SPECIAL REPORT 2020

ACCOUNTING OF EARLY VOTING COSTS & IMPLEMENTATION

OFFICE OF THE DUTCHESS COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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MARCH 2020

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Dear County Officials & Taxpayers,

The Dutchess County Comptroller's Office has completed this special report on the costs and implementation of early voting in Dutchess County that was legislated in New York State. Early voting was among a series of Voting Reform bills signed into law early in 2019, designed to provide greater access to voting in New York - which historically has had some of the lowest voter turnout in the nation. Engaging in the democratic process of electing local, State, and federal representatives is among one of our most important rights and responsibilities.

The general election in November of 2019 was the first and only election thus far to have early voting. There were nine early voting days beginning on October 26th until November 3rd at a total of five polling places. The estimated cost for those early voting days is $162,754, with the additional capital costs of new poll pads and accessories of $405,990.

In 2020 there will be a total of 27 early voting days due to the Presidential Primary on April 28th, the Federal, State, and Local Primary on June 23rd, and the General Election on November 3rd. These additional voting days will result in a significant increase in expenses when compared to 2019.

Total voter turnout in Dutchess County varies from year-to-year and cycle-to-cycle. In 2019 early voting turnout accounted for 4.3% of total voters, with total general election turnout of 39.14% - a relatively low turnout rate. 2020 is a Presidential Election year, an election year which typically has the highest turnout of the four-year cycle.

It is too soon to tell what the impact of early voting legislation will have on voter turnout. It is important voters have easy access to exercise their civic duty and right of voting. It remains to be seen if early voting is an economically viable solution or other methods of voting should be considered such as "no excuse" absentee voting or vote-by-mail options.

I thank the Dutchess County Board of Elections for their assistance in gathering and validating the necessary information to produce this special report.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin L. Lois
Dutchess County Comptroller

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Background

Early in 2019, New York State Early Voting Legislation §8-600 was signed. This law affords registered New York State voters the opportunity to vote during a specific period prior to any general, primary, run-off primary, or special election. This early voting process was first implemented in Dutchess County, and across the state, for the November 5th, 2019 General Election, with nine early voting dates. Costs associated with the early voting totaled approximately **$162,753.84**. In 2020, there will be three elections that the Board of Elections (BOE) will administer: the Presidential Primary; the State, Federal and Local Primaries; and the general election in November. There will be a total of 27 early voting dates in 2020.

Under New York State Election Law, responsibilities are delegated to the Board of Elections of each county to oversee the compliance of all laws and regulations as it pertains to the administration of elections. Under the Dutchess County Charter, the BOE is considered a unit of County Government and is responsible for all Federal, State, County, city, and town elections in Dutchess County. The BOE is managed by two Commissioners, each recommended by one of the major political parties (Republican and Democrat) and appointed by the County Legislature.

The BOE has 16 full-time employees and an adopted annual budget for 2020 of **$3,584,561**.

Scope and Objectives

The following is a limited scope review of the early voting implementation by the Dutchess County Board of Elections for the 2019 General Election and the 2020 Primaries and General Election. In addition, a mention is made of the bonding resolution for the purchase of replacement Ballot Marking Devices.

Objectives:

- Summarize process for Early Voting
- Review the costs associated with the implementation of early voting in 2019 and identify anticipated New York State revenue funding
- Review the anticipated costs for 2020
- Include trends on Election expenditures related to Personnel costs and all expenditures for the Board of Elections by line item for the years 2016 to 2019.
- Provide statistics on voter turnout for 2015-2019 and 2019 Early Voter Turnout

Early Voting Procedures

According to Election Law §8-600, specific procedures must be followed to establish the designated polling places. For example, there should be at least one early voting place for every fifty thousand registered voters in a specific county; *however, the number of sites does not need to be more than seven. Those counties with fewer than fifty thousand registered voters must have at least one early voting polling site.* Counties should make every effort in the selection of sites to ensure they are readily accessible, considering certain factors such as location distance, population density, and access to public transit.

Early voting is to begin on the tenth day prior to election, for a total of nine early voting days prior to Election Day. The law also states that the early voting polls be open at least eight hours on weekdays, from the time between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. On Saturday, Sunday, and legal holidays, the early voting polls should be open at least five hours between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. NOTE: Primary Election hours and General Election hours for the polls on each respective day are 6am to 9pm.

In 2020, three elections will take place in Dutchess County. The first is the Presidential Primary Election taking place on **April 28th** which will determine the selection of delegates to attend the National Convention. The Early Voting for this election will start on April 18th and run through April 26th. The second election will be the Primary

Election (for Federal, State, and Local elections) held on **June 23rd** with the Early Voting dates of June 13th through June 21st. The final election is the General Election which takes place on **November 3rd** and the Early Voting dates will run from October 24th through November 1st.

Implementation of Early Voting in Dutchess County in 2019

In 2019, New York State Election Law §4-104 was adopted and required the Dutchess County Board of Elections to designate early voting dates and times. Dutchess County established five early voting sites in 2019. The number of enrolled voters in 2019 according to Dutchess County BOE was **196,708**.

