

BOARD OF ELECTIONS
AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA
REGULAR MONTHLY AND CERTIFICATION MEETING
~~Meeting Conducted Via Zoom~~ Warehouse
March 24, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary and
June 9, 2020 General Primary and Nonpartisan Election

Chairman Tim McFalls called the meeting to order. Present were Board Members Bob Finnegan, Sherry Barnes, and Terence Dicks. Also present were Executive Director, Lynn Bailey, Assistant Director Travis Doss and members of the public. Board member Marcia Brown was absent.

Item #1 – Call the meeting to order. Chairman McFalls called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Item #2 – Consider Provisional or Challenged ballots cast during the March 24, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary. Chairman McFalls called on Mr. Doss for a report. Mr. Doss disseminated a report and provided explanations as follows:

Group A – 1 voter cast a ballot but was unable to provide one of the 6 acceptable forms of identification prior to casting their ballot. The voter was properly notified, but failed to respond to the request for information by the deadline of Friday, June 12, 2020. Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the ballot be rejected and not counted. Mr. Finnegan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

The final tally was 1 provisional ballots cast and 1 provisional ballot rejected.

Item #3 - Consider Provisional or Challenged ballots cast during the June 9, 2020 General Primary and Nonpartisan Election. Mr. Doss disseminated a report and provided explanations as follows:

Group A – 60 voters cast a provisional ballot out of precinct either because they thought they were at their correct precinct or did not have time to get to their correct precinct. Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the ballots be accepted, but duplicated onto a ballot card for the voter's correct precinct. Mr. Dicks seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Group B – 13 voters were properly registered and at their correct polling place, but could not be located by poll workers on the electronic poll book. Mr. Dicks made a motion to accept and count the ballots. Mr. Finnegan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Group C – 1 voter was mistakenly taken by another county. The voter has been transferred back to Richmond County. Mr. Dicks made a motion to accept and count the ballots. Mr. Finnegan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Group D – 1 voter cast a ballot during the court ordered extended hours for voting caused by the late opening of a polling location. The voter was properly registered to vote. Mrs. Barnes made a motion to accept and count the ballots. Mr. Dicks seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Group E – 2 voters cast a provisional ballot because they registered to vote, but missed the voter registration deadline. Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the ballots be rejected and not counted. Mr. Finnegan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Group F – 12 voters cast a provisional ballot but were currently registered to vote in other counties in Georgia and had not transferred their voter registration to Richmond County. Mr. Finnegan made a motion that the ballots be rejected and not counted. Mrs. Barnes seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Group G – 3 voters were removed from the list of voters due to a felony conviction and had not re-registered to vote. Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the ballots be rejected and not counted. Mr. Finnegan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Group H – 1 voter returned their ballot by mail, but failed to properly mark the outside envelope as spoiled and signed the back of the envelope swearing that the envelope contained her duly voted ballot. The ballot marked as spoiled was counted as submitted by the voter. Mrs. Barnes made a motion that since the voter's mail in absentee ballot had been counted that the provisional ballot be rejected and not counted. Mr. Dicks seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Group I – 32 ballots placed into a provisional status due to a missing or mismatched signature provided the required documentation to provide a cure for their ballot deficiency. Mr. Finnegan made a motion that the ballots be accepted and counted. Mr. Dicks seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

The final tally was 125 provisional ballots cast with, 107 ballots accepted and 18 rejected. In addition to the 107 provisional ballots accepted for counting there were 6 military/overseas ballots received after the election, but in time to be counted making the total number of ballots added to the Unofficial Results stand at 113 ballots. Mr. Doss also presented a statistical report showing from which precinct each provisional ballot was issued and the reason for issuance of the ballot. Chairman McFalls then excused Mr. Doss from the meeting to prepare the final reports for certification.

Item #4 – Recap of the June 9, 2020 General Primary and Nonpartisan Election. Ms. Bailey disseminated an Election Recap report. She explained Election Day points of interest as follows:

Election Morning

It was a chaotic morning as poll workers saw the new voting equipment for the first time in a real life scenario. Trouble shooting by staff and technicians were at a higher level than normal.

Technical issues experienced in various polling places on Election morning included:

- Being unable to properly open up/operate the ballot scanning device
- Being unable to properly open up the ballot marking device
- Being unable to properly open up/operate the electronic poll book

At 40 of our 42 polling sites, any technical issues were successfully resolved and voting began at 7:00 AM as scheduled. At 2 of our 42 polling sites, technical issues were not successfully resolved until 7:30 AM at the Vineyard Church and 8:40 AM at the Southpoint Church. In both instances, court orders

were sought and issued to extend voting hours, as required. The Board complimented the staff for their good preparation and hard work leading up to Election Day.

Complaints/Issues

- Leading up to Election Day, many voters contacted our office to check on the status of their absentee ballot by mail
- The postponement of the election caused some confusion
- The Special Election for US Senate that will appear on November's ballot caused confusion
- Ballot cancellations by voters coming to vote in person although they had previously been mailed an absentee ballot was an internal, time consuming issue that persisted throughout the conduct of voting.

