

Minutes

Talbot County Board of Elections
215 Bay Street
Easton, MD 21601
January 15, 2020

Present:

Board

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

Staff

Jeri Cook, Election Director
Tammy Stafford, Data Applications Specialist I

Board Attorney

Philip Cronan

Public

None

The monthly meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections was held on January 15, 2020 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 meeting of December 18, 2019, copies of which had been forwarded to the Board Members in advance of the meeting. Ms. MacKinnon moved approval of the minutes as presented. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Addition/Changes to the Agenda

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

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Election Director's Report

Ms. Cook introduced Tammy Stafford, contract employee serving as Data Applications Specialist I. Board Members welcomed Ms. Stafford to the Election Board. At this point, Ms. Stafford departed the meeting.

Ms. Cook than reported the following:

- She met with Ruth Drummer and Catherine Asche on January 14. We will continue to employ rather than contract with Election Judges. Ms. Cook is satisfied that the county and its vendor understand the proper way to handle annual tax report filing for these employees.
- Joseph Secrist, Walter Black and herself met with Easton Volunteer Fire Department representatives on January 14 to discuss security and safety concerns during Early Voting. Cones with no parking tops have been purchased and the town and county will be contacted to request the use of electronic signs to direct voters to the proper entrance.
- She reported on the following issues regarding security and other operational issues:
 - Afterhours bell for the ADA entrance in the rear of the office building has been installed where it can be heard in the Election Board office.
 - Additional lighting has been installed in the front of the office building
 - A proposal from the county of two options for a secure glass window to be installed in the office. One is a one-piece option with a pass through at the bottom, the other was a slide window. The cost differential was explained to the Board.
 - There has been no improvement in the phone system, but the county was working on the problem during the board meeting. Ms. Cook suggested if this solution does not work, it may be time to consider having our own phone system and referred the Board to the proposal received from Telewire, Inc. in the approximate amount of \$4,500.
- She met with county emergency staff to discuss the upcoming meeting with county agencies and the possibility of grant funding for some security needs. Clay Stamp will get back to her. Ms. Cook inquired at the State Board about State funding for our security needs. No state funds are available at this time.
- Four Eastern Shore trainers will be using our voting equipment maintenance area to prepare for the upcoming Election Judge training.
- She has reached out to some individuals who sent back interest letters to become election judges to see if they may be interested in becoming election day

field support. Currently, six have agreed to help. Ms. Cook sees a need for 4 or 5 more.

Ms. Cook reminded the board of the meeting with the county emergency management officials and other county officials. The purpose of the meeting will be a table top exercise regarding possible emergencies which could happen during the elections.

Board Attorney's Report

Mr. Cronan stated he has nothing new to report.

Old Business

a. Facility for Election Office

Other than the topics reported during her Election Director's Report, there was nothing new to report on a new office location for the Election Board.

b. Budget FY2020

Expenditure reports through December were provide to the Board Members. Ms. Cook noted that the state continues to be several months behind in payroll billings to the county. No other issues were discussed regarding the current year expenses.

c. Review Invoices

Ms. Cook provided copies of invoices received since the last meeting. There were no questions from Board Members.

d. County Bulletins

Ms. Cook previously distributed copies of recent County Bulletins and responded to questions from Board Members.

e. Response to letter sent to County

Ms. Cook noted her report earlier included recent changes in response to her letter to the county. She asked that the Board advise her of its preference regarding the glass window installation. Mr. Bulman moved that the Board approve the installation of the one-piece window with the pass through at the bottom at a cost of approximately \$3,125. Ms. MacKinnon seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Ms. Cook will be meeting with the Sheriff's office to discuss a better process in allowing public into our warehouse area where canvassing takes place.

New Business

a. Budget FY2021

At the previous Board meeting, Ms. Cook provided the Members with a proposed budget for next year. Following discussion at that meeting, Ms. Cook modified her proposed budget and provided copies to the Members for consideration at this meeting. She also noted a memo from Angela Lane, County Finance Director, directing county agencies to submit a budget for next year no more than last year's amount. They may then submit a supplemental request for any amounts over that amount. The budget document provided by Ms. Cook showed both the amount for last year and the full amount requested including the supplemental amount.

Ms. MacKinnon moved that the Board approve a total budget request to the county in the amount of \$648,905, including \$582,492 basic amount, for an increase of 11.4% over last year of \$66,416. Mr. Bulman seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

b. Election Judges

Ms. Cook provided the Members with a list of her recommended Election Judges, their assigned jobs and poll locations. Board Members reviewed the recommendations. Discussion ensued regarding the need for balance between parties as provided by Election Law, preference to in-county applicants and preference to assignment of judges to or near their own polling place. The matter was then referred to Mr. Cronan for his opinion. He cited portions of the Election Law regarding balance by party and the assignment of unaffiliated judges. He noted that other practices, such as preference to in-county applicants and proximity to an applicant's polling place were permitted, provided they were compliant with relevant Election Law. He noted that one precinct in Ms. Cook's recommendation was not consistent with the Law. Based on Mr. Cronan's advice, Mr. Bulman moved to approve the list as presented by Ms. Cook, provided it is compliant with Election law. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Confirmation of the next meeting.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Elections will be Wednesday, February 19, 2020 at 9:30 AM.

Closed Session

Mr. Bulman moved that the Board go into closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters as permitted under General Provisions Art. 3-305(b) (1). Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Whereupon the Board went into closed session at 12:49 PM. At this point, Ms. Cook and Mr. Cronan departed the meeting.

At 1:05 PM, the Board returned to open session. President Secrist reported that the Board deferred further discussion of the End-Cycle review of the Election Director's performance.

Adjournment

Mr. Bulman moved adjournment of the meeting. Ms. MacKinnon seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:06 PM.

Attested,

Respectfully submitted,


Joseph H. Secrist, Jr., President


Richard B. Bulman, Secretary