As a result of this legislation, early voting dates were established for nine days prior to Election Day. Voting commenced on October 26 and ran through November 3, 2019.

Five sites were made available for Dutchess County voters in the following locations and times:

Rhinebeck Town Hall (80 East Market Street, Rhinebeck)

Millbrook Fire House (20 Front Street, Millbrook)

Dutchess County Board of Elections (47 Cannon Street, Poughkeepsie)

Union Vale Town Hall (249 Duncan Road, Lagrangeville)

Fishkill Town Hall (807 Route 52, Fishkill)

Early Voting Dates for General Election 2019	
Date	**Time**
Saturday, October 26	12pm - 5pm
Sunday, October 27	12pm - 5pm
Monday, October 28	9am - 5pm
Tuesday, October 29	12pm - 8pm
Wednesday, October 30	12pm - 8pm
Thursday, October 31	7am - 3pm
Friday, November 1	9am - 5pm
Saturday, November 2	9am - 5pm
Sunday, November 3	12pm - 5pm

Resolution No. 2019121

Amending the 2019 Adopted County Budget as it Pertains to the Board of Elections

In April of 2019, the BOE Commissioners requested additional funds from the County Legislature for the implementation of the required early voting staff, necessary equipment, and general expenses. This request was made and considered prior to confirmation of state reimbursement, therefore funded by general contingency.

Appropriations (Expense)	
Positions Temporary Help	$1,890
Temp Help Elections	$59,900
Office Supplies (includes poll books & printers)	$329,225
Data Line Internet Charges	$4,770
Maintenance Service Contracts	$5,750
Advertising Legal	$1,250
Employee Mileage Non-Taxable	$1,000
Other Services (Delivery of Machines)	$1,600
Interdepart Exp Postage (Voter outreach)	$57,000
Interdepart Exp Printing (Voter outreach)	$33,000
Computer Software - 5 Yr	$133,800
External Postage (Offset by interdepartment)	$57,000
Office Supplies (Offset by interdepartment)	$33,000
Total Appropriations	**$719,185**

Revenue	
Interdept Exp Reimb	$(57,000)
Interdept Exp Reimb	$(33,000)
General Contingency	$(629,185)
Total Revenue	**$(719,185)**

Board of Elections Departmental Expense Trend: 2016 - 2020

	2016 Expenses	2017 Expenses	2018 Expenses	2019 Expenses	2020 Budget
*Personnel Costs	$1,522,281.95	$1,338,785.13	$1,620,880.18	$1,606,817.74	$2,122,768.00 [1]
Operating Costs	$630,763.14	$456,558.38	$603,279.52	$1,042,031.98	$909,378.00 [2]
Employee Benefits	$490,147.13	$538,778.01	$581,700.48	$545,390.56	$552,415.00
Totals	$2,643,192.22	$2,334,121.52	$2,805,860.18	$3,194,240.28	$3,584,561.00

1 The significant increase from 2019 expenses to the 2020 budgeted funds primarily occurs in the Temporary Help line due to the additional Presidential Primary Election (PPE) and the implementation of Early Voting for all three elections.

2 While the overall operating costs decreased from 2019 to 2020 specific lines such as Data Lines, Commercial Printing, Postage and Other Services for the transportation of voting machines and equipment increased significantly also due to the additional PPE and the Early Voting for all three elections

Early Voting Costs

The identifiable costs associated with early voting in 2019 were **$162,753.84**. A breakdown of costs attributed to early voting is provided in **Exhibit I**.

In order to protect the integrity of voter data across multiple poll sites, new voter poll pads were purchased and utilized to facilitate the early voting process. The BOE purchased 260 iPads and the related accessories to replace paper poll books and efficiently process voter data. The total cost of the poll pads and accessories (including licensing, manuals, printers, charging stations, etc.) was **$405,990**. This has been partially reimbursed by New York State Electronic Poll Books Capital Grant, in the amount of **$237,119.19;** these funds were received by the County in February of 2020.

In addition to the County employed staff, temporary elections workers are provided for various elections each year. In 2019, 111 employees worked the early voting for a cost of **$45,015**. ($41,130 for salaries and $3,885 for training). Costs associated with early voting for full-time BOE County employees were not segregated from their normal pay.

Other anticipated funding includes ***Early Voting – Aid to Localities Grant*** of **$174,312.72** and ***HAVA (Help America Vote Act) Shoebox Grant*** funds of **$148,526.22**. As of the writing of this report, the BOE has submitted these claims to New York State for payment but has not yet received the funds. The total of all three grants intended to offset 2019 costs is **$559,958.13**.

Election Dates 2016 - 2020

Election dates are established annually by the New York State Board of Elections based on court-ordered and statutory provisions.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Presidential Primary	*April 19*	*n/a*	*n/a*	*n/a*	*April 28*
Federal Primary	*June 28*	*n/a*	*June 26*	*June 25**	*June 23**
State/Local Primary	*September 13*	*September 12*	*September 13*		
General Election	*November 8*	*November 7*	*November 6*	*November 5*	*November 3*

**In January 2019, the New York State Legislature consolidated local, State, and Federal primary dates. The law went into effect during the 2019 election cycle and changed the primary election date to June instead of September.*[1]

Early Voting in 2020 and the Presidential Primary Election

2020 elections will require a total of 27 early voting days, which will result in a significant increase in expenses when compared to the nine early voting days held in 2019. This increase was considered and accounted for in the 2020 Board of Election's budget request and adopted budget.

