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SUBMITTED TO: AISWCD MEMBER DISTRICTS
REGARDING: COVID-19 ELECTION & ANNUAL MEETING PROCEDURE CONSIDERATIONS

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The current situation involving COVID-19 has changed our way of life. SWCDs are in the position of balancing needed service to customers while protecting the health and safety of everyone involved. This guidance provides options for SWCDs in conducting Soil and Water Conservation District Director general elections, as well as holding elections during annual meetings, to prevent/minimize virus exposure.

AISWCD strongly encourages you to review your election plans with your IDOA Bureau of Land and Water Regional Representative, as well as the USDA-Natural Resources Area Conservationist to ensure district elections plans are compatible with other existing COVID-19 safety guidelines impacting office operations. Finally, polling place locations should follow local, state, or federal COVID-19 health guidelines.

GENERAL RECOMENDATIONS

- In part, the two notices of election should include detailed instructions to eligible voters on polling place location, the availability of legal ballots, voting procedure, where to submit completed ballots and the presence of an election judge.
- Such notices should briefly explain that different voting procedures have been established due to the pandemic.
- Such detailed instructions should also be shown on signage attached to the main building public access doors or on the main door(s) to your office for eligible voters to view.
- If possible, the polling place should be inside the building entrance, in the hallway or in a conference room depending on building and office configurations. Ideally, if weather and location allow, the polling location could be placed outside with someone monitoring.
- The ballot collection box should reside in a secure space that prevents physical contact.
- Social distancing should be employed regardless of polling place location and of course, masks are critical. A plexiglas barrier between you and voters may help.

ELECTION RECOMENDATIONS

Maintaining Healthy Environments:

- Surfaces that are frequently touched by multiple people, for example door handles, registration tables, pens, and clipboards, should be disinfected frequently.
- Where possible, replace shared objects, like pens or ballot activation cards, with single-use objects.
- Maintain or increase the total number of polling places available to the public on Election Day to improve the ability to social distance. Use floor markings (tape or chalk, for example) or decals and signs to remind voters to maintain social distancing while in line.
- Physical barriers, such as plexiglass shields, can be used to protect workers and voters when physical distance cannot be maintained, for example at registration desks or between voting stations.

Signage:

- Post signs and messages about staying at least 6 feet apart and wearing a mask.
- Establish physical reminders of distancing 6 feet apart by using chalk, tape, or stickers to add physical guides and by adding one-way directional signage to floors and walls.
- Provide signage about voting procedures.

Supplies:

- Offer disposable or giveaway pens when possible. Tip, this provides a great marketing opportunity to give away branded pens!
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol to use at voting locations.

Cleaning:

- Clean and disinfect surfaces and voting-associated equipment frequently.

Polling Location:

- Locate polling place that can be visibly monitored and attended to by an election administrator.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly (if indoors) and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible (such as opening windows).
- Ensure voting area is accessible to voters with disabilities.

Source: Centers for Disease Control (CDC) located at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/election-polling-locations/elections-toolkit.html#anchor_1603457386264

ANNUAL MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS:

As public health officials continue to issue new guidance in response to the COVID-19 situation, the situation remains fluid and ever-changing. As such, Districts may encounter difficulty in scheduling an annual meeting whereby the public is invited to attend, only to later learn that restrictions on gathering and group size prohibit

this. Separating the annual meeting from the election may provide a better avenue to accomplish the goal of electing directors by minimizing the impact from ever changing health directives.

- In part, the two notices of election should include detailed instructions to eligible voters on polling place location, voting procedure (ballot or voice vote) and where to submit completed ballots.
- Voice vote would be safer contingent on the extent of mask usage.
- Such notices should briefly explain that different voting procedures have been established due to the Pandemic.
- Such detailed instructions should also be shown on signage attached to the building public access doors for eligible voters to view.
- Ballots should be handed to voters while they complete the voter registration form to lessen physical contact.
- The ballot collection box should reside in a secure space that prevents physical contact.
- Social distancing should be employed regardless of using ballots or voice vote and of course, masks are critical. At the registration table, a plexiglas shield between you and attendees should be considered.

This guidance is not all inclusive and SWCDs may have better ideas for appropriate election procedures during this pandemic. Of course, the object is to provide a safe and secure environment for everyone.
