

MINUTES
Wicomico County Board of Elections
345 Snow Hill Road, Salisbury, MD 21804
Wednesday, September 16, 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, joined meeting at 10:00 a.m.

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.

Prior to this meeting, James "Bo" McAllister, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Wicomico County was present to swear in the members of the Board of Canvassers. Katrina Purnell and Sharon Morris were also sworn in as members of the Board of Elections.

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 August 19, 2020 meeting of the Board of Elections. Joseph Collins made a motion to approve the minutes with one addition and one deletion; seconded by Sharon Morris, passed unanimously.

Changes to Agenda: The Board of Elections will convene to rule on ballots for the Primary Election which were received late.

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.

Regarding personnel matters, Judi East has been hired as the Election Judge Coordinator. The Acting IT Specialist is now working in the office for the election, as well County technical support personnel and four County seasonal workers to date.

The Director attended the September 9 Democratic Club Zoom meeting. He also contacted Nate Samson, chair of the Republican Central Committee, to offer to speak to their groups as well.

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There has been no response from SBE on whether candidate signs are allowed on Board of Elections property.

A call was received from a voter who requested that all regular polling places be opened for this election.

BOARD ATTORNEY'S REPORT:

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

Joseph Collins made a motion to recess the Board of Elections at 9:09 a.m. in order to convene the Board of Canvassers; seconded by Sharon Morris. At 9:09 a.m. the Board of Canvassers convened. 8 additional ballots from the 2020 Primary Elections have been received. Joseph Collins made a motion to reject these 8 ballots as late; seconded by Sharon Morris, passed unanimously.

For the October meeting, the Board has requested a total number of ballots that have been rejected during the 2020 Primary Election.

Joseph Collins made a motion to adjourn the meeting of the Board of Canvassers and reconvene the Board of Elections; seconded by Catherine Keim, passed unanimously.

The Board of Elections reconvened at 9:11 a.m.

The Director discussed the target dates for the ballot drop boxes to be delivered, slated for September 28. The first 2 boxes to be received will be placed at the Board of Elections office and the Wicomico Civic Center. Subsequently, a third will be placed at the Wicomico Tourism Center in Delmar. Wicomico County Council member Joe Holloway has requested a fourth box at Pittsville Fire Department.

There was discussion regarding the number of Ballot Marking Devices to be deployed at Early Voting and the Vote Centers. This discussion was tabled until a later meeting.

Emergency regulations for the 2020 General Election were discussed, including the following:

There was extensive discussion regarding the directive pertaining to date stamping ballots received. The Election Director will obtain and send the Board the exact wording of this directive once it is approved by SBE. Katrina Purnell suggested hiring at least one additional person solely for the purpose of date stamping ballots as received. The Board also discussed the option of obtaining another stamping machine. Katrina Purnell made a motion to continue the current procedure of date stamping all items received in the office until the Board Attorney gives clarification on the SBE directives regarding physically time stamping ballots; seconded by Joseph Collins, passed unanimously.

The LBE staff recommended one-person teams for opening ballots with in-person observation. The Board opted to have two-person teams with live streaming observation.

Remote participation is authorized for local boards. The canvassing schedule is to be determined. The Election Director will send dates during which the Board's participation is required as soon as these dates are available.

SBE emergency regulations direct that if a voter submits their mail-in ballot and then goes to a vote center and votes a provisional ballot, the mail-in ballot is to be counted and the provisional is to be rejected. Any double voting, as in current procedure, is reported to the State. The Election Director will

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request a copy of this State Board regulation also. The Board discussed various scenarios which could be impacted by this regulation and the fact that a large number of ballots will be mail-in. Also, ballots received can be tracked online via the SBE website.

Katrina Purnell stated that the SBE website and the local site must be made current.

The postcard mailing regarding voting centers was discussed. Sharon Morris made a motion to choose the bid for Minuteman Press to produce and mail the postcard; seconded by Katrina Purnell, passed unanimously. The content for the postcard was discussed, and Board members wish to add a statement that voters may vote at any of the designated voting centers. The vote centers should be in alphabetical order.

The Board decided that standard-sized signs be placed at all voting centers which are to be utilized, as well as regular polling places which are not being utilized in this election, stating "To Vote, Go To" and listing all voting centers and the date and times for Election Day (November 3, 2020, 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.) The Election Director will send the Board a draft. There will be no signs or banners for drop boxes.

The Election Director states that there has been no information yet from SBE on Board visits to vote centers.

The target dates for the Sample Ballot mailings are: October 2, October 9, and October 19.

NEW BUSINESS:

The Board discussed requests to open an additional vote center in the Pittsville area. SBE would have to approve the addition, and this would affect mailings, as well as technical issues such as signal testing.

Joseph Collins made a motion to open all 33 polling places in Wicomico County on Election Day, November 3, 2020; seconded by Katrina Purnell. Further discussion ensued. Katrina Purnell suggested possibly opting for opening additional vote centers instead. Sharon Morris suggested adding a vote center in Pittsville. Peter Golba asked about the availability of staffing, including Election Judges. In any case, SBE would have to approve any additional vote centers at their September 24 meeting. The motion was called to question, with 2 votes in favor of the motion, 3 votes opposed.

Katrina Purnell made a motion for the Election Director to contact SBE to see what is the maximum number of locations we can use for this election in Wicomico County, and report back to the Board as soon as possible; seconded by Catherine Keim. Following discussion, Katrina Purnell amended the motion to contact SBE, stating that Wicomico County requests an accessible number of voting centers to be determined by this Board; seconded by Catherine Keim, passed unanimously.

Board Attorney Peter Golba advised the Board that 48 hours' notice is required for any determination regarding polling place locations. In light of this, the Board discussed the options at hand, and will table the vote for a later meeting. The Board discussed the following options, taking into consideration geographic location, concentration of voters and resources available, and pending approval by SBE: Willards Elementary, Westside Intermediate, Westside Primary, with a fourth drop box located at Pittsville Fire Department.

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MISCELLANEOUS:

None.

MEMBERS TIME:

Catherine Keim, citing an interview on MPT, raised the issue of increased postal delivery times for postage paid mail. The Election Director will call and email SBE for clarification and report this information to the Board.

CLOSED SESSION:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Brad Bellacicco announced that the next regular meeting will be Wednesday October 21, 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 Joseph Collins to adjourn this meeting, passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

 10-21-2020

Brad Bellacicco, Board President

Date

 10/21/20

Bill Blockston, Recorder

Date

Revised 10/21/20