	2019 Expenses	2020 Budget	Difference
Personnel Costs	$1,606,817.74	$2,122,768.00	**$515,950.26**
Operating Costs	$1,042,031.98	$909,378.00	**($132,653.98)**
Employee Benefits	$545,390.56	$552,415.00	**$7,024.44**
Totals	**$3,194,240.28**	**$3,584,561.00**	**$390,320.72**

As indicated on the above chart, Personnel Costs in 2020 are expected to increase significantly from what was expensed in 2019. The increase is expected primarily in the Temporary Help line due to the additional Presidential Primary Election and the implementation of Early Voting for all three of the 2020 elections. While the overall Operating Costs decreased from 2019 to 2020, specific budget lines such as Data Lines, Commercial Printing, Postage, and Other Services (for the transportation of voting machines and equipment) increased

1 *Election Law - Section 8-100(1)(a)*

significantly also due to the additional Presidential Primary and the Early Voting for all three elections. Expense trends by line item and the approved budget costs for 2020 are provided in **Exhibit II**.

Board of Elections 2016 - 2019 Temporary Personnel Expenditures for Election Activities

Account Description	2016 Expenses	2017 Expenses	2018 Expenses	2019 Expenses	2020 Adopted Budget
Positions Temporary Help	$0	$0	$0	$0	$119,100 [1]
Temp Help Elections	$495,085	$316,010	$471,365	$426,370	$830,000 [2]
TOTALS	**$495,085**	**$316,010**	**$471,365**	**$426,370**	**$949,100**

[1] *The BOE 2020 budget request included funding in the Positions Temporary Help line for the hiring of two additional temporary employees for the Presidential Election.*

[2] *The Temporary Help Elections line was significantly increased for 2020 because of the Early Voting for all three elections and the Presidential Election.*

Dutchess County Voter Turnout Statistics

General Election Voter Turnout 2015-2019

Year	Registered Voters	Voter Turnout	Turnout (%)
2015	166,824	50,206	30.10%
2016	176,760	131,867	74.60%
2017	176,225	69,981	39.71%
2018	180,367	114,699	63.59%
2019	184,704	72,470	39.14%

2019 Early Voter Turnout

Saturday, October 26	1,034
Sunday, October 27	738
Monday, October 28	930
Tuesday, October 29	842
Wednesday, October 30	807
Thursday, October 31	536
Friday, November 1	793
Saturday, November 2	1,097
Sunday, November 3	1,215
Total Early Voters, Days 1 - 9	**7,992**
Total Voter Enrollment	184,704*
Early Voter Turnout %	**4.33%**

2019 Early Voter Turnout by Political Party

Party	Registered Voters	Early Turnout	(%)
Democratic	67,665	4,432	7%
Republican	52,625	2,015	4%
Conservative	3,680	118	3%
Independence	10,350	251	2%
NOP	48,772	1,134	2%
Other	1,612	42	3%
Total	**184,704***	**7,992**	

** Does not include "deactivated" voters*

Observations

- The highest volume early voting day was the ninth and final day of early voting.
- A total of 72,273 residents voted in 2019, up 22,264 voters from 2015, a similar ballot year.
- Voters at early voting sites were typically residents of towns immediately surrounding that site. (See Exhibit III-Early Voters by Municipalities).

Exhibit I - Early Voting Costs

Poll Pads	Quantity	Cost	Total
iPad *	10	$310.00	$3,100.00
Cases	10	$155.00	$1,550.00
License	10	$560.00	$5,600.00
Receipt Printer	10	$300.00	$3,000.00
Hot Spots (approximate cost per OCIS)	5	$30.00	$150.00
Total			**$13,400.00**
Poll Print	Quantity	Cost	Total
iPad	10	$310.00	$3,100.00
Poll Print - Tablet Case	10	$100.00	$1,000.00
Connection Pkge	10	$250.00	$2,500.00
Oki Printer	10	$750.00	$7,500.00
Cabinets	10	$2,000.00	$20,000.00
License	10	$599.00	$5,990.00
Blank Paper			$1,480.00
Total			**$41,570.00**
Salary & Training	Quantity	Cost	Total
Early Voting Training**	111	$35.00	$3,885.00
Salary	111		$41,130.00
Total			**$45,015.00**
Security for Early Voting	Quantity	Cost	Total
Wire Seals			$367.30
Total			**$367.30**
Advertising	Quantity	Cost	Total
EV Signs			$15.00
Paper			$52.58
8.5 x 11 Flyer for EV			$8,962.80
EV Flyer	500		$75.00
Postage for EV postcard mailing			$21,533.94
Total			**$30,639.32**
Manuals	Quantity	Cost	Total
Poll Pad Manual			$1,218.00
Poll Print Manual			$1,050.00
Total			**$2,268.00**
Other Costs Related to Early Voting	Quantity	Cost	Total
Charging Stations	6	$3,500.00	$21,000.00
Pocket Folders			$287.60
Vinyl envelopes Poll Pad			$95.00
10 Ft. cords for Poll Pads	10	$10.00	$100.00
Toner			$1,537.42
Receipt Paper	1000		$1,219.00
Grill Covers in brown for EV			$512.81
Lights for Booth for EV (includes s&h)			$617.84
Install. & Training			$3,500.00
Clip Magnets for Poll Print			$24.95
Extension Cords	20		$259.80
Tape	20		$339.80
Total			**$29,494.22**
Early Voting Grand Total			**$162,753.84**

