

MINUTES
Wicomico County Board of Elections
345 Snow Hill Road, Salisbury, MD 21804
Wednesday, August 19, 2020

ATTENDEES: Brad Bellacicco, Board President, Republican Member, present in office
Katrina Purnell, Board Secretary, Democratic Member, present in office
Joseph Collins, Republican Member, present in office
Catherine Keim, Republican Member, present in office
Sharon Morris, Democratic Member, present in office
Peter Golba, Board Attorney, via phone
Anthony Gutierrez, Election Director, present in office
Dionne Church, Deputy Director, present in office

ABSENT: None

GUESTS: None

The Wicomico County Board of Elections met Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Public notice was given and the agenda was posted at the Board of Elections office the week prior to the meeting. Additionally, a special public notice that, in compliance with the Governor's Order to prevent of spreading the COVID-19 virus, and in compliance with a directive from the State Board of Elections office, the board would not meet in-person but the public would have a way to call-in and listen to the meeting if they would like.

Brad Bellacicco, Board President, called the meeting to order, conducting a roll call of the board members, and declared that there was a quorum present.

Brad Bellacicco voluntarily led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Board chose to recite The Lord's Prayer.

Brad Bellacicco asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 15, 2020 meeting of the Board of Elections. Sharon Morris made a motion to approve the minutes with corrections; seconded by Joe Collins, passed unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: (See Attached Copy)

Anthony Gutierrez, Election Director, referred the Board to the items listed on his Director's Report. The following items were highlighted.

Interviews will be conducted for the Election Judge Coordinator and Acting IT Specialist positions, as well as for County seasonal employees to assist with processing the anticipated thousands of mail-in ballot applications and ballots, in addition to the regular voter registration applications and changes to existing records, conducting Election Judge training, and preparing polling place supplies.

The Election Director will be assuming responsibility for the voting system until the Acting IT Specialist is hired. The election system vendor will come to provide training. When the Acting IT Specialist is hired, they will have the assistance of County tech personnel.

The Director will forward an email to the Board of SBE's report to the Governor.

The Election Director inquired of SBE as to whether the local board has the authority to limit political signs posted on our office property. SBE Deputy Administrator Nikki Charlson stated that they are presently considering this issue.

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An increase in human resources expenses for FY 2020 was addressed. Hospitalization costs increased because the County added “Retirees – Health Insurance” to this line item. The SBE Budget officer speculates that our Unemployment increased due to previous employees possibly applying due to COVID.

BOARD ATTORNEY’S REPORT:

Peter Golba stated he had received a call from a voter who found the Primary Election process confusing. He suggested more dissemination of information for the General Election. Discussion followed.

OLD BUSINESS:

To avoid providing incorrect information or information that may subsequently change ahead of the election, we have been careful about limiting the amount of unconfirmed details on the website. A link has been provided for voters to submit an application for a mail-in ballot online.

SBE has directed that Early Voting will occur October 26 through November 2, 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. On Election Day, November 3, the designated Early Voting Center will be open, in addition to public high schools (or SBE approved alternative locations) designated by the local boards.

Following recommendations presented by the Director and Deputy Director, discussion of the possible voting centers ensued, taking distance, population, and accessibility into account, as well as limiting risk factors inherent in the ongoing pandemic.

Sharon Morris made a motion to use the following sites for vote centers; seconded by Catherine Keim, passed unanimously:

- Salisbury Middle School (located in County District 1)
- Mardela High School (located in County District 2)
- Pemberton Elementary School (located in County District 2)
- Wicomico Youth & Civic Center (located in County District 3) – also Early Voting Center
- Bennett Middle School (located in County District 3)
- Bennett High School (located in County District 4)
- Beaver Run Elementary (located in County District 5)

These locations must now be approved by the State Board of Elections.

The Board discussed sending a brightly colored postcard informing voters of the available vote centers and pertinent details. A motion was made by Katrina Purnell that a colorful (neon) postcard be designed, utilizing content regarding dates, times, and locations of vote centers, and including a statement that anyone may vote at any of these locations; seconded by Catherine Keim, passed unanimously. The Board will submit proposals for content to the Director, and a draft will be prepared for the next Board meeting.

It was discussed that the information on the LBE’s website is in need of improvement. Once pertinent election-related details are finalized, they will be included on the website. The Director reiterated his earlier remarks regarding giving accurate information to voters.

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Sharon Morris inquired as to whether masks will be required at vote centers. The Director stated that we will follow whatever County rules are in effect at that time. The use of personal protective equipment and procedures for sanitation will be in effect for all vote centers.

Sharon Morris inquired if the Board members will be required to make visits to the various vote centers. The Director stated that SBE has not informed local boards of this yet.

Regarding Election Judge training, the Director indicated that SBE is not requiring LBEs to offer hands-on training. However, while the lecture portion of the training will be online, we will offer opportunities for hands-on training to judges who feel they need it.

The Board of Elections recessed at 10:31 a.m.

The Board of Canvassers convened at 10:31 a.m.

20 ballots from the 2020 Primary Election were presented for rejection for having been received late. Katrina Purnell made a motion to reject these 20 ballots as late; seconded by Catherine Keim, passed unanimously.

The Board of Canvassers adjourned at 10:34 a.m.

The Board of Elections reconvened at 10:34 a.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

MISCELLANEOUS:

None.

MEMBERS TIME:

None.

CLOSED SESSION:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:


Brad Bellacicco announced that the next regular meeting will be Wednesday September 16, 2020 at 9:00 a.m., unless a special meeting is required prior to that date. The meeting will be conducted at the local board office unless County directives become more stringent as to preclude an in-person meeting.

A motion was made by Brad Bellacicco to adjourn this meeting, passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


Brad Bellacicco, Board President

Date


Bill Blockston, Recorder

9/18/20

Date

Revised 9/16/20