

Minutes

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

Present:

Board

Joseph Secrist, President	(R)
Walter Black	(D)
Susan MacKinnon	(D)
Richard 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 April 15, 2020. Due to the circumstances resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic, the monthly Board meeting scheduled for March 18, 2020 was cancelled. Today's meeting was held by teleconference for the open portions and video conference for the closed session. Mr. Secrist called the meeting to order at 9:33 AM. Mr. Secrist noted that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Secrist asked if the Board had any corrections or additions to the minutes of the meeting of February 19, 2020, copies of which had been forwarded to the Board Members in advance of the meeting. Mr. Bulman noted that all the pages on the draft as sent with the meeting package contained the same page number. He moved that the minutes as submitted be approved with the correct of the page numbers. Ms. MacKinnon seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Addition/Changes to the Agenda

Mr. Secrist asked if there were any additions to the agenda as included in the package as mailed to the Board Members. Mr. Bulman asked that Polling Place

Evaluations be added to the agenda since it was an item on the draft agenda for the March meeting. He also asked that Web Site Security be added to the agenda. Ms. Cook reported that with all the changes required by the State Board in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, no progress has been made on creating a secure website. Ms. Cook asked that we include an update on the June 2, 2020 Presidential primary to the agenda. Mr. Black then moved that the agenda be approved with the addition of Polling Place Evaluations under Old Business and Update on the Presidential Primary under New Business. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Election Director's Report

Ms. Cook reported on the following:

- Monae Butler and Tammy Stafford have trained 14 volunteers to register voters. Ms. Butler has trained an additional 2 volunteers.
- Judges' training went well until it was stopped due to the county offices being closed to the public in mid-March because of the Coronavirus outbreak. Approximately half the judges were trained.
- Ms. Cook, President Secrist and Vice President Black appeared before the County Council in support of our budget proposal for the upcoming year. Questions were raised regarding the amount of the increase. Ms. Cook explained that last year we were over budget, new equipment was leased, more expenses are being incurred since elections are now a part of critical infrastructure and the State Board reclassified the staff positions which resulted in increased salary expenses.
- Currently, all staff are telecommuting with just limited need to be in the office.
- County Clerk Kathi Duvall will be in the office parking lot at 10:00 AM on May 11 to administer the oath of office for the Board of Canvassers.
- Ms. Cook has obtained additional gloves for canvassers and is seeking to obtain other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for judges and canvassers. At this time, the state is working to obtain most of the PPE needed.
- As of this date, we have processed almost 500 absentee applications which has doubled the number of absentee ballot requests made in 2018.

Board Attorney's Report

Mr. Cronan had nothing to report at this meeting. However, he will be on a conference call with the State Board personnel and other local Board Attorneys the next day and will provide the Board Members with an update following that call.

Old Business

a. Facility for Election Office

Ms. Cook said there was nothing new to report.

b. Budget FY2020

Expenditure reports through February were provided to the Board Members. Ms. Cook responded to questions from Board Members.

c. Review Invoices

Ms. Cook previously provided Board Members with copies of invoices received since the last meeting. Ms. Cook responded to questions from Board Members.

d. Budget FY2021

Ms. Cook reported further on the meeting with the County Council she attended along with Mr. Secrist and Mr. Black regarding our budget request for FY2021. She noted the concern Council Members had with the amount of increase, particularly in the area of salary. She noted that position reclassifications for most of the staff and resulting salary increases were approved by the State Board and are not within the local Board's control. She also noted that due to billings from the State Board, we were over budget last year.

e. County Bulletins

Mr. Bulman noted that there was discussion in the bulletins about Premium Pay resulting in changes in work practices required due to the Coronavirus. He asked Ms. Cook what the financial impact would be on our budget. Ms. Cook reported that those changes were reevaluated at the Maryland Department of Budget and Management and that they no longer apply to our employees. The financial impact will be minimal.

f. Polling Place Evaluations

Ms. Cook reported that at this time it appears there will be no polling place evaluations. Therefore, no training for Board Members will be needed.

New Business

a. Meeting Announcement

Ms. MacKinnon asked that we be sure to let the public know what is going on regarding the change to Vote-by-Mail. Ms. Cook reported that the State Board is preparing public announcements about the changes. While the changes are still in the finalization stage, we should not be putting out information at this time which may be incomplete and, possibly, conflicting with the State Board's final plans and public notice.

b. Update on the Presidential Primary

Ms. Cook reported that this will be primarily Vote-by-Mail election. Ballots will be sent to voters with a prepaid postage envelope to send the voted ballot to the election office. However, an in-person voter center will be available on Election Day at the Easton Firehouse to accommodate those who want or need to vote in person, wish to use the Ballot Marking Device, want to do same day registration or have other special needs. Fred Gleockler is updated the site survey to reflect social distance requirements. Monae Butler is reaching out to see which of the judges already trained are willing to work on Election Day.

Ballot drop off boxes will be placed at the Easton Firehouse and the Election Office. Ballots may be dropped off from May 21 through June 2. Ballots will be picked up periodically during this time.

Ms. Cook will be reaching out to election judges and will have staff begin the inspection and opening of envelopes beginning May 21. Those ballots determined properly completed will be scanned and counted. Any ballots that are in question will be set aside for consideration by the Board of Canvassers. The entire process will be live streamed on the internet. She noted that no results will be released until the close of elections on June 2.

Board of Canvassers will meet remotely from May 21 through June 12. Details for conducting this meeting and for completing the minutes are being developed.

Confirmation of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections will be Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 9:30 AM by way of teleconference.

Closed Session

Mr. Black 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 10:35 AM via video conference set up by Mr. Cronan. At this point, Ms. Cook departed the meeting.

At 11:10 AM, the Board returned to open session. Ms. Cook rejoined the meeting. President Secrist reported that the Board was advised by the State Board that it must take additional steps to complete the End-Cycle review of the Election Director's performance. In Closed Session, the Board completed those steps.

Adjournment

Mr. Black moved adjournment of the meeting. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:23 AM.

Attested,

Respectfully submitted,


Joseph H. Secrist, Jr., President


Richard B. Bulman, Secretary