

## Appendix C

### Early Voting Survey: Clerk Comments

#### ***Absentee Ballots***

The day before and especially the day of voting are difficult. Limited staff and limited office hours make it difficult to process the absentee ballots. -- **ALFRED**

The review and storage of the unopened envelopes is time consuming. If the “voted in person” ballots could be deposited into a voting machine before Election Day, we would have more time to prepare for Election Day and monitoring and securing those ballots would be simplified. -- **AUGUSTA**

Absentee voting on the day before election is unmanageable. It would be very helpful if the cut-off could be on the last regular business day of the prior week. -- **BANGOR**

Bridgton only has one polling place and generally the polls are too busy to stop and process those absentee ballots at a time certain during the day. Processing absentee ballots after the polls close is very time consuming. I think that it is a great idea to process the absentee ballots before the election. I would hesitate to allow the voters to cast their ballot directly into the box prior to the election. -- **BRIDGTON**

Trying to get all of the ballots put through the tabulators along with the voters is a time consuming chore requiring additional election workers. Usually the machines tend to jam at that time, as well. Also, the poll watching faction has to be dealt with when processing absentees at the polls. -- **CARIBOU**

Absentee voting in the 30 days prior to Election Day can be a bit chaotic due to the time and staffing issues. It takes time away from our normal day to day duties to verify, fold, complete the paperwork and process these requests as they are beginning to pile up well in advance of the ballots arrival. Processing is difficult and very time consuming on Election Day. Extra staff is needed to process just those ballots and for a town of 3000 voters it took most of the day. -- **CHINA**

The voting machines jam quite often on Election Day when we are processing the folded absentee ballots. We need to open the ballot box many times when we are processing absentee ballots because we need to compress the ballots so often. This causes more problems when we have long lines. -- **FAIRFIELD**

I think that absentee voting on the Monday before Election Day should be eliminated. The volume of people voting the day before has become absurd. The logistics of setting up and preparing for Tuesday are large and important. To have us all totally exhausted going into Tuesday because there is too much to accomplish on Monday, has become problematical. -- **FREEPORT**

Absentee ballots that are returned by mail or obtained by visiting nursing homes could be opened and cast by town employees under dual control (witnessed by two people) prior to Election Day. Early voting would work together with absentee voting so that absentee ballots are still issued under the current process but the absentee ballots would be cast “early” as they are received. -- **GORHAM**

There needs to be something to address the absentee voting process that will give the municipalities some relief from all the duplicate paperwork and requirements, if the early voting does not pass or even if it does. [Cut] off absentee voting the Friday before Election Day to help allow time to get the election lists ready. [Maybe allow] absentee voting early on Election Day before the polls open for people that need to get to work, especially with the towns that open later. -- **HALLOWELL**

Absentee voting in person has increased tremendously over the last couple of elections to the point that it is hard to manage on current staffing. -- **HOULTON**

The problems we have had with absentee voting have been the extra work and stress associated with the high rate of traffic brought to our office by voters wanting to vote absentee. -- **MILLINOCKET**

Keeping track of sealed absentee ballot envelopes and then opening them and casting them directly into the ballot box at the polls in front of witnesses takes a little time but provides much more accountability and integrity of the absentee ballot. -- **NEW LIMERICK**

Absentee ballots have a tendency to jam the machine due to the folds in the ballots, which then backs up the line of voters waiting to deposit their ballot. -- **NORTH YARMOUTH**

I think the state should go back to having a reason to vote absentee and not promote absentee voting so much. So many people wait until the last minute to vote absentee and this creates a lot of added work to the Clerk, who is already contending with the election and all of their other duties, which are many for most of us. -- **POLAND**

In the near future as Raymond grows I see that the administration of voting absentee will become burdensome and will require some overtime of our staff or part-time ballot clerks allowing the accomplishment of the work. -- **RAYMOND**

