



CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH AGENDA ITEM

ITEM: An Ordinance to Transfer \$349,958 of Vacancy Savings within the General Fund to the Communications Office and to Authorize a Contract with the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Community Engagement Regarding the City's Election System

MEETING DATE: February 7, 2023

■ **Background:** The City Council adopted Resolution #04192 on December 13, 2022, which directed the City Manager to develop a public input process to educate and survey residents regarding the City's election system and requested that this process be substantially completed prior to August 18, 2023. That date is the deadline to petition the Circuit Court for a referendum to be placed on the November 7, 2023, ballot.

During the City Council work session on January 17, 2023, the City Attorney's Office and the Communications Department briefed Council on the history of the election system, the *Holloway* case and history, the 2021 General Assembly actions, and the 2022 election and potential viable options for an election system in 2024. The second half of the briefing focused on the planning and execution of an education and public engagement plan and an outline of a robust community engagement plan that includes contracting with the University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service for community engagement and resident survey efforts.

■ **Considerations:** The University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service (CCPS) was recommended by staff based on:

- CCPS program's experience of offering highly specialized support in local government community engagement and public impact research, particularly as it relates to matters of public policy and elections.
- University of Virginia (UVA) staff were not involved in previous court proceedings related to the case/issue (unlike, for reference, Christopher Newport University's Wason Center for Civic Leadership, whose academic director Dr. Quentin Kidd was a witness for the City in the *Holloway* case).
- UVA's status as component unit of the Commonwealth allows a government-to-government contract, which avoids the 60-to-90-day period of time required to conduct a competitive RFP process.

The proposed funding source for the work of the CCPS and additional community engagement and marketing is vacancy savings in the General Fund. This funding request is exclusive of any costs associated with public education related to a possible referendum. Should a referendum be ordered, there will likely be another funding request to support public education regarding such referendum.

■ **Alternatives:** The City Council can request to seek alternative proposals for a community engagement and survey partner. The start date would need to be adjusted to accommodate this request, and any delays could impact the August 18 deadline. In addition, should the City Council desire, the scope of the community engagement could be increased or amended. A change in scope may impact the timeline and/or cost.

■ **Public Information:** Normal City Council agenda process. As previously noted, this concept was presented to the City Council during its Informal Session on January 17, 2023.

■ **Attachments:** Ordinance; Proposed Scope of Work ("Exhibit A")

Recommended Action: Approval

Submitting Department/Agency: Communications Office

City Manager:



1 AN ORDINANCE TO TRANSFER \$349,958 OF VACANCY
2 SAVINGS WITHIN THE GENERAL FUND TO THE
3 COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE AND TO AUTHORIZE A
4 CONTRACT WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA'S
5 WELDON COOPER CENTER FOR COMMUNITY
6 ENGAGEMENT REGARDING THE CITY'S ELECTION
7 SYSTEM
8

9 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH,
10 VIRGINIA:
11

- 12 1) \$349,958 of vacancy savings is hereby transferred within the General Fund to
13 the FY 2022-23 Operating Budget of the Communications Office to support
14 survey work, public input sessions, and other community engagement and
15 marketing costs for public input on the City's election system.
16
17 2) The City Manager is hereby authorized to enter into a contract with the
18 University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service for consulting
19 and surveying to assist in the public input process. The scope of such contract
20 shall be generally consistent with the proposed scope of work attached hereto
21 as "Exhibit A."

Adopted by the Council of the City of Virginia Beach, Virginia on the _____ day
of _____, 2023.

APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:


Budget and Management Services


City Attorney's Office

CA16025
R-1
January 26, 2023

Exhibit A



**Weldon Cooper Center
for Public Service**

Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

coopercenter.org

2400 Old Ivy Road | PO Box 400206

Charlottesville, VA 22904-4206

January 19th, 2023

Proposed Scope of Work Virginia Beach Election System Community Engagement Survey

***Prepared by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service
University of Virginia***

The University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service (CCPS) is well equipped to support the City of Virginia Beach and the City Council in systematically and inclusively engaging community residents to raise awareness of the local election system and receive community feedback on the current election system and preferences going forward. Drawing on the Cooper Center's research and government support expertise, Cooper Center staff will oversee and facilitate a series of community town halls, carry out a scientific probability-based community survey, and conduct an expert review of election system options and prepare recommendations accordingly for the City.

To conduct the community town halls, the Cooper Center will train a diverse group of moderators to facilitate a total of twelve town halls, in a combination of in-person and virtual formats. At least one town hall will be conducted for each electoral district. CCPS will synthesize town hall feedback and prepare a summary report of findings.

CCPS will prepare, administer, and analyze a survey of Virginia Beach residents to capture their experiences with the 2022 local election cycle and their preferences for the local election system going forward. To achieve statistically representative findings, we propose a mixed-probability, multi-mode survey design. More specifically, we recommend a stratified, address-based (ABS) probability sample of 4,500 households who will be contacted following a mail-forward design in which residents are first invited to complete the survey by paper, and are later presented with a web option for participation. The probability-based responses will provide the survey's basis for statistical inference of results to all Virginia Beach residents. Additionally, the Cooper Center will host a web-only, "open-source" survey available to residents not selected for the ABS sample. We will coordinate with the City to widely share the open-source web survey via social media, City communications, and any other channels the City deems appropriate. This mixed sample design enables statistically generalizable survey results in combination with maximized outreach and engagement for any City resident interested in providing feedback. The survey will follow a confidential protocol and be administered in English, Spanish, and Tagalog.

To carry out its review of legally viable election system options for Virginia Beach, CCPS will partner with a Virginia-based local election systems expert from UVA. With this partner, CCPS will review similar local election cases as well as Virginia election laws to prepare a report of recommendations on election system options going forward for Virginia Beach and advise on possible referendum question phrasing.

This proposal contains the following elements:

- A. Scope of Work (page 2)
- B. Timeline (page 5)
- C. Budget for Services (page 6)
- D. Experience and Qualifications (page 8)

The primary contacts for this proposal are Charles Hartgrove and Kara Fitzgibbon.

Charles W. Hartgrove, ICMA-CM

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Kara Fitzgibbon, PhD

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A. Scope of Work

Below is a breakdown of the specific Cooper Center services to carry out the proposed community engagement efforts.

1. The Cooper Center (CCPS) will oversee preparation and facilitation of the community town halls, including:
 - a. Moderator guide preparation
 - i. CCPS will consult with City staff to develop the key talking points and discussion questions for the town halls
 - b. Consult with City staff to determine in-person vs. virtual plans for each electoral district
 - i. CCPS will coordinate with the City on scheduling the town halls
 - c. CCPS will identify and train town hall moderators
 - i. In consultation with the City, a variety of town hall moderators will be selected to ensure **community members feel reflected by the moderator's own characteristics**
 - ii. CCPS will coordinate with the City on which town halls, if any, may require Spanish translation support
 - d. CCPS will be responsible for facilitating the community town halls
 - i. A total of 12 town halls are budgeted, with a combination of in-person and virtual formats.
 - e. CCPS will prepare summary report of town hall feedback
2. The Cooper Center will oversee all project preparation ahead of survey production, including:
 - a. Questionnaire preparation
 - i. CCPS will consult with City staff to develop the survey questionnaire
 - ii. CCPS will format the paper questionnaire for mail administration.
 - iii. CCPS will program the questionnaire using Qualtrics for web-based administration.
 - iv. CCPS will be responsible for translation of the questionnaire into each Spanish and Tagalog
 - b. CCPS will compose all mailing materials, with final approval by the City.

