

Minutes

Talbot County Board of Elections
215 Bay Street
Easton, MD 21601
August 16, 2023

Present:

Board

Joe Secrist	(R)
Walter Black	(D)
Barbara H. Perry	(D)
Denise Lovelady	(R)

Staff

Tammy Stafford, Talbot County Election Director

Public

Terrence Bernard

The monthly meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections was held August 16, 2023 in Conference Room 1 at the Board office indicated above. Mr. Secrist called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM and noted that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Secrist asked if the Board had any corrections or additions to the minutes of July 19, 2023, copies of which board members had. Ms. Lovelady moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Black seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Additions/Changes to Agenda

Mr. Secrist asked for any additions or changes to the agenda as presented. Mr. Black moved that the agenda be approved as presented. Ms. Perry seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Public Comments

No one was online. Mr. Bernard, stated he was an Easton resident, commented that he encourages the BOE to stay away from rank choice voting which in his view is complex, costly and not fair to anyone. More election workers would be needed to help explain it to voters. Ms. Lovelady asked if the county can make that decision and Ms. Stafford said it was the legislature. It had been brought up during the 2023 General Assembly session and may be again in 2024. Mr. Black asked what rank choice voting was and Mr. Bernard said it was a three-tiered voting system where voters rank their

first, second and third choices for whom they want for an office, regardless of party, and if no one wins a majority in round one it goes to subsequent rounds until someone wins a majority. Ms. Stafford noted that she had info from the MAEO conference that she would print out and send to the Board Member.

Election Director's Report

- Director's Report provided to the Board is attached.

Notice of Distribution of Materials:

- Meeting materials were prepared and mailed to Board Members August 8, 2023.
- Agenda for the August meeting was posted on the BOE office door, in the entrance of the building and to the website August 8, 2023.

Personnel :

- There are no changes to personnel at this time.
- Staff is scheduled to attend Regional Training in Queen Anne's County September 7, 2023.

Meetings Attended:

- **Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) meeting August 2, 2023 in Anne Arundel County** – The agenda included comments from guest speaker, Jared DeMarinis, the future Administrator of the Maryland State Board of Elections; a discussion about the pollbook project; new wording for ways to mark your ballot; the 2024 MAEO Conference and the 2024 legislative goals. Attendees felt the 2024 MAEO Conference should be a shorter conference and later in the year, maybe September.
- **Meeting with County Staff July 27, 2023** – Ms. Stafford met with County staff to discuss relocation of office and election equipment work area to the temporary space in the Bay Street office building. The purpose was to determine timeframe for completion of work in the temporary space and use of vacant office space in the area. It was decided that the office and the election equipment would move to the temporary location and vacate Suite 7.

Movement to Temporary location:

- Ms. Stafford and staff are moving non-sensitive materials now and will complete the move by August 31, 2023 which is the date that the voting equipment will be moved using 2 contracted trucks. All equipment will be secured in locked and sealed rolling carts (like what are used when transporting equipment to polling places) by Talbot Board of Elections staff who along with SBE staff will follow the trucks from the Business Park to the temporary location.

- Security evaluation was done on the new location for the equipment and more measures can be added if needed.
- Ms. Perry stated that she just wanted to make sure that the public would have no reason to challenge the movement of the equipment and she is satisfied that all planning ensures the security of this move.
- Once the move is complete and they are fully settled into the new space, Ms. Stafford wants to have an Open House inviting the County Council along with the public to tour the new location.

Correspondence:

- Ms. Stafford stated that she had received a request from a group called the Justice Society wanting records pertaining to voting equipment. The SBE has handled that request and Ms. Stafford has received a copy of that response. Since that request, Ms. Stafford has received two more requests for information from the Justice Society that she will handle. Ms. Lovelady asked if Ms. Stafford will share details of all these requests with the Board at the next meeting and she said she would. Ms. Stafford stated she didn't know anything about who the Justice Society was.

Voter Registration Activities:

- Monthly statistical report, which was distributed to Board Members, has as of July 31, 2023, that there were 28,763 active registered voters, 1,373 inactive voters, for a total voter count of 30,136 in Talbot County.

Voting System Activities:

- New poll books are behind schedule and are in a no-go state due to software. The final release of software is expected no later than August 25, 2023, followed by a two-week testing period. Currently Talbot County Board of Elections plan to use current poll books even though the SBE and LBE subcommittee will make a decision in early September as to whether the new poll books will be ready for the 2024 election.

