

BOARD OF ELECTIONS  
AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA  
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING  
April 20, 2020

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

Item #2 – Approval of the minutes from the January 23, 2020 Special Called Meeting. Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the minutes be approved as disseminated. Mr. Finnegan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Item #3 – Approval of the minutes from the February 10, 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 #4 – Approval of the minutes from the March 9, 2020 Regular Monthly Meeting. Mr. Finnegan made a motion that the minutes be approved as disseminated. Mrs. Brown seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Item #5 – Update on the June 9, 2020 General Primary and Nonpartisan Election. The first discussion point was the Election Calendar. Ms. Bailey reported the following:

- The Election Calendar has been updated to reflect the new Election Date, the new voter registration deadline, the new Advance Voting period and the new runoff date. The updated calendar is posted on our Website under 2020 Election Info.
- Logic and Accuracy testing should begin on 4/27/2020 and will take approximately 2 weeks to complete. Prep work is underway now.
- 19 small in person poll worker training sessions will be offered for selected poll workers (equipment workers) May 12 – May 28. All other workers will be trained by mail on the basics of working at the polls – code of conduct, campaigning laws, line management, accessibility, COVID, and general polling place procedures. The written instructions will be supplemented with training videos made available by the Secretary of State's Office.
- The time period for mailing out absentee ballots will be Tuesday, April 21 – through Friday, June 4, 2020.
- Advance Voting will begin Monday, May 18 – Friday, June 4, 2020.
- Saturday Voting will be Saturday, May 30, 2020
- The new voter registration deadline is Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup>
- The new runoff date will be Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup>

The next discussion point was regarding whether or not to open up the satellite sites during Advance Voting under the current circumstances. Ms. Bailey reported the following:

- Currently, pursuant to the Board of Elections Policy for Opening Satellite Sites for Voting, all four sites will be open beginning Saturday, May 30 through Friday, June 4, 2020. Options discussed included:
  - Limiting Advance Voting to downtown only to best control the environment
  - Limiting Advance Voting to the Municipal Building and Diamond Lakes only, because the rooms are large allowing for voters and workers to be spread out, but the rooms at Warren Road and Brigham Center are smaller which means possible crowding due to fewer voters and workers being able to fit into the space
  - Open up all of 4 sites, set each one up in as safe a manner as possible and acknowledge that it will likely take longer for voters to vote especially at the small locations
  
- Considering that Advance Voting takes place over a three week period of time, staff is actively gathering information on Plexiglas sneeze shields that will stand between the poll worker and a voter.
- Providing adequate personal protective equipment for poll workers has been a top priority. Currently we are prepared to offer each worker 1 pair of protective eye wear, 2 sets of gloves, 2 masks, and personal hand sanitizer.
- At the time of check in, each voter will be offered a re-usable rubber tipped stylus to use to mark their choices on the ballot marking device. The stylus and the voter card will be sanitized after each use.
- The existing policy provides that all four sites be open per normal operating procedure. Any change to the existing schedule would require Board action.
- By State Election Board Rule, the time, date, and place for Advance Voting is to be published on the Board of Elections Website at least 7 days prior to the opening of Advance Voting, which would be Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup>.

Chairman McFalls suggested tabling the discussion until a later date because the circumstances were currently very fluid at the current time. After more general discussion, Mrs. Barnes made a motion to table the matter until such time as more information is available. Mrs. Brown seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. Mrs. Barnes made a follow up motion that the May 11<sup>th</sup> Regular Monthly Meeting be rescheduled for Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup> at which time the matter of modifying the current Advance Voting schedule will be placed back onto the agenda for an update and further discussion. Mrs. Brown seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

The next discussion point was regarding providing personal protective equipment for poll workers and establishing a policy for its use within the polling place. Ms. Bailey began the discussion by presenting a draft policy to the Board for their consideration.

Ms. Bailey explained that pursuant to the Department of Homeland Security, election personnel were classified as essential critical infrastructure workers and are required to work a normal work schedule, meaning that absentee voting must be provided, voter registration applications must be processed, and Election Day polling sites must be opened. Continuing, she stated that pursuant to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines certain actions are recommended in

advance of Election Day. Ms. Bailey explained the 4 primary focus points of the CDC policy as follows:

- Techniques for encouraging voters to use voting methods that minimize direct contact with other people and reduce crowd size
- Preventative actions poll workers can take
- Preventative action at polling locations
- Recommendations for processing mail-in ballots

Continuing, Ms. Bailey explained the current ways that staff has implemented the CDC recommendations. She also stated that a suggestion was made by the Emergency Management Director, Fire Chief Chris James, that anytime a voter enters a polling site showing symptoms of sickness that the poll worker facilitating the voting process for the voter be mandated to wear all protective gear that is provide and to immediately sanitize any surface with which any possibly infected voter comes into contact. Continuing, she stated that it had also been suggested that the Board consider mandating all poll workers to wear all protective gear the entire time that voting is taking place. Ms. Bailey continued by stating that the Board should consider if implementing a stricter mandate such as requiring all poll workers to wear protective gear the entire time voting is taking place would make the policy difficult to manage, specifically if poll workers find wearing the protective gear is uncomfortable and decline to wear it despite the policy.

