

Minutes

Talbot County Board of Elections
215 Bay Street
Easton, MD 21601
December 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

None

The monthly meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections was held on December 19, 2018 in Conference Room # One at the Board office indicated above. Mr. Secrist called the meeting to order at 9:35 AM. 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

Mr. Secrist asked if the Board had any corrections or additions to the minutes of the meetings of October 17, 2018 and November 21, 2018, copies of which had been forwarded to the Board Members in advance of the meeting. Ms. MacKinnon moved approval of the minutes of both meetings as presented. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Addition/Changes to the Agenda

Mr. Secrist asked that the Hourly Reports from the general election be added as an agenda item.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Bulman moved approval of the agenda with the addition of Hourly Reports. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Election Director's Report

Ms. Cook reported the following:

- Ms. Cook has arranged for Mr. David Johnston of the Department of Homeland Security to report on his review of the Talbot County Election Board's preparedness. He is not available on the regular date for the next Board meeting and Ms. Cook asked that the Board reschedule its January meeting to January 23, 2019 to accommodate Mr. Johnston's schedule.
- She met with the Chief Election Judges to assess the recent General Election. The topics the judges brought up included: more judges are needed at Early Voting; they requested an increase in pay; there is a need to improve the speed for processing of voters; more Ballot Marking Devices are needed at certain locations; Board Members are asked to be patient when performing their reviews at busy polling places; they suggest field staff be trained to assist election judges, particularly in General Elections; and in some situations, Greeters are not helpful in directing voters to the proper locations in the polls.
- Two position vacancies exist and Ms. Cook has submitted a request to advertise them to State Human Resources for action. They should be filled by mid-February.
- Ms. Cook assisted Wicomico County with a manual recount.
- With the exception of December 27, she expects to be away from the office through January 7, 2019 in order to use her accumulated leave.
- Phone service has been interrupted several times and unsatisfactory in other ways. Verizon is the county provider and she is working with the county to seek improvements.

Board Attorney's Report

Mr. Cronan presented his letter sent to Delegate Chris Adams regarding the Board's request that the legislature enact legislation requiring all county Boards of

Election close schools on election days. A copy of Mr. Cronan's letter is attached to these minutes.

Old Business

a. Budget FY2019

The County Council will meet with members of the Board of Elections on January 8, 2019 to consider the Board's request for an increase in funding for the current year. Much of the increase involves salary adjustments as approved by the state and revisions to position grades in the Talbot County Board. Mr. Secrist stated he is calling a Special Meeting of the Board for January 3, 2019 to discuss this matter further.

b. Review Invoices

Board Members reviewed the invoices as presented by Ms. Cook. No questions were asked.

c. County Bulletins

No questions were asked by Board Members regarding the County Bulletins. However, the Board discussed the idea of using 16-year-old judges in Talbot County which was a topic covered in the report of the November 29, 2018 Election Directors' Meeting.

d. Polling Places

Ms. Cook reported that there was nothing new to report on the polling places at St. Michaels and Trappe.

e. Election Judges

There was nothing additional to report regarding election judges.

f. Legislation for School Closing

This topic was discussed during Mr. Cronan's report to the Board.

g. Hourly Reports

Mr. Secrist asked that the Board be provided with the Hourly Reports from the Chief Judges. He noted the value of these reports in considering the number and location of judges in future elections. Ms. Cook circulated copies of the reports to the Board members present. Discussion ensued regarding their value and the added work they impose on the Chief Judges.

During this discussion, Ms. Cook summarized a letter dated November 27, 2018 from Dr. L. Anne Browne. Dr. Browne's letter complained about the lack of proper handicapped parking and other issues regarding access to the polls and the office that she believes are not in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act and state law. The sense of the Board was that Ms. Cook invite Dr. Browne to meet with her at the office as well as tour Easton Firehouse in order to solicit suggestions for improvements and specific issues that Dr. Browne believes the Board in not in compliance regarding Federal and state law.

New Business

a. Budget FY2020

The Board reviewed Ms. Cook suggested budget for next year. Questions were raised regarding the need for a Part Time MDVoter position, FICA reductions, postage, cost impact of possible Same Day Registration on Election Day, mailing of new voter registration cards for new Board office address. Final action on the Board's budget request will be considered at its next meeting.

b. Polling Place Evaluations

Copies of the evaluations for the General Election were provided to each Board member. The Board discussed the procedure for completing them. No specific modifications were agreed upon.