- i. CCPS will be responsible for translation of the mailing materials in each Spanish and Tagalog
- c. Sample preparation
 - i. CCPS will obtain an addressed-based sample of approximately 4,500 households, with stratification across the 10 City districts to ensure adequate representation from each district.
- d. CCPS will obtain Institutional Review Board approval for the survey to ensure ethical research practices.
- e. CCPS will create a database (using FileMaker Pro) to manage the sample and assign unique code numbers for each household, track all contact events and responses including those received via the online version of the survey, and generate mailing materials such as mailing labels and cover letters.
- 3. CCPS will manage survey administration, including hosting the online questionnaire and printing, mailing, and tracking all respondent contacts.
 - a. The survey production of the ABS sample will include:
 - i. A personalized advance letter (in each English, Spanish, and Tagalog) describing the survey will be sent to all sampled households by first-class mail. The letter and outgoing envelope will bear the City logo to establish legitimacy and encourage respondent participation. All subsequent mailings will bear the University of Virginia, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service logo to establish objectivity and confidentiality of the data. We also propose to print the City logo on all subsequent letters and on the outgoing envelopes to reinforce the partnership and importance of the project.
 - ii. About a week after mailing the advance letter, survey packet #1 will be sent to the full sample. This packet will contain a personalized cover letter (in English, Spanish, and Tagalog), a paper version of the questionnaire (English), a mail-back post card the respondent may use to request a Spanish or Tagalog version of the paper questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope for completed questionnaire booklets.
 - iii. Within 10 days of mailing the first survey packets, a postcard will be sent to all households with deliverable addresses. The postcard will thank those who have already completed the survey and remind non-responders about the initial survey invitation and request their participation. It will also invite participants to complete the questionnaire online if they prefer. The post card will include a short URL and code number with instructions to complete the survey online.
 - iv. Approximately three weeks after sending the initial reminder postcard, CCPS will send a second full survey packet to all non-responders (after tracking responses received online and by mail). The second packet will again include a cover letter (English, Spanish, and Tagalog), a questionnaire booklet, and a postage-paid return envelope for completed questionnaires. The wording of this cover letter will be somewhat different from the first packet's cover letter and include instructions to complete the survey online as well as the final date to submit a response.
 - v. About 10 days after sending the second survey packet, CCPS will send a closeout postcard as the final mail contact. This postcard will again announce the close date and provide instructions to complete the survey online.

- vi. Data collection will close approximately two and a half weeks after the closeout postcard is sent.
- vii. The following table summarizes the proposed contact strategy for the mail-forward sample:

Contact	Proposed Date
Advance letter	March 22, 2023
Paper survey packet #1	March 28, 2023
Post card reminder	April 6, 2023
Paper survey packet #2	April 27, 2023
Closeout post card	May 8, 2023
Close data collection	May 26, 2023

- b. As noted, a web-only survey will be made available concurrently to the probability-based ABS data collection. Any City resident may participate in the open-source survey.
- c. CCPS will enter the data from the paper questionnaires into a FileMaker database customized for data entry and validation. Data entry will be validated for a random sample of 10 percent of the paper questionnaires.
- d. Below is a table of production estimates used to calculate the survey costs. Please note, CCPS does not guarantee response rates. However, based on our prior experience surveying comparable communities, CCPS anticipates a response rate around 23%, yielding approximately 1,052 responses.

Survey Production Estimates:

Mail Contact	Sent	Received
Advance letter	4500	
<i>Bad addresses</i>		315
Paper survey packet #1	4500	
<i>Response to paper survey packet #1</i>		309
ThankYou/Reminder postcard	4185	
<i>Response to reminder postcard</i>		262
Paper survey packet #2 - referral to web	3876	
<i>Response to paper survey packet #2</i>		368
Closeout postcard	3246	
<i>Response to closeout postcard</i>		113

Returns by web	242
Returns by paper	810
Expected number of returns:	1,052
Final overall response rate:	23.4%

Completion estimates are for budgeting purposes only. CCPS does not guarantee response rates.