Candidate Filing:

- Candidate filing is open with a deadline to file of February 9, 2024 at 9 p.m. No candidates have filed at this time.
- Local offices on the ballot are Board of Education Districts 2, 5, 6.

Precinct and Polling Issues:

- **2024 Polling Place Agreements** – Ms. Stafford has received seven of the eleven polling place agreements back. One was returned unsigned and she has reached out to the contact person.

- **Talbot County Public Schools** – Ms. Stafford spoke with Kevin Schafer, Director of Operations, with regard to Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Board of Elections and TCPS. She provided him with a copy of the MOU and he indicated that the polling places contracts for 2024 will be signed for both the primary and general election. He is waiting for TCPS to finalize the school schedule for the fall of 2024.
- **Election Judge Recruitment** – Election Judge numbers as of August 8, 2023 are 86 committed and 49 needed to fill 125 election judge positions. Of those committed, the current breakdown is 57 Democrats, 26 Republican and 9 Unaffiliated/Other.
 - Mr. Black asked what efforts are being made to get more Republicans. Ms. Stafford said they are doing Community Outreach events, one upcoming in October. She spoke to Senator Mautz. Richard Osborne, Chairman of the Talbot County Republican Central Committee, has inquired about voter registration training where she will also bring up the need for Election Judges.
 - Ms. Lovelady asked if during Ms. Stafford's total time with the Board of Elections if there has always been this imbalance and she said yes. Even with repeat Judges, there are some who don't want to travel far from their homes to the polling places. Ms. Lovelady then asked Mr. Secrist if he talks with Mr. Osborne and she stated that she and Mr. Secrist need to push for more people to sign up.
 - Ms. Lovelady then asked Ms. Stafford how does she vet people who sign up to be Election Judges. This will be discussed at our next meeting.

Other Projects:

- **Voter Outreach** – Election staff participated in the National Night Out event at Moton Park on August 1. Over 50 people visited their booth from 5 – 8 p.m. Two voter registrations and one election judge interest form were completed. Several others expressed interest. Ms. Perry complimented Ms. Stafford and her staff for doing this event on rather short notice.
 - Ms. Stafford is also developing different information pamphlets to hand out at various events.
 - Concerning the update of the Facebook page, Ms. Lovelady asked about the progress. Ms. Stafford will focus more once the office move is completed. She will post on Facebook that August 23 is National Poll Worker Day. Ms. Lovelady asked if the SBE puts out information

that could be reposted to our Facebook page and Ms. Stafford said it could.

- **Call Center** –During last year's election cycle, the Talbot County Board of Elections used the state's call center for incoming calls. Ms. Stafford felt this just added a screening that didn't help the office or the voters calling in. The office will not be using the call center for the 2024 Presidential Election.
 - Ms. Perry asked if Ms. Stafford could hire any temporary staff to help answer phones during the 2024 election. She will look into that since they do get more calls during elections.

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- **There is a meet and greet September 13, 2023** being scheduled by Jared DeMarinis, Maryland State Board of Elections Administrator to visit the office to meet the Election Director and Staff. He is trying to visit all of the county Boards of Election.
 - Mr. Black asked if the Board members could be there and Ms. Lovelady said that Mr. DeMarinis may have a tight agenda but expressed the importance of meeting with him. Ms. Stafford said she will ask and let us know. As of now, she does not have a time when he will be here.

Board Attorney's Report

In the absence of Ms. Ryan, the Board Attorney, Ms. Stafford gave Ms. Ryan's report that Nikki Charlson, the Deputy Administrator of the State Board of Elections will be leaving and her last day is August 22, 2023. Ms. Lovelady asked if this departure was expected and Ms. Stafford said she didn't know but thought it was unexpected.

Old Business

A. By-Laws

Ms. Perry brought up two sections that dealt with who transmits our minutes to the SBE and then posts to our website that she felt should have different wording. There was a discussion and Mr. Black moved that we table the By-Laws until the Board Attorney, Ms. Ryan, could be present. Ms. Lovelady seconded and it passed unanimously

B. Facility for Election Office –

There is nothing new to report on a permanent facility for the election office but are looking at a 2025 timeframe so as not to interfere with any election year. We are not locked in to the Cadmus location and with new Board members, Ms. Stafford wants to get information packets for the Board to review and discuss goals for a new facility as well as reaching out to the County.

