

BOARD OF ELECTIONS  
AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA  
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING  
February 10, 2020

Item #1 - Chair Tim McFalls called the meeting to order. Present were Board Members Sherry Barnes, Terrence Dicks and Marcia Brown. Also present were Executive Director Lynn Bailey, Assistant Director Travis Doss, Board Attorney Rachel Mack, and members of the public. Board member Bob Finnegan was absent.

Item #2 - Approval of the minutes from the December 2, 2019 Regular Monthly Meeting. Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the minutes be approved as disseminated. Mr. Dicks seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Item #3 - Approval of the minutes from the December 18, 2019 Special Called Meeting. Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the minutes be approved as disseminated. Mrs. Brown seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Item #4 – Approval of the minutes from the January 13, 2020 Regular Monthly Meeting. Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the minutes be approved as disseminated. Mr. Dicks seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Item #5 – Update on the New Voting System. Ms. Bailey reported the following:

- The legacy voting system was picked up from the Board of Elections Warehouse on January 14, 2020.
- New voting equipment began arriving on January 16, 2020. To date, all components of the voting system have been delivered except for 30 ballot marking devices which are expected Monday, February 10<sup>th</sup>
- Additional storage space has been secured at an unused building owned by the Board of Education. All voting system components are stored in a secure environment at the Board of Elections Warehouse.
- Outreach continues on a regular basis with 13 events scheduled between February 10<sup>th</sup> and March 18<sup>th</sup>. The voting system is also available for demonstrations in the Board of Elections Office during regular business hours and in the lobby of the Municipal Building from 1 – 4:30 on Augusta Commission meeting days.
- Matching grants for security improvements, accessibility improvements, and/or general implementation (excluding consumables) of the new voting in an amount not to exceed \$15,000 per county are available from the Secretary of State’s Office. We anticipate applying for and receiving maximum reimbursements up to the \$15,000 limit.

Item #6 – Update on the March 24, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary. Ms. Bailey reported the following:

- Logic and accuracy testing began Thursday, February 6<sup>th</sup> and will continue until completed.
- Poll worker training will be conducted beginning Tuesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> through Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. 19 classes will be offered during this time period.
- Absentee voting by mail began on Tuesday, February 4<sup>th</sup> when 84 ballots were mailed and 12 were sent by electronic transmission.
- Advance Voting will be held beginning on Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> and ending on Friday, March 20, 2020

Item #7 – Discussion of expanding the hours for Advance Voting. Chairman McFalls began the discussion by asking Staff for input into the need to expand Advance Voting hours.

Ms. Bailey gave a background report and stated that the initial request for the consideration of expanding Advance Voting hours came from Georgia Shift. Continuing, she stated that the initial request included multiple options such as opening up all sites for Sunday Voting and extending voting hours during the week. She stated that no funding to expand the hours for Advance Voting beyond customary hours of operation other than once again offering Sunday Voting on the same weekend as Saturday Voting during the November General Election had been budgeted for in the 2020 Budget.

Continuing, Ms. Bailey presented possible options to the Board for their consideration of expanding Advance Voting hours in small ways for 2020. She stated that the expanded hours being presented as options to the Board were configured in ways that would have the least financial impact to the existing budget and were based only on Advanced Voting for the November General Election only. Options and costs of providing additional service were:

- Option #1 Extending the hours for Sunday Voting at the Municipal Building from 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM to 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM mirroring the hours for Saturday Voting – Cost \$400
- Option #2 Adding an additional Saturday Voting day on the third weekend prior to the date of the election from 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM at the Municipal Building only cost \$1,700
- Option #3 Adding an additional Saturday and Sunday Voting day on the third weekend before the date of the election from 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM at the Municipal Building only – cost \$3,400

Mrs. Barnes re-stated her standing concern regarding placing additional demands on poll workers particularly in light of the fact that workers will already be challenged by the implementation of a new voting system. Mr. Dicks re-stated his belief that the Board should consider moving forward with expanding voting opportunities in light of the magnitude of the election year. Ms. Brown expressed her desire to expand voting to the extent it is possible in order to better accommodate senior citizens and disabled voters. Mr. McFalls stated that expanding the hours for voting could provide more opportunity for poll workers to gain experience with the new system, but that his primary concern was whether or not the Board of Elections Staff is comfortable with and felt prepared to expand voting hours. He also stated his

desire that Board members depend heavily on the staff's recommendation when making their final decision.

After more general discussion, Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the Board hold off on expanding the hours for Advanced Voting for the time being and that staff be directed to evaluate and to provide feedback to the Board on staffing/training concerns and other factors following the March 24<sup>th</sup> Presidential Primary at which time staff is requested to make a recommendation as to whether or not expanding the hours for Advanced Voting is a viable option. Mrs. Brown seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Item #8 – Discussion of establishing a media photography policy for polling locations. Ms. Bailey began a discussion by stating that this item had been placed onto the agenda to begin a discussion of establishing a media photography policy within polling places on Election Day and during Advanced Voting. She explained that up until the present time, photography by media had been permitted on a case by case basis depending on the layout of the polling place and in consideration of voter privacy while casting a ballot.

Ms. Bailey presented a draft policy adopted by the Cobb County Board of Elections. She stated that the draft policy permitted photography on a case by case basis and only with prior written approval. Board Attorney Rachel Mack opined that the safest and fairest course of action for the Board would be to adopt a policy that follows closely to the law and makes no exceptions for photography inside the polling place, except as permitted by law. Mr. Dicks inquired if there were any First Amendment issues with a prohibition against photography inside the polling place. Ms. Mack responded that the law clearly gives the Board of Elections authority over such matters.

Continuing the discussion, Ms. Bailey stated that because the new voting system did not currently provide an audio playback of a voter's paper ballot, voters who are disabled, illiterate or cannot read the English language are permitted to use their personal electronic device when reviewing their ballot. She further stated that poll officers are permitted to use recording devices or cameras for official purposes.

After further discussion, Mr. McFalls expressed his opinion that due to privacy concerns and pressure placed on poll workers that photography should not be permitted inside of polling places. Continuing, Mr. McFalls requested that a revised draft policy be presented to the Board for their consideration that takes into account input from the Board members in attendance, the Board attorney, and staff, and, that the policy address not only photography at the polls but also stresses the exit polling limitations that no person is permitted to conduct any exit poll or public opinion poll with voters within 25 feet of the building in which a polling place is located. The Board agreed by consensus to revisit both matters when an updated draft policy is made available.

Item #9 – Old Business. There was no Old Business to come before the Board.

Item #10 – New Business. Ms. Bailey informed the Board that interviews were ongoing regarding the vacancy in a Deputy Clerk’s position and that once concluded, staff would be coming forward with a recommendation to hire.

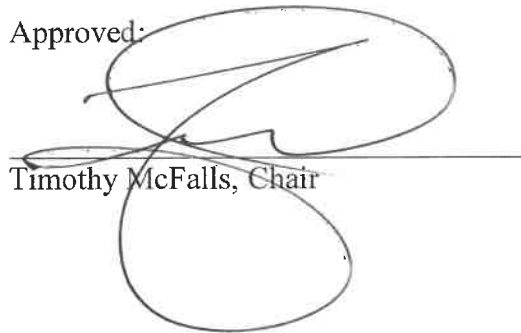
There being no further business to come before the Board, Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the meeting stand adjourned. Mrs. Brown seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brown, Secretary for the Board

Approved:



Timothy McFalls, Chair