4. CCPS will clean, analyze and report on the survey data.
 - a. CCPS will prepare a machine-readable data file that combines the data from surveys completed by web from the ABS group, data entered by CCPS from the paper surveys completed by the ABS group, and data from the web-only, open survey.
 - b. To provide data that is statistically generalizable to the City of Virginia Beach as a whole, CCPS will weight the probability-based responses to correct for sample stratification. This process is also known as base-weighting. CCPS will also weight the probability-based responses to match known population parameters on characteristics agreed upon with the client (e.g., racial affiliation, age, etc.). This process is known as post-stratification weighting.
 - c. CCPS will prepare complete descriptive statistics of all survey questions.
 - d. CCPS will run comparisons of all survey questions by up to five characteristics to be agreed upon with the client (e.g., residential district, racial affiliation, age, probability vs. nonprobability sample).
 - e. CCPS will prepare a topline summary narrative report of the survey findings, with detailed tables provided in appendices as well as a dispositions and methodology report. This report will be delivered by June 13, 2023 so long as the City meets prior deadlines during survey preparation.
 - f. CCPS will prepare a PowerPoint presentation of the survey findings. CCPS will present the results to City Council and/or an internal City-identified leadership team to allow for in-depth Q&A.
5. CCPS will review current election system and make recommendations on options for the City to consider moving forward
 - a. CCPS will partner with a Virginia-based local and state election systems expert within the University of Virginia. This partner will consult with CCPS throughout community engagement process.
 - b. CCPS, in consultation with election expert, will review local election system legal cases and Virginia state law to identify legally viable options for the City of Virginia Beach
 - c. CCPS will prepare report of findings and recommendations
 - d. CCPS may provide guidance on referendum question phrasing
6. By accepting this proposal, the City of Virginia Beach would receive a complimentary annual VIG membership retroactive to July 1, 2022. The City will also receive a complimentary annual VIG membership for FY24. The total value of the membership is \$40,000 over two fiscal years and provides access to member services and programming discounts provided to local government organizations.

B. Timeline

Below is an overall timeline of the community engagement process across CCPS service, from town hall and survey preparation through delivery of results. In order to deliver the results by June 13, 2023, all of the following preparation dates in collaboration with Virginia Beach City must be met.

Community Engagement Progress Milestones	Proposed Date
Kickoff planning meeting with Virginia Beach	February 9, 2023
Draft survey conceptual outline	February 10, 2023
Set tentative dates for town halls; select moderators	February 15, 2023
Begin facilitating community town halls	~February 22, 2023
Finalize survey sampling design	March 3, 2023
Finalize survey questionnaire	March 8, 2023
Launch survey w/ mailing of advance letter	March 22, 2023
Conclude all town halls	March 28, 2023
Deliver town hall findings report	April 28, 2023
Close survey data collection	May 26, 2023
Deliver survey findings and report on election system options	June 13, 2023
Presentation to City Council	Early to mid-July (date TBD)

C. Budget for Services

Cost of Services:

	Service Cost	Subtotal
PROJECT MANAGEMENT	\$22,469.00	\$22,469.00
COMMUNITY TOWN HALLS		\$38,500.00
<i>Prepare moderator guides and train moderators</i>	\$8,500.00	
<i>Conduct town halls (12x, combination in-person & virtual)</i>	\$24,000.00	
<i>Synthesize community town hall feedback</i>	\$6,000.00	
ELECTION SYSTEM CONSULTATION		\$35,000.00
<i>Collab w/ Virginia-based election system expert from UVA</i>	\$12,000.00	
<i>Review of election system cases and Virginia election laws</i>	\$14,500.00	
<i>Prepare report of legally viable election systems</i>	\$8,500.00	
SURVEY DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT		\$19,473.00
<i>Questionnaire development</i>	\$3,056.00	
<i>Non-English language translations</i>	\$6,500.00	
<i>Preparation of questionnaire booklet</i>	\$1,117.00	
<i>Construction of web survey instrument and welcome pages</i>	\$2,266.00	
<i>Sampling and weighting plan</i>	\$1,726.00	
<i>Trips (2x) to Virginia Beach</i>	\$4,808.00	