New Business

Ms. Perry submitted to President MacKinnon a letter advising of her of a monthly donation to the Talbot County Democratic Central Committee and was told to bring it up at this meeting. The Board acknowledged this disclosure of a donation.


Confirmation of next meeting

The next regular scheduled meeting of the Board of Elections will be on September 20, 2023 at 9:30 AM.

Adjournment

Ms. Lovelady moved to adjourn; Ms. Perry seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:40 AM.

Attested,


Denise Lovelady, Vice President

Respectfully submitted,


Barbara H. Perry, Secretary

TALBOT COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

ELECTION DIRECTOR'S REPORT

August 16, 2023

Notice and Distribution of Materials

Meeting materials were prepared and mailed to Board Members August 8, 2023.

The Agenda for the August meeting was posted on the Board of Elections office door and in the entrance of the building, as well as, to the website August 8, 2023.

Personnel: There are no changes to personnel at this time.

Staff is scheduled to attend Regional Training in Queen Anne's County September 7, 2023.

Meetings Attended:

Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) meeting August 2, 2023 in Anne Arundel County- The agenda included comments from guest speaker Jared DeMarinis, the future Administrator of the Maryland State Board of Elections; a discussion about the pollbook project; new wording for ways to mark your ballot; the 2024 MAEO Conference, and 2024 legislative goals.

Meeting with County Staff July 27, 2023- I met with County staff to discuss the relocation of our office space and election equipment work area to the temporary space in the Bay Street office building. The purpose of the meeting was to determine the timeframe for completion of work in the temporary space and the use of the vacant office space in the area. During the meeting, it was decided that we will be moving our offices with the election equipment work area to the temporary location and vacating Suite 7.

Correspondence:

We received a Public Information Act request from the Justice Society. I was advised by SBE that they would be responding to the request. I have asked for a copy of the response.

Voter Registration Activities:

Monthly Statistical Report- The Report was distributed to board members in the monthly packet. As of July 31, 2023 there were 28,763 active registered voters in Talbot County and 1,373 inactive voters, for a total voter count of 30,136.

Voting System Activities:

The new poll books are behind schedule and are currently in a no-go state due to software. The final release of software is expected no later than August 25, 2023 followed by a two-week testing period. A decision will be made by SBE based on recommendations from the stakeholders and the LBE subcommittee in early September as to whether the new pollbooks will be ready for the 2024 election.

Candidate Filing:

Candidate filing is open. The deadline to file for candidacy is February 9, 2024 at 9 p.m. The local offices on the ballot are Board of Education Districts 2, 5, 6. No one has filed at this time.

Precinct and Polling Issues:

2024 Polling Place Agreements- I have received seven of the eleven polling place agreements back. One of the contracts was returned unsigned, and I have reached out to the contact person.

Talbot County Public Schools- I spoke with Kevin Schafer, Director of Operations, in regards to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Board of Elections and TCPS. I provided him with a copy of the MOU and he indicated that the polling place contracts for 2024 will be signed for both the primary and general election.

Election Judge Recruitment- Election Judge numbers as of August 16, 2023 are 92 committed and 43 needed to fill 135 election judge positions. Of those committed, there are 57 Democratic; 26 Republican; and 9 Unaffiliated/Other.

Budget:

A report documenting Board of Elections Expenditures for FY 2023 as of June 30, 2023 and FY 2024 as of August 8, 2024 were included in the Board's packets.

Other projects:

Voter Outreach- Election Staff participated in the National Night Out event held at Moton Park August 1. We had over 50 people visit our booth from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. We had two voter registrations and 1 election judge interest form completed. We had several people express interest.

Office Location Move- The relocation of the election equipment work area in the Talbot Business Park will take place August 31. Office staff has begun packing and moving some of the supplies to the new location at 215 Bay Street.

We will move the election equipment first. Our offices in Suite 7 will be moved in the following weeks.

Once the move is complete we will have a room that is available for use as the Board's meeting space.

Call Center- The office will not be using the call center for the 2024 Presidential Election.

Upcoming Meetings/Events:

Meet and Greet September 13, 2023- Jared DeMarinis, Maryland State Board of Elections Administrator will be visiting our offices to meet with the Election Director and Staff.