** Billed but not paid*

*** The amount of training pay was based on BOE reporting that all 111 Early Voting workers received Early Voting Training.*

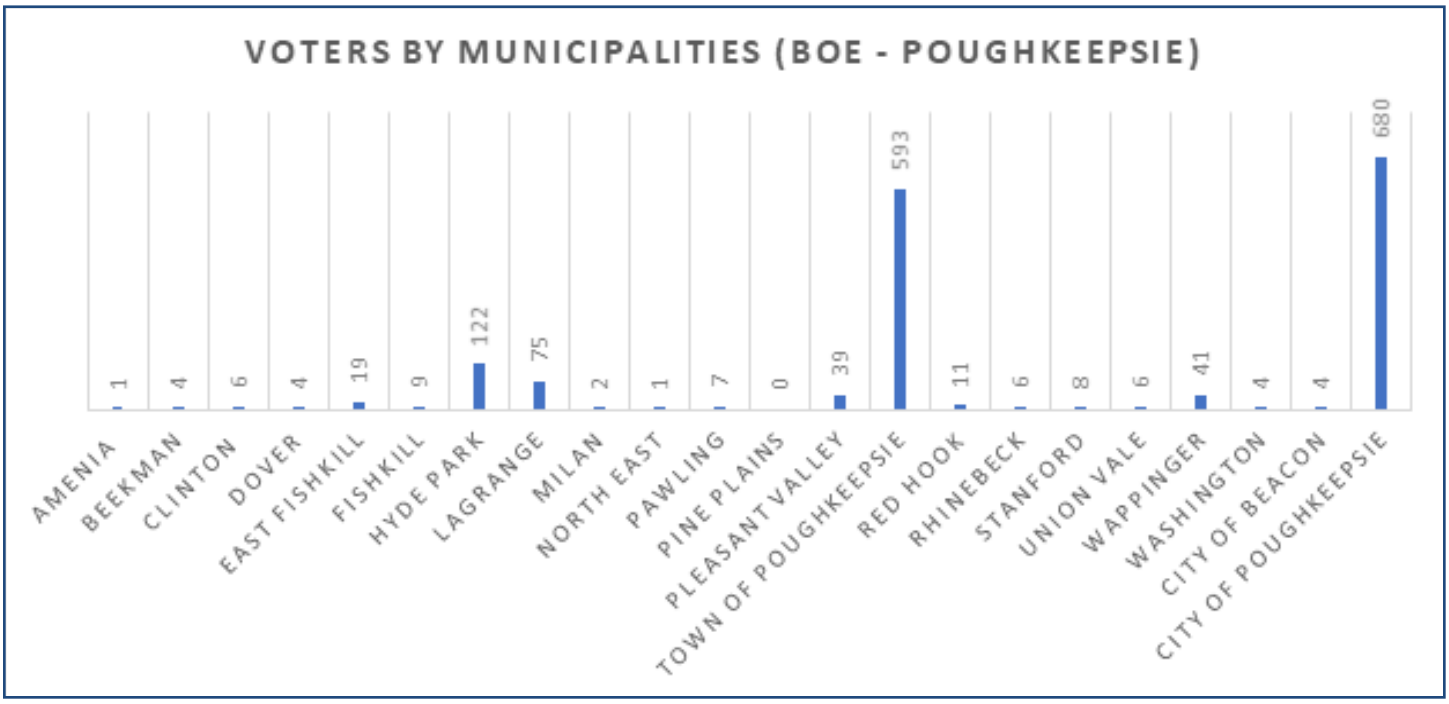
Exhibit II - Detailed Board of Election Expenses