SURVEY PRODUCTION		\$47,004.73
<i>Website maintenance and hosting</i>		\$912.55
<i>Purchase sample</i>		\$830.00
<i>Data base creation and management</i>		\$1,316.00
<i>Data entry</i>		\$4,212.99
Advance letter		
<i>N to mail out</i>	4,500	
<i>Mail-out labor</i>		\$599.00
<i>Supplies, postage, printing</i>		\$5,265.00
1st QA Mailout		
<i>N to mail out</i>	4,500	
<i>Mail-out labor</i>		\$1,740.69
<i>Supplies, postage, printing</i>		\$14,673.84
Reminder/thank you postcard		
<i>N to mail out (estimate)</i>	4,185	
<i>Mail-out labor</i>		\$189.25
<i>Supplies, postage, printing</i>		\$2,038.10
2nd QA Mailout, non-responders		
<i>N to mail out (estimate)</i>	3,876	
<i>Mail-out labor</i>		\$1,439.75
<i>Supplies, postage, printing</i>		\$12,060.31
Closeout Postcard, non-responders		
<i>N to mail out (estimate)</i>	3,246	
<i>Mail-out labor</i>		\$146.50
<i>Supplies, postage, printing</i>		\$1,580.75
SURVEY ANALYSIS & REPORTING		\$12,515.00
<i>File preparation (merging, cleaning, weighting)</i>		\$3,464.00
<i>Data analysis</i>		\$2,286.00
<i>Topline Summary Report of Findings</i>		\$2,982.00
<i>Prepare Methods and Disposition Reports</i>		\$881.00
<i>PowerPoint presentations of findings</i>		\$2,902.00
Direct costs for all services		\$174,971.73
Facilities & Administration (reduced University rate)	8%	13,996.94
TOTAL COST TO CLIENT		\$188,958.67

D. Experience and Qualifications

Background on the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

The Cooper Center serves localities in the Commonwealth in the context of a complex 21st century in which civic challenges are interconnected and problem-solving requires engaged communities and collaboration across traditional boundaries. In this new context, the Center is reimagining public service to ensure our work is impact-driven and focused on the needs of the diverse communities in Virginia; inclusive of leaders at all levels and of individuals with differing perspectives and from varied backgrounds; and guided always by our values of access, collaboration, commitment to community, and impact. The Weldon Cooper Center draws on eighty years of experience and expertise from across the organization to support the needs of our clients and partners. We conduct advanced and applied research in collaboration with clients so they may make a difference in governance and community life.

To match the specific needs of the City of Virginia Beach, the Cooper Center's Virginia Institute of Government and Center for Survey Research will provide key contributions and collaboratively manage this community engagement project.

Background on the Virginia Institute of Government

The Virginia Institute of Government (VIG) is a business unit of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia. In addition to its full-time designated team, VIG has a rich network of consultants, facilitators, and subject-matter experts. VIG was established in 1994 by the Virginia General Assembly to provide training, technical assistance, and information resources to its member local governments. Due to the changing needs of Virginia communities over the last quarter century, VIG has expanded beyond its original mission.

The goal of VIG is to become the central navigator for local governments to assist in building governance capacity and developing dynamic leaders at all levels. This will be achieved by curating a portfolio of services, partnerships, and best practices to serve our members and other clients. Through the Senior Executive Institute and LEAD programs, VIG provides professional development to local government leaders from communities across the country. Our staff also supports the continuing education programs and conferences for the Virginia Local Government Management Association, Virginia Government Finance Officers Association, Treasurers Association of Virginia, and Commissioners of the Revenue Association of Virginia.

