

Minutes

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

Lyndsey Ryan

The monthly meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections was held on July 15, 2020. Due to restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, the meeting was held by videoconference. The public was invited to listen by conference call and advised via the Board website and on the agenda of the procedure to do so. Mr. Secrist called the meeting to order at 9:30 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 June 17, 2020, copies of which had been forwarded to the Board Members in advance of the meeting. Mr. Bulman noted that there was a typo in the last paragraph under Election Director's Report. "The" should be "There". Ms. MacKinnon moved to approve the minutes with this correction. Mr. Black seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Addition/Changes to the Agenda

Mr. Secrist asked that the Governor's letter of July 8, 2020 be added to the agenda. He asked for other additions or changes. None being offered, Mr. Black

moved approval of the agenda with this addition. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Election Director's Report

Ms. Cook noted that in addition to the Governor's letter of July 8, there were 2 letters from Maryland Association of Election Officials regarding the Presidential General Election. Discussion of them can be deferred to the discussion of the Governor's letter.

Ms. Cook has talked to the Post Office about the routing of mail through Baltimore and the impact it has on the postmark date on ballots. The State Election Board has advised that ballots postmarked on election day, regardless of the time on the postmark, are deemed timely. She learned that mail is collected throughout Talbot County in late afternoon and delivered to Baltimore that day. Mail deposited in a mail box after the last pick up for the day will not be postmarked until the following day. All mail received in Baltimore will be postmarked the day it arrives in Baltimore. Ms. MacKinnon said that voters need to be alerted to that fact and take that into consideration when depositing ballots in the U.S. mail. Ms. Cook also noted that voters may present their envelopes containing a ballot at their local post office and have the local red dated postmark applied to the envelope which will be considered timely.

Mr. Secrist reported that some local citizens are having difficulty registering and navigating our site, particularly the requirement to use the state website to register. Ms. Cook said that if a board member receives information from a voter regarding a concern about using the website, please ask the voter to contact our office and the staff will be glad to take care of their needs.

Attorney's Report

Mr. Cronan previously announced his decision to resign as Board Attorney and had recommend that the Board consider Ms. Lyndsey Ryan for appointment to the position. He introduced Ms. Ryan and asked her to introduce herself to the Board Members and to respond to questions from Board Members, which she did. The Board Members had previously received a copy of her resume.

Old Business

- a. Facility for Election Office

Ms. Cook had nothing new to report.

b. Budget FY2020

Expenditure reports through June were provided to the Board Members. Ms. Cook responded to questions from Board Members. Not all the expenses for the year have been received and/or coded, therefore these figures should not be considered final for year end.

c. Review of Invoices

Ms. Cook previously provided Board Members with copies of invoices received since the last meeting. She responded to questions from Board Members. Mr. Secrist asked about certain expenses that do not show up on the invoices provided to the Board, such as lunches. Ms. Cook responded that small items such as these are paid from petty cash.

d. Budget FY2021

No financial information is available for this fiscal year. Ms. Cook noted that the implementation of the election process published by the Governor will require supplemental funding. She will be sending over the approximate amount to the county when compiled and a copy will be sent to the board.

e. County Bulletins

Ms. Cook provided the Board Members with copies of recent County Bulletins. There were no questions for Ms. Cook regarding the bulletins.

f. June 2nd Update – undelivered ballots

Over 700 ballots were undeliverable. In all cases the undelivered ballots are entered in the data base. The staff found that some other returned ballots were for deceased voters, and some were redelivered based on information found in records. Ms. Cook expressed pride in the work of her staff in handling this unusual election situation.

New Business

a. Election Board Attorney Appointment

Mr. Secrist noted that the Board had an opportunity to discuss the qualifications of Ms. Lyndsey Ryan earlier in the meeting. He asked for further comments. Mr. Black moved to appoint Ms. Ryan Board Attorney. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

b. Governor's July 8, 2020 Letter

Ms. Cook summarized the impact the Governor's letter will have on Talbot County. She described it as being two elections – one a vote-by-mail and one in-person. She has had preliminary discussions with the County Manager, Andrew Hollis, regarding the added costs this will have on the county. Mr. Hollis requested that the Board of Elections meet with the County Council to discuss the anticipated additional costs. Regarding Election Judge recruiting, she reported she only has 44 judges recruited so far.

Ms. Cook noted that there are three small polling places which will not accommodate the necessary social distancing that is requested in the Governor's letter to the State Board of Elections. The three polling places are Bozman (District 2, Precinct 2), Royal Oak (District 2, Precinct 3) and Wittman (District 5, Precinct 1). She requested that the Board consider consolidating these polling places with larger polling places for this election only. She is working with State Board personnel regarding how to proceed and the lead time to make this temporary change. An emergency meeting of the Board would be necessary to begin the process of obtaining State Board approval. Following discussion, Mr. Bulman then moved that the Election Director prepare a written report containing (1) the specifics of the reasons to temporarily consolidate these three polling places for the Presidential General Election, (2) the basis for declaring an emergency, including the reasons why action must be taken before the next Regular Board Meeting and (3) her recommendation for polling place consolidations. The Election Director will also (a) advise the County Council that the Board is considering these consolidations and her reasons for the consolidations and (b) recommend dates for a Special Board meeting to consider her recommendations. Ms. MacKinnon seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Board of Canvassers convene

At this point, the Election Board meet as the Board of Canvassers. Actions at this meeting were recorded separately.

Confirmation of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections will be Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at 9:30 AM.

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 11:30 AM. At this point, Ms. Cook departed the meeting.

At 12:20 PM, the Board returned to open session. Ms. Cook returned to the meeting. During the Closed Session, Mr. Bulman departed the meeting. President Secrist reported that the Board completed the Mid-Cycle review of the Election Director's performance.

Adjournment

Mr. Black moved adjournment of the meeting. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 AM.

Attested,

Respectfully submitted,



Joseph H. Secrist, Jr., President



Richard B. Bulman, Secretary