



City Clerk's Office

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We exist to assist.

September 27, 2024

Dear Senator Knodl and Representative Krug,

Thank you for contacting the City of Madison Clerk's Office. We welcome the opportunity to provide you with information regarding our office's ballot processing error. In addition to answering your questions below, we have also attached a letter that was sent out to affected voters which apologizes for the mistake, explains in detail what occurred, and describes how election procedures ensure that only one ballot can be counted for each voter. We have also adjusted our pre-election procedures to prevent this mistake from happening again.

1. Who committed the error?

This was a simple data processing error made by one of the many dedicated, professional staff who work for the City, and as noted above the process has since been corrected to prevent a similar error from occurring.

2. How will the individual or individuals be held accountable?

All staff in the Clerk's Office have been made aware of how the error occurred and instructed on how to avoid this error in the future. Staff undergoes constant training, and how the City handles coaching and personnel matters is confidential.

3. Have any of the duplicate ballots been returned?

No duplicate ballots have been returned to the Clerk's Office.

4. What steps is your department taking to ensure that only one ballot will be counted where two ballots were sent?

We have mailed each affected voter the attached letter which instructs voters to destroy a duplicate ballot. When absentee ballots are returned to our office, we scan the barcode on each envelope. We can only check in one ballot for each voter. If someone returns two absentee ballots, the second one will be rejected at the polls. Election procedures include checks and balances to ensure that only one ballot can be counted for each voter. Election Inspectors in the affected wards will receive additional guidance regarding processing these ballots.

5. What steps is your department taking regarding confidence in election integrity?

We identified and corrected the mistake quickly and have communicated to the public about how the checks and balances in our statewide system ensure integrity in the election. Our office sent a letter to affected voters and publicly posted that letter in addition to posting a letter responding to questions similar to yours. We have communicated exactly how absentee ballots are processed to explain how only one ballot can be

counted for each voter. We will continue to provide accurate information to the public regarding election integrity and election processes through both our website and media outlets. We promote transparency and we invite the public to get involved by, for example, observing public tests of voting equipment and observing at the polls. We ask and trust that officials that are in position of authority will support those efforts and treat information related to election administration responsibly and refrain from attempting to convert a corrected error into a reason to create suspicion and doubt about the integrity of our elections.

In addition, there are numerous detailed procedures that ensure the integrity of our elections. These include confirming that the number of ballots equals the number of voters in each ward, conducting post-election voting equipment audits, and completing the official canvass which is reviewed at both the county and state level.

6. Is your department open to a third-party investigation and/or audit to ensure this type of error never happens again?

The facts are clear that in this case a clerical error was made. Our office acknowledged it, corrected it, and is making changes to ensure that it does not happen again. There is neither any mystery regarding what happened nor anything else of value that could be added by another agency spending public resources to conduct an investigation. Nonetheless, this matter is certainly public and if any appropriate agency with jurisdiction wishes to conduct an investigation, it may certainly initiate one. We are confident an investigation would only confirm the facts as we have stated them.

In closing, I would simply note that elections are conducted by humans and occasionally human error occurs. When errors occur, we own up to them, correct them as soon as possible, and are transparent about them – precisely as we have done here. Our staff works incredibly hard to conduct elections in a professional, nonpartisan and fair manner and works to continually assess and improve our processes. This task is made more challenging every day as the conduct of elections becomes more complex and as election officials have become the target of attacks that seek to undermine the confidence of voters in our election results. I trust that this response adequately addresses your questions. Thank you for your interest in City of Madison elections.

Sincerely,



Maribeth Witzel-Behl, City of Madison Clerk

Attached: Letter to Affected Voters