

**Columbus Consolidated Government  
Council Meeting Agenda Item**

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Councilors
<b>AGENDA SUBJECT:</b>	Mail Opener/Extractor for Board of Elections
<b>INITIATED BY:</b>	Finance Department

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It is requested that Council approve payment to Opex Corporation (Moorestown, NJ) in the amount of \$35,396.60 for the purchase of a mail opener/extractor for the Board of Elections. Due to the anticipated amount of absentee-by-mail turnout during the most recent election cycle, automation was critical to facilitate processing absentee ballot applications, ballot envelopes and ballots efficiently and accurately in weeks leading up to Election Day and in the canvassing process afterwards. The Mail Opener/Extractor enabled election workers to process mailed-in ballots automatically rather than opening the mail by hand. Prior to the 2020 election cycle, and the challenges faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, absentee voting by mail participation increased from an average of about 7K absentee by mail ballots to over 56K. This significantly increased the cost of processing absentee ballots.

Thirty (30) election workers were using hand letter openers and worked 18-hour days for fourteen days straight for the June Primary. An attempt was made to use smaller electric envelope openers, but that equipment burned out quickly as they were not designed to handle such large volumes.

After hearing from a colleague in another county who had recently purchased the opener/extractor, the Board of Elections determined that the OPEX Ballot Extractor was vital to operations, as well as a cost-effective way to continue to successfully serve the community, considering the changes in how our citizens were voting. It is expected that absentee by mail voters will continue to increase in the future.

OPEX is recognized as a global technology leader in both government and private business sectors. At the time, OPEX was already serving multiple counties and municipalities in the Atlanta area and across Georgia using this equipment to open their incoming mail and absentee ballots.

Funding is available in the FY21 Budget: Multi-Gov't Project Fund – Board and Commissions – CTCL Election Grant – Elections Expenses; 0216-290-2211-6355.

**A RESOLUTION**

**NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PAYMENT TO OPEX CORPORATION (MOORESTOWN, NJ) IN THE AMOUNT OF \$35,396.60 FOR THE PURCHASE OF A MAIL OPENER/EXTRACTOR FOR THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS.**

**WHEREAS**, due to the anticipated amount of absentee-by-mail turnout during the most recent election cycle, automation was critical to facilitate processing absentee ballot applications, ballot envelopes and ballots efficiently and accurately in weeks leading up to Election Day and in the canvassing process afterwards. The Mail Opener/Extractor enabled election workers to process mailed-in ballots automatically rather than opening the mail by hand; and,

**WHEREAS**, prior to the 2020 election cycle, and the challenges faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, absentee voting by mail participation increased from an average of about 7K absentee by mail ballots to over 56K. This significantly increased the cost of processing absentee ballots. Thirty (30) election workers were using hand letter openers and worked 18-hour days for fourteen days straight for the June Primary. An attempt was made to use smaller electric envelope openers, but that equipment burned out quickly as they were not designed to handle such large volumes; and,

**WHEREAS**, after hearing from a colleague in another county who had recently purchased the opener/extractor, the Board of Elections determined that the OPEX Ballot Extractor was vital to operations, as well as a cost-effective way to continue to successfully serve the community, considering the changes in how our citizens were voting. It is expected that absentee by mail voters will continue to increase in the future; and,

**WHEREAS**, OPEX is recognized as a global technology leader in both government and private business sectors. At the time, OPEX was already serving multiple counties and municipalities in the Atlanta area and across Georgia using this equipment to open their incoming mail and absentee ballots.

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF COLUMBUS, GEORGIA, HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:**

That the City Manager is hereby authorized to render payment to payment to Opex Corporation (Moorestown, NJ) in the amount of \$35,396.60 for the purchase of a mail opener/extractor for the Board of Elections. Funding is available in the FY21 Budget: Funding is available in the FY21 Budget: Multi-Gov't Project Fund – Board and Commissions – CTCL Election Grant – Elections Expenses; 0216-290-2211-6355.

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Introduced at a regular meeting of the Council of Columbus, Georgia, held the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021 and adopted at said meeting by the affirmative vote of \_\_\_\_\_ members of said Council.

Councilor Allen voting \_\_\_\_\_.  
Councilor Barnes voting \_\_\_\_\_.  
Councilor Crabb voting \_\_\_\_\_.  
Councilor Davis voting \_\_\_\_\_.  
Councilor Garrett voting \_\_\_\_\_.  
Councilor House voting \_\_\_\_\_.  
Councilor Huff voting \_\_\_\_\_.  
Councilor Thomas voting \_\_\_\_\_.  
Councilor Tucker voting \_\_\_\_\_.  
Councilor Woodson voting \_\_\_\_\_.

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Sandra T. Davis, Clerk of Council

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B.H. "Skip" Henderson III, Mayor