VIG draws regularly on the Cooper Center's intellectual and technological expertise to develop and deliver services. The director, Charles Hartgrove, is responsible for leading VIG's staff, daily operations, professional development programs, and consulting services. VIG has the ability to pull from subject matter experts within the Cooper Center, the University at-large, and external partners with experience designing and delivering programming for local government elected officials, senior executives, and staff.

Background on the Center for Survey Research

The Center for Survey Research (CSR) is a service unit of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia. CSR combines expert faculty, experienced staff, and advanced technical facilities to bring the best tools of quantitative and qualitative social science to the service of local government and state agencies, non-profit and private-sector clients, and academic researchers. Since its founding in 1988 as an interdisciplinary research and service organization, CSR has

conducted thousands of telephone, mail, web and in-person interviews. Senior staff members make frequent contributions to the academic and professional survey research literature. CSR specializes in providing full-service survey methodology, including customized project design, professional interviewing, data collection, and data analysis. CSR continues to lead and innovate in conducting surveys and utilizing multi-mode approaches to ensure high completion rates.

Further, CSR is committed to community-engaged research while supporting localities and agencies throughout Virginia. Through our research, CSR opens channels of communication to give voice to the main. By helping governments, community organizations, and researchers to measure attitudes, opinions, behaviors and interests, we enable them to serve their communities more effectively.

Key Project Personnel

Charles W. Hartgrove, ICMA-CM

Mr. Hartgrove is the director of the Virginia Institute of Government (VIG) at the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. He leads the staff and daily operations of VIG. This includes providing local governments professional/technical assistance, training programs, and consulting services. He is also responsible for the Senior Executive Institute (SEI), Leading, Educating, and Developing program (LEAD), and the Constitutional Officer Education Program.

Prior to joining the Cooper Center staff in 2019, he most recently served as the chief deputy commissioner of the Virginia Department of Taxation. Hartgrove served as the agency's chief administrative officer and was responsible for all internal financial and general operations and the organization's strategic plan. He led special projects and served on several committees for the Secretary of Finance and the Governor's offices regarding workforce development, the gig economy, worker misclassification, and local government issues.

Hartgrove worked as a senior executive for Virginia local governments for over twenty years. He has vast experience in the fields of organizational development, community engagement, strategic planning, financial administration, and community and economic development. He served as the deputy city manager of Lynchburg and as the town manager of Ashland (Hanover County), Middleburg (Loudoun County), and Gate City (Scott County).

Hartgrove obtained a Bachelor's degree in government from the University of Virginia's College at Wise. He also received a Master of Public Administration and a Post-Baccalaureate graduate certificate in public management from Virginia Commonwealth University. He is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma's Economic Development Institute, Virginia Commonwealth University's Virginia Executive Institute, and the University of Virginia's Senior Executive Institute. He is an International City/County Management Association Credentialed Manager (ICMA-CM). Hartgrove previously served on the Executive Committee of the Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA).

Kara S. Fitzgibbon, PhD

Dr. Fitzgibbon is Director of the Center for Survey Research. Dr. Fitzgibbon has worked at CSR since 2012, and during that time has been directly involved in over 100 funded survey projects, served as PI on dozens of these studies, and regularly designed and led qualitative research efforts, including both semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In her role as director, she maintains responsibility for

the study design, budget, staffing, data and report deliverables of all research projects that are carried out through CSR.

Dr. Fitzgibbon is also active in the field of survey research at the national level through committee memberships and conference presentations across several preeminent professional survey associations, including the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) and the Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations (AASRO). In addition, she has co-authored several peer-reviewed academic articles based on her survey research. In addition to presenting at national conferences, Dr. Fitzgibbon regularly presents on survey findings to public community audiences as well as internal presentations for organizational leadership or other client-identified bodies.

Dr. Fitzgibbon received her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Virginia with specialized training in survey methods. She also holds a Master's degree from UVA, and she received her Bachelor's degree from Washington and Lee University. She has experience teaching research methods and statistics.