Following more general discussion, Chairman McFalls asked Board members to make a note of and submit their questions regarding the logistics of conducting an election in the current environment to the Director to be placed on the May 4<sup>th</sup> agenda for discussion.

The next discussion point was an outline of the procedures for processing mail in absentee ballots. Ms. Bailey stated the following:

- Approximately 13,000 requests for absentee ballots have been received and are currently being processed
- To date approximately 4,700 Democratic ballots, 2,800 Republican ballots, and 300 Nonpartisan ballots had been completely processed and were ready to print
- Additional secure storage space had been acquired in the Municipal Building and modifications to the space were underway
- Preliminary discussions that would help election officials manage the extraordinarily high number of mail in absentee ballots by permitting the opening up absentee ballots to begin earlier than at 7:00 AM on Election Morning were in progress at the State level

The next discussion point was regarding the permitting of absentee ballot drop boxes. Ms. Bailey provided a copy of the State Election Board Emergency Rule providing for the temporary usage of absentee ballot drop boxes as follows:

- As mentioned in an earlier email, the State Election Board has permitted local election superintendents to establish secure absentee ballot drop boxes in their counties. Staff recommendation is to establish absentee ballot drop boxes pursuant to State guidelines at all 4 Advance Voting locations in Richmond County. The locations are all well-

known and well dispersed. We have asked the Central Services Department to come up with a plan for installation and the Marshal's Department to come up with a plan for security/monitoring. We have the Administrator and Recreation Department's full support in our efforts.

- The time period for having the boxes open and available may begin as early as April 21<sup>st</sup> and must close at 7:00 PM on Election Day. Staff recommendation is to aim for having the boxes available at least by the opening of the Advance Voting period starting May 18, 2020 or earlier, if possible.
- All ballots must be picked up from each location at least once every 24 hours.
- The Emergency Rule requires advertising on our Website.
- Staff is seeking ratification by the Board to proceed as outlined above.

After some general discussion, Mr. Dicks made a motion that the staff be authorized to procure absentee ballot drop boxes and explore logistics for the operation of the drop boxes within the guidelines set forth in the newly adopted State Election Board Emergency Rule. Mrs. Barnes seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Item #6 – Discussion of establishing a media photography policy for polling locations. Ms. Bailey began the discussion by summarizing previous discussions on this matter during the past two Regular Monthly Meetings. She stated that it was apparent from the previous discussions that the Board felt strongly that having a policy disallowing any photography within the polling places while voting was taking place was in the best interest of voter privacy and spacing within the polling place.

Ms. Bailey presented a follow up draft policy stating the Board's position on disallowing the use of any photographic or electronic recording devices within the polling place with the exception of poll workers using the devices for official election business or for blind or illiterate voters using devices to review their printed ballot. She further stated that pursuant to previously stated concerns regarding overly aggressive exit polling, the proposed policy also contained wording reiterating the State law that exit polling may only be conducted within 25 feet of the exit door of any building in which a polling place is located and ballots are being cast.

Following some general discussion, Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the draft Policy for Photography and Exit Polling be adopted by the Board as presented by Staff. Mr. Dicks seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Item #7 – Old Business. There was no Old Business.

Item #8 – New Business. Chairman McFalls stated that in order to help facilitate the May 4<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, he was requesting that Board members with outstanding questions on polling place or other election related processes or logistics reach out to the Executive Director in advance of the meeting to submit questions/concerns for discussion.

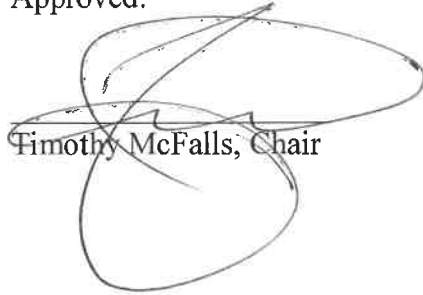
There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Dicks made a motion that the meeting stand adjourned. Mrs. Barnes seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brown, Secretary for the Board

Approved:



Timothy McFalls, Chair