Account	Description	2016 Expenses	2017 Expenses	2018 Expenses	2019 Expenses	2020 Budget
1010	Positions	1,017,291.87	1,012,046.62	1,135,557.21	1,160,582.94	1,150,668.00
1010.1030	Positions Temporary Help	.00	.00	.00	.00	119,100.00
1035	Temp Help Elections	495,085.00	316,010.00	471,365.00	426,370.00	830,000.00
1040	ST Overtime	240.70	72.50	1,232.17	1,785.46	5,000.00
1050	Overtime	9,664.38	10,656.01	12,725.80	18,079.34	18,000.00
2500.05	Other Equipment 5 YEAR	.00	.00	24,494.00	.00	.00
2600.05	Computer Software 5 YEAR	.00	7,368.57	7,368.57	.00	.00
4105	Bldg & Maint Parts, Supp & Tools	.00	.00	172.08	979.64	1,500.00
4123	Safety Supplies	.00	.00	.00	162.98	.00
4125	Food & Kitchen Supplies	.00	.00	.00	30.06	280.00
4160	Office Supplies	41,589.13	35,426.34	36,806.98	247,718.92	43,007.00
4160.115	Office Supplies Software Products & Licenses	217.95	.00	7,563.88	646.91	432.00
4190	Uniforms, Badges & Access	.00	.00	.00	258.00	.00
4210	Gas-Public Utilities	3,247.39	3,925.37	3,146.69	2,834.17	5,126.00
4220	Electric-Light & Power	4,582.20	4,486.34	5,029.35	4,574.91	5,038.00
4230.52	Telephone Cell Phones/Wireless Services	.00	.00	.00	4,160.00	.00
4231.54	Data Lines Internet Charges	959.40	959.40	1,659.40	1,749.40	13,770.00
4401.102	Professional Services Legal	6,301.00	5,009.88	19,691.66	31,567.92	25,000.00
4401.105	Professional Services Consultants	326.74	299.40	299.40	299.40	360.00
4401.106	Professional Services Program	135.78	135.85	.00	.00	320.00
4456	Training Programs - Educ	.00	.00	.00	3,500.00	11,800.00
4460	Comm Printing	245,648.83	128,212.36	187,969.49	128,708.79	300,000.00
4571.62	Rntl/Lse - Real Prop Short T	440.00	244.75	.00	240.00	.00
4571.63	Rntl/Lse - Real Prop Long T	75,881.28	80,739.58	87,541.20	87,541.20	87,542.00
4609	Maint -Service Contracts	52,950.00	51,900.00	53,287.40	331,007.87	133,800.00
4610.71	Advertising Legal	5,254.56	2,719.39	3,282.51	4,181.15	6,000.00
4610.106	Advertising Program	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
4612	Repairs/Alt To Equip	8,114.63	8,858.00	.00	9,960.50	2,000.00
4614	Security Services	150.00	.00	.00	.00	450.00
4619	Employee Mileage Non-Taxable	8,589.67	3,662.32	6,502.40	10,019.36	9,900.00
4620.72	Employee Travel & Exp Travel	4,707.48	3,119.88	4,028.60	2,704.06	6,400.00
4620.73	Employee Travel & Exp Reimb	5.00	14.00	13.50	88.00	40.00
4623	Other Services **	59,576.13	26,965.00	41,868.00	27,903.75	54,576.00
4626.75	Employee Allowance Meals Taxable	352.95	186.20	.00	.00	.00
4628.51	Interdept Exp Land Lines	4,812.00	4,812.00	4,320.00	3,960.00	5,332.00
4628.52	Interdept Exp Cell Phones	435.27	435.87	441.72	740.00	888.00
4628.77	Interdept Exp Postage	34,250.34	24,787.33	34,376.38	29,236.31	70,000.00
4628.78	Interdept Exp Copier Program	12,097.68	12,284.79	12,347.16	11,318.23	12,348.00
4628.79	Interdept Exp Printing	2,199.50	2,627.00	2,115.00	7,077.75	40,000.00
4628.80	Interdept Exp Auto Center	1,699.40	929.40	992.00	888.65	2,340.00
4628.81	Interdept Exp Records Retention	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
4628.82	Interdept Exp Computer Process	12,397.50	8,340.50	13,411.50	9,100.00	11,600.00
4631	Training Seminars/Conf	330.00	270.00	270.00	240.00	300.00
4650	External Postage	38,213.35	34,935.05	43,068.92	30,987.63	49,525.00
4653	Public Info and Services	.00	.00	.00	164.00	164.00
4660	Safe Deposit Boxes	95.00	95.00	95.00	95.00	100.00
4670.95	Subscriptions Subscr	68.98	189.99	976.73	39.99	40.00
4670.96	Subscriptions Dues	70.00	140.00	140.00	140.00	300.00
4710	Furniture & Office Equip-ND	5,064.00	2,478.82	.00	47,207.43	9,100.00
8100	Pymts to Retire System	145,244.00	136,236.00	138,053.00	138,469.00	136,007.00
8200	Pymts to Soc Sec	76,763.11	76,020.88	85,273.36	87,830.28	88,042.00
8355	Long-Term Disability	4,297.77	5,660.39	5,864.98	6,059.66	6,766.00
8400	Hospital,Med&Surg Ins	237,110.22	291,673.20	324,062.34	284,386.72	292,080.00
8450	Optical Insurance	3,205.47	3,459.20	3,440.80	3,588.00	3,840.00
8500	Dental Insurance	19,679.60	23,225.52	22,410.08	22,432.80	22,736.00
8800	Life Ins	3,526.38	2,085.32	2,162.88	2,150.64	2,408.00
8850	ACC Death & Dismemb	320.58	417.50	433.04	473.46	536.00
	Expense Totals	**2,643,192.22**	**2,334,121.52**	**2,805,860.18**	**3,194,240.28**	**3,584,561.00**