The only issue I have with absentees voting is the sheer volume of ballots...each year there seems to be increasing numbers of absentee ballots for the clerks to process with various groups encouraging more and more people to vote absentee. A procedure where the absentee ballot could be counted before Election Day would alleviate some of the pressure. -- **ROCKLAND**

It should only be as a necessity and not just for convenience. -- **WOODSTOCK**

I have limited staff (usually myself full time and one very part time helper) to handle the incoming requests for AV. The processing during Election Day is ... a challenge. I could barely keep up with it and keep it together. We literally had people standing in line at town hall to wait to AV instead of standing in line on Election Day. Go figure! -- **YARMOUTH**

I now have a dedicated part-time employee who is trained in absentee voting and is dedicated to that function only at election time. She works full-time for the 30 days prior to Election Day. Last municipal election, out of a total of 4001 ballots cast, 2478 were executed by absentee. -- **YORK**

## **Early Voting**

Early voting will be extremely difficult as we have very limited space in our Town Hall. We do our voting at another location. It will be nearly impossible to find a handicapped accessible area for early voting as well as one to set up the AVS equipment here in our building. -- **ALFRED**

Small municipalities whose clerk is administrative and daily counter clerk cannot be running an election 14 to 30 days prior to THE ELECTION DAY and maintain the daily operations of a clerk's office. In reviewing other New England states that offer early voting, it will be interesting to see if they have Election Commissions overseeing elections at a County level for State elections. -- **BAR HARBOR**

Early voting would be terrific. Suggest that it be allowed a certain number of days prior to the election and that the clerk publish the times so that any interested person could be present to witness and challenge. The other concern regards people who vote absentee then decease before Election Day. Their ballots are not supposed to be counted. -- **BREWER**

Early voting sounds like a very feasible way of dealing with the abundance of absentee voters. -- **CARIBOU**

I have had many people question whether their ballot will be counted or not on Election Day when they are using the absentee process. A voter would have more privacy and confidentiality than absentee voting because they can deposit their ballot directly into the machine without anyone seeing how they voted. I would like to see a cut-off of early AND absentee voting before the election. The clerks should have the whole day before Election Day or at the very least ½ the day, to be able to prepare the voting place and get the voting list ready for Election Day. -- **FAIRFIELD**

If I also had to deal with early voting I would have more work in watching a voting machine (unless funds could be found to hire others to work during this period), processing those ballots through, securing a room to hold the voting for extended periods of time, and the securing of the machine each night. I would wonder about the perception of having ballots processed ahead of time in a machine. I am questioned often about where absentee ballots are kept now and who has access to them. I think the integrity of the voting would be questioned even more. -- **FARMINGTON**

I believe that casting directly into the voting machine is an excellent idea. I realize that all kinds of additional security would need to be established, but the saving in paperwork and frustration with folded ballots would be the reward. -- **FREEPORT**

I find that the current processing and maintenance of absentee ballots is very tedious and extremely time consuming. I am greatly in favor of early voting. I feel it will be a huge time saver. I do not have any concerns about tampering because the ballot box would be supervised during working hours and locked up at night. -- **GORHAM**

For our City early voting and cutting off absentee voting the Friday and Monday before Election would outweigh the overtime now needed just to get the absentee ballots done and ready along with the Election Day lists & all the material that is needed. [Public education] will be extremely important and probably the one key element to making the early voting work. The only problem that I see is with the AVS equipment. The telephone line is at the school and I would want the absentee voting to take place at City Hall. -- **HALLOWELL**

How do you secure the ballot box during business hours? In order to keep it secure we would have to hire someone to guard the box at all times during business hours or keep the box in the administration office behind the customer counter. If the box was kept behind the counter and voters were to enter the administration area, employee safety could be an issue. -- **HAMPDEN**

Security and integrity of the ballot box in a small town such as ours, and the fact that we generally only have one person working the desk will bring into question the integrity of the votes cast and recorded. -- **LAMOINE**

My concerns with early voting are the availability of secure space to store the equipment during the voting period. Space is at a premium at the town office and if we needed to have early voting some place else it would create a variety of problems such as location, security, manpower. -- **LINCOLN**