Next Meeting

Ms. Mackinnon moved that the Board change the date of the next meeting from January 16, 2019 to January 23, 2019. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Mr. Secrist then announced that the next meeting of the Board will be January 23, 2019 at 9:30 AM.

Board of Canvassers

Mr. Secrist announced that the Board of Canvassers will meet immediately following the adjournment of this meeting.

Closed Session

Ms. MacKinnon moved that the Board go into closed session for the purpose of Performance Review of the Election Director. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Whereupon the Board went into closed session at 1:05 PM. At this point Ms. Cook and Mr. Cronan departed the meeting. During the Closed Session,

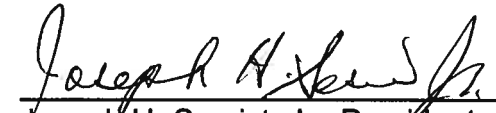
the Board was required to relocate its meeting from Conference Room #1 due to a scheduling conflict with other county functions.

At 1:55 PM, the Board returned to open session. Mr. Secrist reported that the Board had completed the Semi-Annual review of the Election Director. The open portion of the meeting reconvened in the Election Board staff office.

Adjournment

Ms. MacKinnon moved adjournment of the meeting. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:58 PM.

Attested,



Joseph H. Secrist, Jr., President

Respectfully submitted,



Richard B. Bulman, Secretary



Hollis, Cronan
& Fronk, P.A.

William C. Hollis III
Philip T. Cronan
Gordon D. Fronk

December 11, 2018

Honorable Christopher T. Adams
6 Bladen Street, Room 326
Annapolis, Md. 21401

Re: *Talbot County Board of Elections*

Dear Delegate Adams:

I represent Talbot County Board of Elections (the "Board"). The purpose of this letter is to request your consideration to sponsor legislation making it mandatory that all public schools in the State of Maryland are closed on the dates of the Primary and General Elections (collectively referred to as "Election Day").

Maryland contains 1,428 public school and currently educates approximately 893,689 students.¹ Maryland law provides that Calvert, Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Talbot, and Worcester Counties may remain open and in session on Election Day. *See* Md. Code, Education Art., §7-103(c)(4).

Presently, Caroline, Kent, and Talbot Counties are the only school districts in the State that remain open on Election Day. These counties contain roughly .014% of the total Maryland student population (12,426² students of 893,689 students). Most recently, only Caroline and Talbot Counties remained open to students on Election Day in those counties in which at least one public school was utilized as a polling place.³

According to the data published by Talbot County Public Schools ("TCPS"), the school system is comprised of two high schools, two middle schools, and six elementary schools and currently serves a school age population of 4,646 students.⁴ By nature of being the county public schools, their geographic locations are known by a large portion of the general population. Additionally, characteristics that describe public schools mirror the characteristics that sound election sites require.

¹ Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Public Schools Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender and Number of Schools, September 30, 2017.

² *Id.*

³ Kent County Public Schools remained open but was not in session for students.

⁴ Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Public Schools Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender and Number of Schools, September 30, 2017.

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In previous election cycles, the Board has struggled to find appropriate sites for voters that match the adequacy of the public schools. The selection of sites and the ability to utilize them is a never-ending effort by the Board.

The Board and TCPS have struggled to facilitate elections in its two high schools while the schools are open to students. Despite each parties' best efforts, conducting an election in schools open to students has presented both organizations with conflicting missions. Talbot County has limited options and the public schools are undoubtedly necessary to conduct a proper and accessible election.

The Board believes it is imperative that it offer an environment most conducive to a proper and accessible election. Given TCPS's position to have schools remain open to students during Election Day and, consequently, interfering with Talbot County's polling place sites, the Board looks to the State's elected officials to secure that all elections will be held in the most suitable environment to conduct a proper election.

Please see the enclosed correspondence from the President of the Talbot County Education Association in support of the Board's request for legislation to close session for students in all public schools during the Election Day.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,
Philip Cronan
Philip Cronan

Cc: Talbot County Board of Elections
Talbot County Board of Elections Correspondences/Outgoing-Letter Adams 2018 (12.11)