**2020 Expenses BPR run 01/15/20*
*** Transportation of Voting Machines & Equipment for elections*

Exhibit III - Early Voting by Municipalities

Provided by the Dutchess County Board of Elections



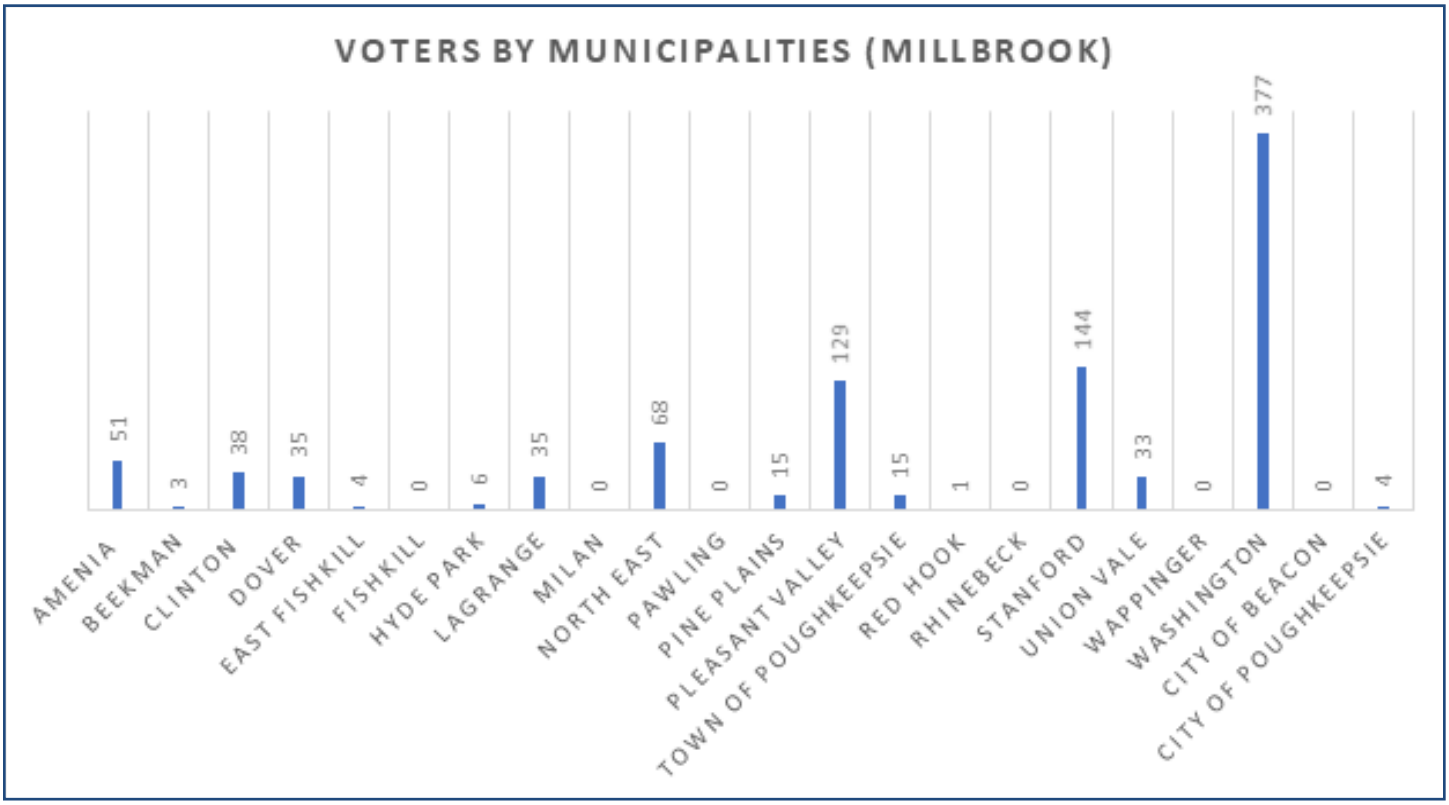
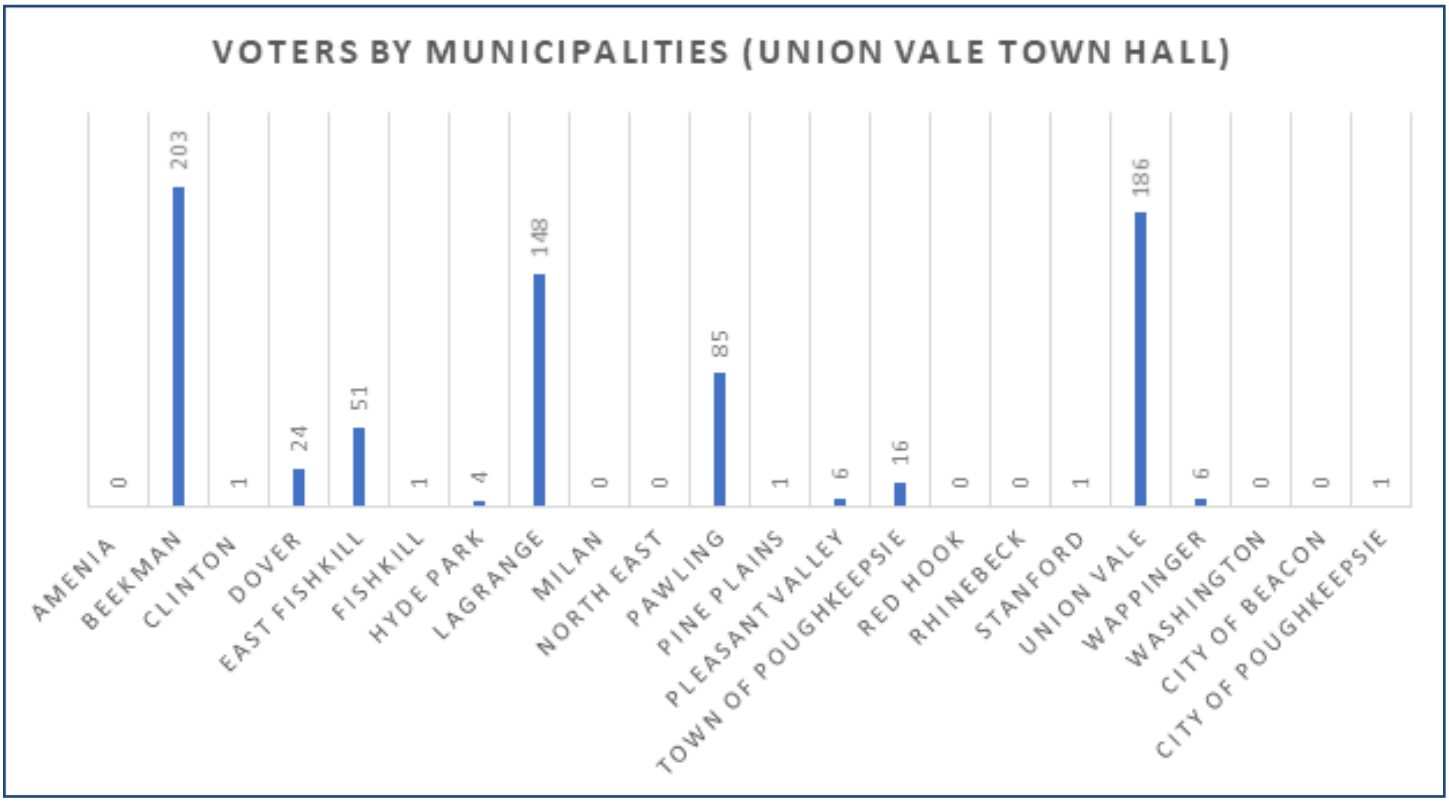
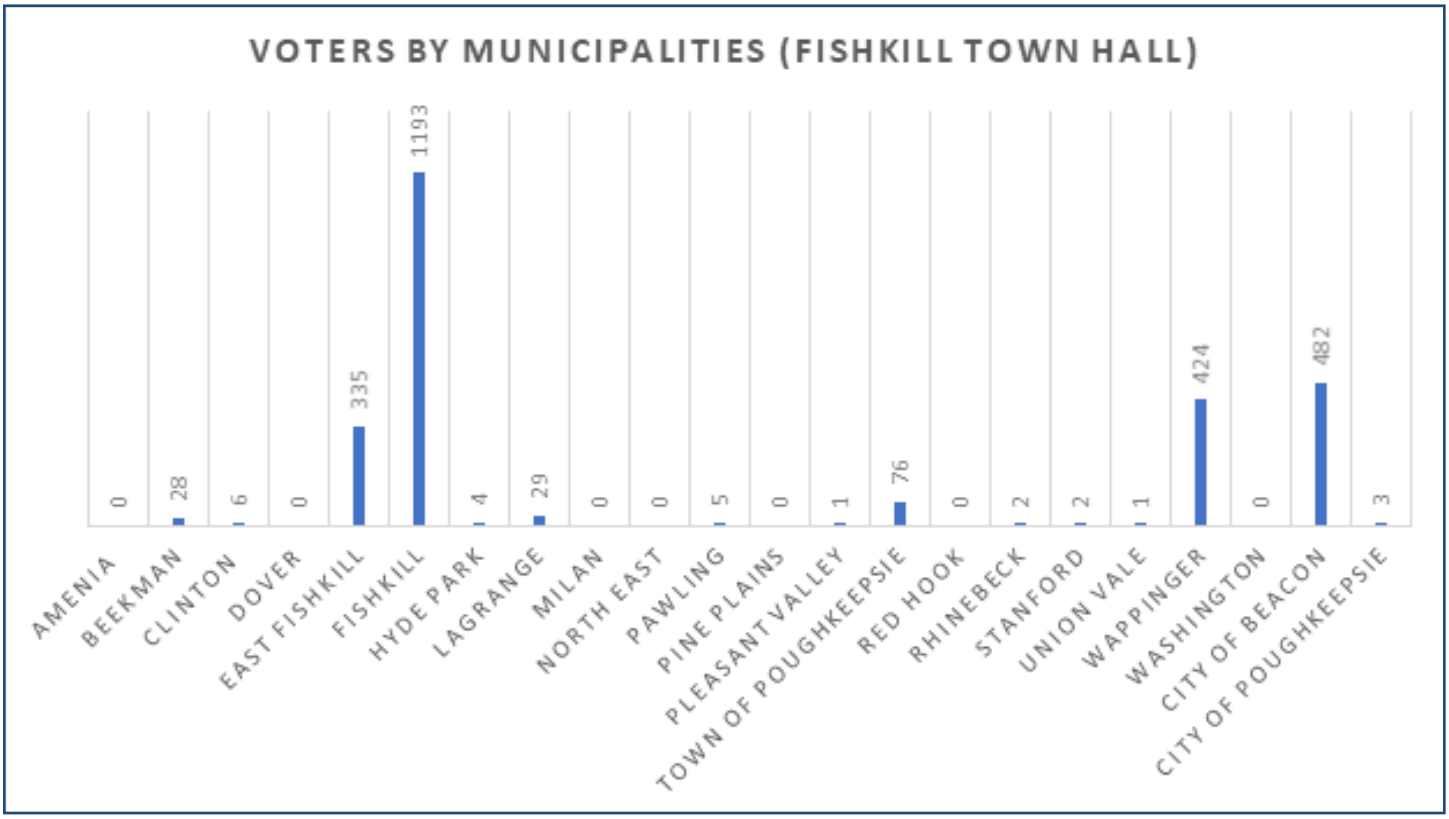