My concern with early voting is not only the security of where we put the voting machine, but the added work for our staff. Our office is secured, we don't allow the public past our counter and there would be no room to set up a voting machine in our office, which would put the voting machine in the outer hallway where it would not be secure. The polling place is ½ mile from our office at the high school gymnasium. -- **MILLINOCKET**

I think early voting is a "great idea!" Minot is a small town so I think it would run smoothly. Everything would be handled right in view of the clerk's office and the voting machine would be rolled back into the vault at the close of the business day. -- **MINOT**

I think that in small offices where there is only one person all the time it would be easy for someone to accuse the clerk of tampering with the ballot box with cast ballots in it whereas an absentee ballot envelop sealed by the voter insures the ballot has not been tampered with and provides much more protection for the lone clerk in the office. -- **NEW LIMERICK**

At this moment I believe [early voting is] a good idea. My concern would be financial. I would tend to think I would need an additional machine (which, I would like). Getting the board of selectmen on board with adding that item to our budget currently would not be an easy task. -- **NORTH YARMOUTH**

Unlike Election Day, where there is a warden that stays with the machine from beginning to end (and in one-polling place Towns like Old Orchard Beach, I'm there all day), there wouldn't be one person that could testify that [the election] results are valid. We would be disenfranchising the other registered voters from possibly challenging someone who is voting. -- **OLD ORCHARD BEACH**

Anyone challenging a voter would have to go through some process. I don't know how you would mark the ballot since it would already be in the machine – a problem. -- **RAYMOND**

With the absentee balloting procedures already in place, I see no need for an "early voting" procedure. Anyone who wants to vote early can do so by voting absentee. By instituting an "early voting" procedure, it is basically saying that the public does not trust that the absentee votes will be counted, which, frankly, I find insulting to all the clerks in this state who work very hard to ensure the integrity of our elections. -- **ROCKLAND**

Keeping the ballot box secure is an issue. We do not have a safe; we deal with fire safe file cabinets. -- **SMITHFIELD**

I feel early voting, if the ballots and equipment can be secured would be a welcome act. Voters are looking for an easier way to participate. -- **TURNER**

The current process is extremely cumbersome and redundant from a staffing and paperwork perspective. We envision improved process that would allow our time to be better spent making more substantial differences in say, areas of training, organization within our office, improving the current set-up of our polling locations, being able to BREATHE! Things that we currently struggle to manage during the frenzy of a condensed 30 day time period, the crushing volume of election work and juggling an ever growing population of voters anxious to vote absentee. -- **WESTBROOK**

I really like the idea of letting people put their own ballot right into the ballot machine immediately after they vote. I think it is a great idea. It would save us a lot of time and at least eliminate doing an envelope for those people. -- **WINDHAM**

Why try to push ahead with this before the statewide voter list issue is settled, as well as the handicap voter issue is settled? -- **WOODSTOCK**

One concern I can think of is the AVS system and how we would handle that and set that up for people. Our dedicated line for that is in a different building not usually accessible. -- **YARMOUTH**

Good ideas, many checks and balances need to be in place however. Cast ballots must be secured, procedures in place for full ballot boxes, procedure for challenged ballots. -- **YORK**

### ***General Comments***

I am really starting to question what the purpose of an actual election day is.... -- **FARMINGTON**

I had suggested that it would be wonderful if there were a way for people to use the vote by phone system from their own homes instead of the confusion of Election Day. Would someone be smart enough to make this work for early voting? -- **LITCHFIELD**

I can't imagine the State expecting the local communities to take on the load of early voting whereas we already have absentee voting; this is very upsetting to me as a clerk and registrar. Local budgets are continually being held down, and the expectations of the State in regards to voting and changes in the voting system are constantly changing, asking more of not only the communities but putting more of a burden onto the municipal staffs which are not expanding to meet these demands. -- **MILLINOCKET**

Nothing is better than just going to the polls on Election Day. -- **WOODSTOCK**