

Memorandum



DATE March 28, 2008


TO **Honorable Mayor and
Members of City Council**

SUBJECT **Electronic Filing of Campaign Finance Reports**

Attached is the following briefing information on electronic filing of campaign finance reports to be presented on April 2, 2008.

- Powerpoint Presentation
- Campaign Finance—
Electronic Filing System (screen prints)

Please contact me if you have questions.


Deborah Watkins
City Secretary

Attachments

C: Mary K. Suhm, City Manager
Thomas P. Perkins Jr., City Attorney
Rosa A. Rios, Assistant City Secretary
Rose Ann Jones, Elections Manager

ELECTRONIC FILING OF CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTS

City Secretary's Office
April 2, 2008

PURPOSE

This briefing is to inform the City Council of the implementation of electronic filing (e-filing) of campaign finance reports





E-FILING OBJECTIVE

Procure and enhance an electronic filing system for campaign finance reports with features to allow quick/efficient access, search and sort capability for candidates, officeholders, political committees and interested citizens

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORT FILING REQUIREMENTS

- Chapter 254 of the Texas Election Code requires:
 - Candidates, officeholders and political committees to report political contributions and expenditures during each reporting period
 - Candidates, officeholders and political committees to file in a format prescribed by Texas Ethics Commission (TEC)
 - Campaign finance reports of candidates, officeholders and specific purpose political committees (SPAC's) to be filed with the City
- Chapter 15A of the Dallas City Code requires general purpose political committees (GPAC's) to file with the City in the same format required for filing with the TEC

REQUIREMENTS – LOCAL LEVEL E-FILING

- Section 254.036 of the Texas Election Code requires campaign finance reports to be in a format prescribed by TEC
- TEC allows home-rule cities to pass an ordinance that requires city council candidates, officeholders and political committees to transmit reports electronically rather than on paper, using a system that has been approved by TEC (TEC Advisory Opinion No. 459)
- The City's proposed electronic filing system is modeled using the same standards TEC is required to meet under Section 571.061 of the Texas Government Code
- The City will also make available, upon request, a paper copy of the report that conforms to the same format and paper size as the form prescribed by TEC

EXEMPTIONS TO ELECTRONIC FILING

Exemptions to electronic filing are provided as follows:

- The filer
 - (or agent of the filer or a person with whom the filer contracts) does not use computer equipment to keep the current records of political contributions, political expenditures, or persons making political contributions to the filer; and
 - does not, in a calendar year, accept political contributions that in the aggregate exceed \$20,000 or make political expenditures that in the aggregate exceed \$20,000; or
- The filer is an individual not acting in concert with another person who makes one or more direct campaign expenditures in an election from the individual's own property that exceed \$100 on any one or more candidates or measures if the individual complies with Chapter 254 of the Texas Election Code as if the individual were a campaign treasurer of a political committee and the individual receives no reimbursement for the expenditures

MAJOR TEXAS CITIES - COMPARISON OF CURRENT REPORTING SYSTEMS

City with custom system providing for on-line preparation and submission with the ability to search for specific information:

San Antonio

City with custom system providing for on-line preparation and submission with limited search capability in PDF format:

Houston

Cities with basic methods for filing paper copy with limited search capability in PDF format:

Dallas
Austin
Fort Worth

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

- March 2006 - City Secretary's Office began researching e-filing
- March 2008 - E-filing software purchased
- April 2, 2008 - Council Briefing
- April 4, 2008 - TEC Advisory Committee meeting to consider Dallas' e-filing system
- April 23, 2008 - Council consideration of amending Chapter 15A to require e-filing
- June 1, 2008 - System ready for testing
- June 15, 2008 - Begin training candidates, officeholders, political committees and interested citizens
- July 15, 2008 - Semi-annual campaign finance reports due
- Jan. 15, 2009 - Electronic filing of semi-annual campaign finance reports due will be enforced

E-FILING TRAINING

- City Secretary's Office and Communication and Information Services will train candidates, officeholders, political committees and interested citizens to use the system
- Public Information Office will assist in developing a training video
- City Secretary's Office and Communication and Information Services will staff "help desk" to answer questions from users

SUMMARY

Dallas will become one of the leading cities in Texas to initiate electronic filing of campaign finance reports for candidates, officeholders and political committees

