

City of Annapolis Election Administration and the Anne Arundel County Board of Elections

Administrative History of Annapolis Municipal Election Administration: 2009–Present

This report provides a concise overview of the administrative and fiscal relationship between the City of Annapolis (the City) and the Anne Arundel County Board of Elections (AACBOE) from 2009 to the present. It should be noted that the AACBOE is a state agency, subject to the authority of the Maryland State Board of Elections (“SBE”), although fully funded by Anne Arundel County, as required by law.

Under Maryland Election Law, the relationship between the City and the AACBOE is a blend of statutory obligation and optional contract.

The County is Legally Mandated to Provide (at no cost):

- **Voter Data:** Certified lists of registered Annapolis voters residing within city boundaries and voter registration forms (Election Law § 3-403).

The County is Not Mandated to Conduct the Election:

- The City of Annapolis Board of Supervisors of Elections is legally responsible for the conduct of the municipal elections and all decisions made in connection with those elections.
- Any support beyond providing the voter registration list—such as providing voting equipment, hiring/training poll workers, canvassing, or certification—is optional.
- This optional assistance is formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- Without the MOU, the AACBOE is under no obligation to provide any services aside from what is mandated by Maryland Election Law.

Scope of Annapolis Municipal Elections

Annapolis elections involve a significant administrative scope:

- **Registered Voters:** 25,473 (as of January 9, 2026)
- **Polling Places:** 8 locations
- **Wards/Precincts:** 8 Wards composed of 16 precincts
- **Voting Methods:** In person voting on Election Day. Mail-in ballots and dropboxes are utilized. A manual voter notification process has been developed to mirror the statewide enhanced mail-in voter communication protocols, though Early Voting is not included.
- **Comparative Size:** The Annapolis electorate is larger than five Maryland counties (Caroline, Dorchester, Garrett, Kent, Somerset) and nearly equivalent to a sixth (Talbot).

Differences from Statewide Elections

The AACBOE provides services to the City that are similar, but not identical, to those provided for statewide elections. Notable exclusions in the municipal election include:

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- Early Voting
- Web-delivery of ballots to voters.
- Enhanced ballot tracking (voter alerts for mailing, USPS tracking, delivery, receipt, notification when envelope is opened and ballot is counted).
- Immediate online reporting of unofficial election results on Election Night.

Election Administration History and Costs

Essentially, the AACBOE functions as a vendor for the City. The City executes an MOU with the AACBOE for election administration services and support and signs a second MOU with the Maryland State Board of Elections (SBE) to use the current voting equipment and agrees to adhere to certain election policies and procedures.

The AACBOE is an implementing body for SBE regulations and does not possess the mission scope or resource bandwidth to draft election policies or create new administrative frameworks for an Election. Municipal elections are conducted in addition to the AACBOE's regularly scheduled preparation for statewide elections.

Year	Administrative Model	Key Events and Fiscal Impact
2009	Informal Agreement	No formal MOU. An "understood agreement" for support was in place. Disagreement over reimbursement of costs led to the AACBOE deciding against future participation.
2013	City-Run Election	The City administered the election independently, receiving only the minimum legally required voter registration information from the AACBOE. The City concluded that independent administration involved a much larger scope and higher costs and liabilities than anticipated.

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<p>2017</p>	<p>Contractual MOU</p>	<p>The City and AACBOE entered a formal MOU for election conduct, including support and voting system use. The SBE introduced a Municipal Election Questionnaire and Guidelines. The City agreed to reimburse the AACBOE for staff hours and paid a \$5,000 voting system fee to SBE. County Executive Schuh waived repayment to the AACBOE of most associated fees.</p>
<p>2021</p>	<p>Increased Liability</p>	<p>The City mailed ballots directly to all registered voters due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The City and the AACBOE were both named as defendants in subsequent litigation, demonstrating a higher liability for election conduct and a more litigious environment.</p>
<p>2025</p>	<p>Mandated Use, Elevated Costs</p>	<p>The Maryland State Legislature passed SB0088/HB0322 as emergency legislation effective June 2025. This mandates an MOU between the SBE and the City for voting system use and introduces significant fee increases: SBE Equipment Fees: Approximately \$76,400 (including \$40,000 for electronic pollbooks, \$10,000 for database programming, and \$14,400 for mail-in voting development). AACBOE</p>

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		<p>Services MOU: A separate MOU totals \$150,000 for staff hours for preparation and execution, including manual enhanced mail-in ballot communications. Total Cost Liability: Exceeds \$220,000 for the Primary and General.</p>
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Current Pressure Points

- **SBE Limitations:** In August, 2024, SBE announced that with the exception of four municipalities: the City of Frederick, City of Annapolis, Ocean City and the City of Salisbury, SBE would no longer provide, or permit Local Boards of Election to provide, services or equipment other than the voter lists as required by Election Law § 3-40, and that even in the case of the four excepted municipalities, SBE would support only services.
- **AACBOE Administrative Bandwidth:** The complexity of modern election laws, particularly concerning mail-in voting, the ballot "curing" processes, and the expectation by voters of enhanced ballot tracking and communication for mail-in ballots, strains the AACBOE staff, whose core priority remains the administration of County, State, and Federal election cycles – i.e. the bi-annual Presidential and Gubernatorial elections.
- **Future Customization Risk:** Any further administrative customization requested by the City, such as for "ranked-choice voting" or "open primaries," is likely to exceed the AACBOE's existing technical and legal capacity. This could necessitate the Board reverting to its statutory minimum support.

Conclusion

The administrative history of the Annapolis Municipal Election cycle since 2009 illustrates a clear transition from an informal, cooperative service model to a complex, high-risk operational contract. The increasing complexity and standalone costs of the odd-year municipal cycle are placing significant stress on the intergovernmental relationship. The timing and complexity of the Annapolis Municipal has turned the election into an expensive project which requires significant staff support from the AACBOE. These pressures may necessitate the AACBOE declining to become involved in future municipal elections.