of the process.

Klassen asks if any of the comparators are affected by the loss of the two mentioned vendors. O'Brien says that the company that's now insolvent is a recent news, but there are two municipalities that use them. Maybe too soon to know who all's affected.

Guthrie asks if there's a difference between the bandwidth issues on Election Day and with advanced voting. O'Brien says all those issues happened on Election Day, but that doesn't mean they can't happen during advanced voting.

O'Brien notes that there could be an issue during advanced polls and might be unable to extend. He says again that it's not just a matter of security, but predictability and

dependability.

First up is Anordul Cameron, the vice-chair of the AAC (though he's here as a citizen). He says Guelph needs to adopt internet voting and RAVBM b/c otherwise many people will not be able to access their right to vote. He says he has a latex allergy & could have died from envelope

He says that concerns about someone hacking Guelph is misplaced because we're not that important. And if someone wants to interfere they will, like when someone poured dye on ballots in Russia.

Next up is Susan Watson, who is against the move to internet voting. She does thank the AAC for their work, but says integrity and trust is at stake. She quotes a website that says internet voting goes against democratic principles.

Meg Harding has withdrawn, so next is Lin Grist. She knows that as former Chair of Social Justice Coalition, they talked to the clerks about concerns with voter turnout, and they felt heard. Pleased to see central voting locations, and asks council for more options:

-Polling stations in retirement homes and nursing homes
-Mail-in ballots worked for here last time
-Council should support expenditures to increase accessibility
-Turnout is low, should spend funds to educate public on getting out to vote.
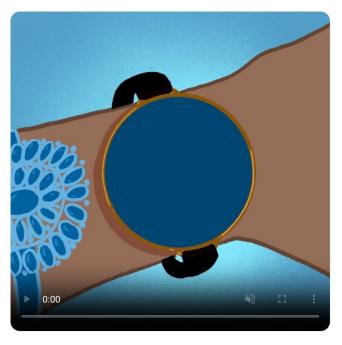
Allt asks Grist about internet voting. Grist says you'd think she'd want it because she's disabled, but she's concerned about safety and security and without that we can't trust people who are elected, and that's the underlying basis for democracy.

Last delegate is Brad Howcroft. He says that Guelph has always been a leader, and people while people with disabilities have always wanted to be treated equal, they keeping hitting a wall with some City services, whether that's voting or using transit.

Goller asks about keeping faith with efficiency of elections with internet voting. Howcroft says that Guelph is smaller scale compared to ONgov and Feds, and who would want to hack Guelph anyway? But how can we measure that against having more people vote?

O'Rourke asks if there was home visit or vote by mail in 2018? There wasn't. So O'Rourke asks Howcroft if those options are helpful. He says mail is, but understands the issues about having some stranger come into your home even with City of Guelph badge.

Chair Caron calls for a 5 minute bio break. Back at 4:18!

0:00

Back to it! Chair Caron calls things back to order.

Allt puts recommendations on floor, seconded by O'Rourke. Thanks staff for identifying security concerns and that it might need to be reconsidered sometime in the future. This is not a perfect system but it balances security and independence.

Recommendation:
1. That Council approve free Guelph Transit service and free parking at Market Parkade on Election Day to support access and remove barriers to voting for the 2026 municipal and school board election.
2. That Council approve the use of vote tabulators in the 2026 municipal and school board election.
3. That Council approve the use of vote by mail and vote from home as the alternative voting methods for the 2026 municipal and school board election.

Goller asks Root about delegates' concerns about loss of confidence in electoral system. Root says that the security and access are not on opposite sides, after 2014 people supported online voting and people wanted to use it again. Not sure insecurity is perception.

Root says that her confidence in the voting system is pretty shaky. What if members of council were asked to have someone else cast their ballot? Plus, we're punting this down the road again and again.

Caton proposes an amendment: to offer internet voting as a method contingent on staff due diligence. Goller seconds.

2026 Municipal Election Alternative Voting Methods and Accessible Voting Service Enhancements
Councillor Caton

1. That Guelph City Council directs the City Clerk's Office to offer internet voting as an alternative voting method for the 2026 municipal and school board election subject to all security requirements and testing meeting the satisfaction of the City Clerk.

Caton says every disabled person knows about their own access needs so we should be listening to them. Can't let fear of technology and hypotheticals stop us from addressing human rights issues.

Downer says she supports the idea of internet voting but wonders if they should take out vote by mail. Surprised it doesn't rate higher as a security issue and since 10 per cent of mail in votes didn't get counted. Caron says they may need to re-order one, two, four then three.

Downer says that there are risks with different types of voting, voter I.D. requirement is a piece of paper with your name and address on it basically. It sounds like City will have a high standard but independence of vote should be paramount.

Billings asks if 2014 turnout was higher than 2010. O'Brien says there was 9% increase, but it's difficult to correlate the two because there was a very active contest at the top of the ballot. Typically, 2-3% range is the effect.