Exhibit III - Early Voting by Municipalities *(Cont.)*





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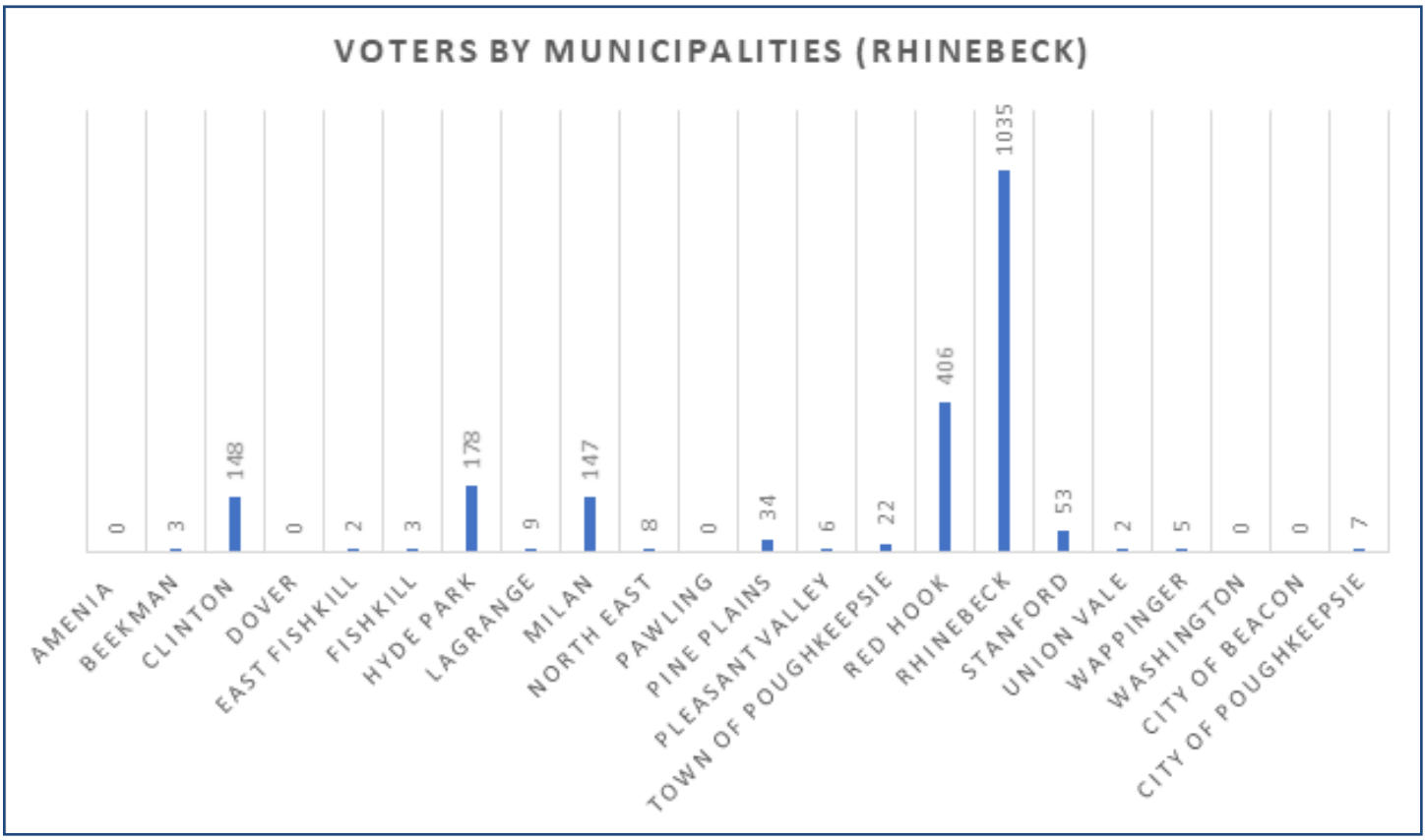

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