

Minutes

Talbot County Board of Elections
215 Bay Street
Easton, MD 21601
September 19, 2018

Present:

Board

Joseph H. Secrist, President (R)
Susan MacKinnon (D)
Richard B. Bulman (R)
Wadella Thomas (R)

Staff

Jeri Cook, Election Director

Board Attorney

Philip Cronan

Public

Walt Johnson

The monthly meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections was held on September 19, 2018 in Conference Room # One at the Board office indicated above. Mr. Secrist called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Mr. Secrist noted that a quorum was present. He reported that Mr. Black had notified him that he would be absent from this meeting.

Approval of Minutes of August 15, 2018

Mr. Secrist asked if the Board had any corrections or additions to the minutes of the open portion of the meeting of August 15, 2018, a copy of which had been forwarded to the Board Members in advance of the meeting. Ms. Thomas moved approval of the minutes of the open portion of the August 15, 2018 meeting. Ms. MacKinnon seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Addition/Changes to the Agenda

No additions to the agenda were offered

Approval of Agenda

Ms. Thomas moved approval of the agenda as presented. Mr. Bulman seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Election Director's Report

Ms. Cook reported the following:

- Election Judge training has begun. The State Board is providing trainers to assist with the process. Mr. Secrist asked why there had been changes to the times training was offered. He noted that the original announcement was to include Saturday training times as well as evening training and now no Saturday training is offered and training sessions start at 4:00 p.m. He thought that these changes from the previously announced times and days would hinder the interest of some to offer to be judges. Ms. Cook said she has not had any complaints from any of the judges. Ms. Cook noted that there will be an open house session for all election judges on Saturday October 13 to bring questions and to work on the equipment.
- The Department of Homeland Security has evaluated our office. A report on their results will be presented on January 16, 2019. Ms. Cook intends to invite the County Manager, county personnel, EMS staff and Sherriff's department. Mr. Secrist suggested an invitation be extended to the Easton Police Department.
- The Board of Canvassers will need to meet to address a matter. The meeting is schedule for immediately following this meeting.
- The next MAEO conference will be May 21 – 24, 2019 at the Clarion Hotel in Ocean City.
- Arrangements are being made with area nursing homes for absentee ballot assistance. Monae Butler is going to Bayleigh Chase and Genesis and will need 2 Republicans and 1 Democrat to accompany her. Ms. Cook asked for volunteers. Ms. MacKinnon, Mr. Secrist and Mr. Bulman offered to assist dependent on the dates and times arranged with the facilities.
- There will be 9 ballot styles for Talbot County in the upcoming general election. The Easton Firehouse will have 7 ballot styles, Easton High School will have 3 ballot styles and Talbot Community Center will have 3 ballot styles.
- The time for the October board meeting must be changed to accommodate an administrative matter.
- There was another water leak at the warehouse on September 18. The county has not yet determined the exact cause. There appears to be an issue of access

to the Board of Elections area in the warehouse. The county wants unrestricted access to the area where voting equipment is stored to address electrical and water leaks that may affect other areas of the building. Such unrestricted access is contrary to COMAR. Non-election officials must be accompanied by election board personnel. This matter requires further discussion with the county.

- It was reported that the judges at Trappe Volunteer Fire Department were closing the polling place prior to 8:00 p.m. Ms. Cook asked that one of the board members remain at that location until the stated close of registration during the General election to assure compliance with state law on this matter.
- Specimen ballots are at the printer and are expected to be mailed the first week of October.

Board Attorney's Report

Mr. Cronan reported on his conversation with Mr. Doug Collison, an attorney who represents the Talbot County School Board, regarding the school board personnel removal of political signs at the St. Michaels High School. Mr. Cronan noted that state law and our usage agreement with the School Board require that the property owner permit the posting of such signs outside the 100-foot restricted area from 5:00 p.m. the day prior to elections to 8:00 a.m. the day following elections. Mr. Cronan has discussed the School Board's refusal to comply with the state law and the agreement with the State Board of Elections attorney and the Attorney General's office. Mr. Cronan presented a draft response to the School Board's attorney's letter in which he offered a suggested compromise. Mr. Cronan advised that the Election Board has no authority to negotiate away the provisions of the state law and the rights of candidates to post signs. After a review of Mr. Cronan's draft letter to Mr. Collison and suggested language changes offered by board members, Ms. MacKinnon moved approval to the letter. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Ms. MacKinnon asked that the topic of asking local elected state officials to sponsor statewide legislation requiring the closure of schools on election day be on the agenda for the Election Board's next meeting.

Old Business

Budget FY 2019

Ms. Cook distributed copies of the expense report for the year through August 31, 2018. She noted that the county has charged against this year's budget salary expense from the prior year. This may result in the board being over budget for this year.

Review of Invoices

Copies of invoices received since the last meeting were provided to the board. Ms. Cook responded to questions from board members regarding the invoices.

County Bulletins

County Bulletins for August 17, August 31, September 7 and September 14, 2018 were distributed to the board. There were no questions from the board.

Polling Places

- St. Michaels High School – discussion of this topic occurred during the attorney's report.
- Cordova VFD – Bingo was held at the Cordova firehouse the evening before the Primary elections. Tables for Bingo were not removed from the voting area when the election judges arrived on election morning, resulting in extra work for the judges. Following the Primary election, discussions with fire company personnel were held and the fire company agreed that they will move the date for Bingo or cancel Bingo the evening before the General election to alleviate this problem.
- Easton High School – Complaints have been made about the poor lighting at the school. Arrangements are being made for temporary additional lighting to be in place.

Election Judges

A roster of judges was provided to the board. Ms. Cook reported that she has been successful in recruiting judges and currently has a few standby judges available for Election Day. Mr. Secrist noted that there a number of judges who have been serving for many years and he suggested that the board consider asking the County Council to recognize them for their service. Ms. Cook intends to send out a survey to the judges following the election asking for their feedback and in that mailing she can ask them to provide the date they began serving, since such a record is not readily available in the office records.

Leaks in Warehouse Area

This topic was discussed under the Election Director's Report.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

No surveys have been completed since the last meeting.

New Business

October Meeting Date & Time/November Meeting Time

Due to an administrative matter that will preclude Mr. Secrist and Mr. Cronan from attending the start of the next meeting, Ms. Cook asked that the board consider changing the date and time for the October meeting. Ms. Cook also noted that the November meeting is the day before Thanksgiving and is scheduled to start at 7:00 p.m. After discussion of options by the board, Mr. Bulman moved that the starting time for the October 17, 2018 meeting be changed from 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and the start of the November 21 meeting be changed from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 a.m. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Confirmation of next meeting

The next meeting will be October 17, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.

Closed Session

Mr. Bulman moved that the board go into closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. At this point, Mr. Johnson departed the meeting. Whereupon the board went into closed session at 11:40 a.m.

At 12:58 p.m. the board returned to open session. During the closed session, Mr. Cronan departed the meeting. At this point, Mr. Johnson returned to the meeting room.

Mr. Secrist reported that during the closed session the board discussed personnel matters with Mr. Cronan and Ms. Cook, and approved the minutes of the closed session held on August 15, 2018.

Adjournment

Mr. Bulman moved adjournment of the meeting. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Attested,


Joseph H. Secrist, Jr., President

Respectfully submitted,


Richard B. Bulman, Secretary