Lessons Learned

- Poll workers, elections staff, and voters gained a better working knowledge of the new voting system.
- A better working knowledge of the system enabled staff to enhance trouble shooting guides and its plan for providing technicians to troubleshoot problems during the August and November Elections
- The experience provided an opportunity to improve upon the challenges equipment delivery.
- While the new system has similarities to the old system, the differences are vast. The DRE system (the former system) was very efficient and made consolidating polling locations easy and very doable. The new paper based system has very different requirements, the most challenging of which is having enough interior space to provide voter privacy, social distancing, an adequate amount of voting equipment, and space for workers.
- Due to space limitations, it is likely that opening up additional Election Day and Advance Voting sites prior to November will be necessary. Five Election Day sites have been identified by staff for evaluation due to possible overcrowding.
- Looking ahead to the November General Election, preventing excessive lines at polling locations will be paramount to the overall success of Election Day. In an effort to prevent long lines, staff will be evaluating the county for an additional or alternate Advance Voting site in an effort to encourage as many voters as possible to vote ahead of time.
- The messaging from the Board of Elections Office to voters will continue to encourage voters to vote absentee by mail or during Advance Voting during all elections in the 2020 Election Cycle.

What Went Right

- Zero complaints from voters on the new voting system
- No lines on Election Day
- No problems with the voter leaving the polling place with their ballot in hand
- The 6 field technicians
- No complaints from voters or poll officers about wearing a mask
- The new law requiring Cure Affidavits for missing or mismatched signatures on absentee ballots by mail. A total of 183 absentee ballots were rejected due primarily due to missing signatures

with a few rejected due to mismatched signatures. 105 of the 183 rejected ballots were cured by the voter prior to the June 12th deadline.

By the Numbers

- 133,697 persons were eligible to vote
- 5,090 persons voted during Advance Voting
- 22,724 persons voted using a mail in absentee ballot
- 15,749 persons voted at the polls on Election Day
- 43,563 voters participated for a 32.58% voter turnout
- 125 provisional ballots were cast

August 11, 2020 Runoff

- The runoff will involve Augusta Commission Districts 1, 3, and 9 (Super District comprised of Single Member Districts 1, 2, 4, and 5).
- 29 polling locations will be open
- 83,040 or 62% of current registered voters will be eligible to vote
- Voters participating in the runoff must have been registered to vote by the voter registration deadline of May 11, 2020
- The Secretary of State's Office will be packaging and mailing ballots to all voters on our roll over list (voters over 65 or disabled). The rollover list currently contains the names of approximately 7,000 registered voters. County election offices will mail ballots for all other applications received. Ballots will be mailed out as soon as practicable.
- Advance Voting will be held Monday, July 20 through Friday, August 7, 2020.

Advance Voting for the Runoff

Ms. Bailey reported that the current Board policy for runoffs provides that the Satellite Sites for Advance Voting are not open for a runoff. She further stated that in order to continue the Board's policy of following the CDC guidelines recommending that voters attempt to vote ahead of Election Day either by mail or during Advance Voting and avoid peak times for voting on Election Day staff was recommending an exception to the Board's current Advance Voting Policy that would permit the opening of the Satellite Sites for the August 11, 2020 Runoff. Mrs. Barnes made a motion that due to the extraordinary circumstances under which voting is being conducted at this time that all Satellite sites be open for the August 11th Runoff, but that no weekend voting be provided. Mr. Dicks seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

A discussion then ensued regarding Emergency Rules adopted for the June 9th Primary permitting the early processing of absentee ballots and absentee ballot drop boxes. Ms. Bailey stated that the expectation is that the State Election Board will make both Emergency Rules permanent beginning with the August 11th Runoff and that she would keep the Board apprised on the matter.

Item #5 – Certify the results of the March 24, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary Ms. Bailey presented the Board with the Official Election Results. The Board then compared the Unofficial Election Night Results to the Official Election Results.

Ms. Bailey explained that Georgia law requires each election superintendent to canvass, compute and announce the results for all elections. Mr. McFalls called on Ms. Bailey to commence with announcing the votes cast during the election. Ms. Bailey stated that the total number of ballots cast was 3,552. At the conclusion of the announcement of the votes cast, Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the results be certified by the Board as read and sent to the Secretary of State's Office. Mr. Finnegan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Item # 6 – Certify the results of the June 9, 2020 General Primary and Nonpartisan Election Ms. Bailey presented the Board with the Official Election Results. The Board then compared the Unofficial Election Night Results to the Official Election Results to ensure that the 107 provisional and the 6 military/overseas ballots were added into the total. The Board verified that the 113 provisional and military ballots were added to the number of ballots cast bringing the total number of votes cast to 43,676.

Mr. McFalls called on Ms. Bailey to commence with announcing the votes cast during the election. At the conclusion of the announcement of the votes cast, Mr. Dicks made a motion that the results be certified by the Board as read and sent to the Secretary of State's Office. Mrs. Barnes seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Staff circulated the certification documents for both elections and each Board member present affixed their signature to the documents thereby completing the certification of the results of the March 24, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary and the June 9, 2020 General Primary and Nonpartisan Election.

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

Item #8 – New Business. There was no New Business.

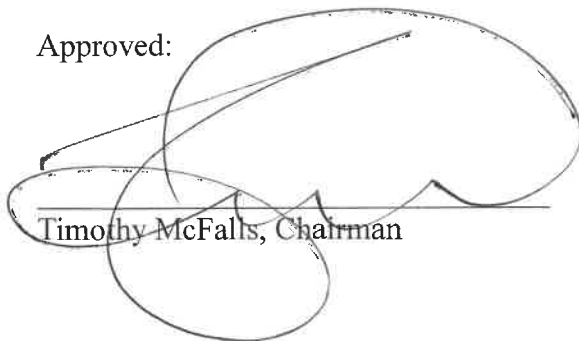
There being no further business to come before the Board, Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the meeting stand adjourned. Mr. Finnegan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brown, Secretary for the Board

Approved:



Timothy McFalls, Chairman