Agenda Report

December 1, 2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: City Clerk

SUBJECT: **DISCUSSION REGARDING WHETHER OR NOT TO DIRECT CITY STAFF TO REQUEST THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE CONDUCT A MANUAL RECOUNT FOR PASADENA MEASURE PFD**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

(1) Find that the proposed action is not a "project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 21065 and within the meaning of Section 15378(b); and
(2) Consider whether it is in the City's best interest for the City Council to direct City staff to request the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RRCC) Office conduct a manual recount of Measure PFD, or in the alternative, take no action to request a recount of Measure PFD; and
(3) If it is determined to direct staff to request a recount, authorize City staff to expend City funds to cover the costs associated with the recount, and coordinate recount activities with RRCC staff, up to and including when and if to terminate recount efforts.

BACKGROUND:

On August 3, 2026, the City Council placed Measure PFD on the November 3, 2026 General Election ballot for Pasadena voters to consider a parcel tax to support Fire Department services, programs, and capital infrastructure improvements to fire facilities. As a City-initiated ballot measure seeking a special tax, Measure PFD requires 2/3 voter approval of the votes cast to be deemed approved. As of the writing of this agenda report, the RRCC's Office is reporting that Measure PFD has received 66.42% support, which is short of the necessary 66.67% for approval (a margin of .25%).

The RRCC's Office is in the process of certifying final election results for the November 3rd General Election, with the Official Canvass of Election scheduled to be completed on Friday, November 27, 2026. California Elections Code Section 15620 establishes the period for requesting a manual recount of ballots, which begins on the 25th day following the election (Saturday, November 28, 2026), and ends on the 29th day following the election (Wednesday, December 2, 2026).

This agenda report is submitted to provide the City Council with an opportunity during the recount request period to consider whether a manual recount of ballots is warranted and should be conducted by RRCC staff on behalf of the City.

1% Manual Tally

California Elections Code Division 14, Chapter 4, Article 5 mandates that a manual tally of 1% of the counted ballots be conducted "during the official canvass of every election." The purpose of the manual tally is to confirm, by hand, the accuracy of results from a random sample of 1% of the electronically tabulated ballots for each election.

On November 23, 2026, the City Clerk and other City staff met with Los Angeles County RRCC staff to observe County election workers perform a portion of the mandatory 1% Manual Tally for the November General Election, and to confirm that the reported electronic results of Measure PFD compare accurately with randomly selected batches of hand-tallied ballots.

Following several manual tallies containing Measure PFD votes, City staff found that the outcome of the hand-tallied ballots matched exactly with the results of the machine-tallied ballots. There were no anomalies or variances between the two types of tallies covering the same randomly selected batches of ballots. This has given City staff a high level of confidence in the results presently being reported for Measure PFD by the Registrar of Voters, which show the Measure as not receiving sufficient support to pass.

Historically, there are limited instances of manual recounts occurring in Los Angeles County since the implementation of the RRCC's new VSAP voting system in 2020. In 2021, the City of Compton conducted a full recount for one of its elections, which resulted in no changes whatsoever to the election results (no candidate gained votes, no candidate lost votes). In 2023, the cities of Long Beach and Beverly Hills each started a recount process for their ballot measures but later abandoned those recounts during the process after witnessing the accuracy of the tallies.

Manual Recount Process

Should the City Council determine that a manual recount is reasonable and necessary (in light of the small margin existing for Measure PFD), an action to direct City staff is required prior to December 2, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. to request the RRCC's Office conduct the recount process on behalf of the City of Pasadena. If such an action is taken, City staff would be authorized to: 1) coordinate the recount activities with RRCC staff, 2) utilize City funds to cover the costs of the recount, and 3) if warranted, abandon recount efforts in real-time if no variances or anomalies are witnessed during the course of the process.

The City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk would represent the City of Pasadena in the recount process, and collectively determine whether, in the City's best interest, the manual recount process should continue to its conclusion or be abandoned based on real-time data and results.

FISCAL IMPACT:

If the City Council requests a manual recount for Measure PFD, the costs will vary based on the method chosen by the City. The most economical and efficient method is utilizing the County's scanned ballot technology, where images of ballots are used by the Tally Board to review and manually tally the votes. This method is the easiest and least expensive to administer and would require $9,200 deposit per day at a rate of $1,150 per hour. The second option is printing the scanned ballots from the system, requiring additional labor and materials. This method would require $11,400 deposit per day at a rate of $1,425 per hour. The final most expensive and labor-intensive method would involve a recount using the actual paper ballots. This method requires RRCC staff to locate and retrieve all the paper ballots containing Measure PFD from ballot storage. This method would require $18,600 deposit per day at a rate of $2,325 per hour.

Regardless of the method used, the timing of any directed recount would start seven days following the request and would take place at the RRCC's Central Ballot Processing Center in the City of Industry. If the City Council were to direct City staff to proceed with the recount at the December 1, 2026 City Council meeting, the recount request would be submitted to the RRCC staff the next business day, Wednesday, December 2, 2026. This would set the timing for the actual manual recount to occur the following week on Wednesday, December 9, 2026.

If the City Council determines to proceed with the recount, the estimated final cost of a full manual tally will vary based on the chosen method detailed above and the length of time needed to either complete the manual tally or abandon the recount (to be determined by City staff based on presence or absence of variances or anomalies witnessed). Unless otherwise directed by the City Council, City staff intends to request the most efficient and least expensive manual tally method. The anticipated cost would be paid from funds available in the City Clerk's Election Budget Account No. 10113002. If the costs exceed available funds, City staff will return to the City Council at a later date to request a mid-year budget adjustment.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Jomsky
City Clerk