O'Brien noted that there was a higher voter turnout in 2018 compared to 2010 though it was not as great as 2014.

Billings says political participation is important to holding up government, and there are the accessibility issues to consider as well as more turnout, so she will support.

Klassen asks if there's research the supports conclusively that internet vote increases turnout. O'Brien sites common Brock study that shows slight uptick but it's hard to isolate for one variable. There's also contentious race, issues in the community and other factors.

Klassen asks what would happen if an election is compromised. O'Brien says there could be direction to re-vote whole election, request for a recount if there's a narrower impact. That's why there needs to be verifiable results.

Downer asks about limiting internet voting to advanced polls, like 2014. Caron notes there's no limit in scope in Caton's motion. O'Brien says they only need the direction, they would scope how best to use it but notes that this is not staff's advice.

O'Rourke asks if there's any solution that the clerks think that they're going to find they haven't looked at already? O'Brien says they will do their best to have the market respond to high degree of security and verification but aren't sure a vendor can meet it.

O'Rourke asks when hey need to make a final decision. O'Brien says they want to hold to the date of May in the year before an election, so May 2025. ONgov changed it to May of the election year, but the clerks like having that extra time.

O'Rourke says that she would love to feel confident in online voting, but Elections Can, Elections ON, Toronto, Ottawa and Quebec all don't.

Guthrie notes that 216 other Ontario cities are satisfied, what if Guelph is an outlier for the wrong reasons. O'Brien says that they're going to be rigorous in development standards, and will look to draft online standards. They will leverage all available resources.

Guthrie says he supports Caton's motion. He talked to so many people who were able to participate in the election in 2014, and that means a lot to people. It also let people be flexible, as they were out of town on short notice. He recognises risk, but it can be tolerated.

Caron makes a point of saying that the votes of council are not mistakes, as the mayor characterised. He withdraws that comment.

Busuttil asks about the clerks' "satisfaction", they may still come back with a recommendation to not proceed, right? O'Brien says their intention to go out in good faith and seek out options to make this work. Doesn't want to speculate.

Gibson says there are snowbirds in Guelph who aren't here, so those are another group that would benefit.

Caron asks where Guelph is in organisation alt voting methods. O'Brien says they can get more detail, might be slightly ahead of the pack.

Caron asks if other area communities doing internet voting, lots of crossover with school boards? O'Brien says that we typically go it alone on procurement.

Caron confirms about timelines and need for resources. O'Brien says they won't know how long it will take until they get into it, but they want firm, clear and concise direction by the end of this month to begin.

Vote on the amendment passes 9-4. (Allt, Busuttil, O'Rourke and Richardson against.)

We're not negotiating about how to amend out the mention of mail-in voting.

O'Rourke asks if they still might be revisit mail-in if internet option fails. O'Brien says that they would have to bring back a new bylaw for council to pass.

Klassen asks about access for people without internet. O'Brien says that they can keep in vote from home.

Allt says he cannot support the motion to remove mail-in vote and there are people who don't use computers, primarily seniors. Without it they're taking away accessibility.

Downer notes that there is the library, and but asks about how people got a mail in ballot. O'Brien says some of them asked for it online, but some people came in in-person to request a mail-in ballot.

Downer notes the number of people that sent their ballots in and they were never counted. Some people asked for a ballot and never got it. So there are issues with mail-in that can't be ignored.

O'Brien notes that it's already tough to find people to work at elections. Just a note that there may be a budgetary need to reduce location.

We seem to be having a point of order off. There's some disagreement about worth ratios is the motion.

2026 Municipal Election Alternative Voting Methods and Accessible Voting Service Enhancements, 2024-201

3. That Council approve the use of vote from home as the alternative voting method for the 2026 municipal and school board elections.

The amendment fails 6-7.

So back to the original three motions plus the Caton motion.

Recommendation:
1. That Council approve free Guelph Transit service and free parking at Market Parkade on Election Day to support access and remove barriers to voting for the 2026 municipal and school board election.
2. That Council approve the use of vote tabulators in the 2026 municipal and school board election.
3. That Council approve the use of vote by mail and vote from home as the alternative voting methods for the 2026 municipal and school board election.

2026 Municipal Election Alternative Voting Methods and Accessible Voting Service Enhancements
Councillor Caton

1. That Guelph City Council directs the City Clerk's Office to offer internet voting as an alternative voting method for the 2026 municipal and school board election subject to all security requirements and testing meeting the satisfaction of the City Clerk.

Guthrie asks about the difference between removing mail and not removing mail money-wise. O'Brien says they can bring more info about budget at the end of the month, but with the four methods here, they will need another co-ordinator.

O'Rourke asks if there's a plan for voter education. O'Brien says that they've learned a lot so they don't need a motion, they will be working with comms team to have robust plan as part of election prep.

Vote on 1,2,3: passes unanimously
Vote on 4: Allt, Richardson and Busuttil vote against, but it's approved 10-3.

That's a wrap. See you later!

@threadreaderapp unroll please.

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