

BOARD OF ELECTIONS  
AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA  
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING  
MEETING CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM  
August 3, 2020

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 #1 - Update on the August 11, 2020 Nonpartisan Runoff

- Absentee ballots by mail: At the time of the meeting, approximately 8,000 ballots had been mailed and approximately 3,900 voted ballots had been returned.
- Advance Voting: At the time of the meeting, approximately 800 person had cast a ballot during Advance Voting not including those ballots cast at the satellite sites.
- Early absentee ballot processing: Early absentee ballot processing will be conducted beginning on Wednesday, August 5<sup>th</sup> through Thursday, August 6<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 - 5:00 daily at the Board of Elections Warehouse. Any ballots not scanned at the end of this process will be opened and scanned on Election Day beginning at 1:00 PM
- Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes: At the time of the meeting, 300 voters had dropped their ballot into one of the secure absentee ballot drop boxes
- There are 29 polling locations open and approximately 90,000 voters eligible to vote

Item #2 - Update on the November 3, 2020 General Election

- Board of Education Qualifying Period: The qualifying period for Board of Education seats 1, 4, 5, 8, and 10 will begin on Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM and will close on Friday, August 21<sup>st</sup> at 12:00 Noon.
- Post-election auditing - Every county in the State will be required to conduct a post-election, but pre-certification audit of the ballots cast during the election. This is the first step towards full implementation of risk limiting audits state-wide. Details on the auditing process are being discussed currently.
- HB 316, which requires the conduct of the pre-certification audit also permits Georgia to join the Election and Registration Information Center. The Center's membership consists of 30 States and Washington DC. One primary function of the Center is comparing the voter registration lists of all member states against each other to check for duplicate voter registration records. Ms. Bailey explained that one of the many services available to members is the ability of the Center to identify all citizens in the State who are eligible to register to vote, but who are not registered to vote. Continuing, she stated that the GA Secretary of State planned to use the service during the month of September 2020 to provide voter registration information to all eligible but unregistered citizens.
- Absentee Ballot Application Portal - the Secretary of State's Office is developing an absentee ballot application portal that will be available for use for November's election. The portal will enable voters to apply for an absentee ballot electronically and the

applications will automatically appear on our dashboard making for quick and efficient processing

A discussion then ensued regarding applying for an absentee ballot for the November Election. Ms. Bailey stated that only those voters who were over 65 or disabled who opted to receive a ballot by mail would automatically receive a ballot for all remaining elections in the 2020 election cycle and that all other voters would be required to submit a separate application for the November election.

#### Item #3 - Call for a Special Election for City Councilperson in the City of Blythe

- On Friday, July 31, 2020 City Councilperson Brent Weir resigned his seat on the Blythe City Council effective immediately. Mr. Weir was elected for a full four year term on November 5, 2019. The special election will be for the unexpired term, expiring on December 31, 2023.
- The suggested qualifying period would open at 9:00 AM on Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup> and would close on Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 Noon.
- The voter registration deadline is the same as for November - Monday, October 5, 2020

Mrs. Barnes made a motion that the Board issue the call for the special election to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of City Councilperson Brent Weir. Mrs. Brown seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

#### Item #4 - Discussion of CARES Act Funding

Ms. Bailey stated that the City of Augusta had recently received financial support from the federal government for COVID relief funding through the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, Economic Security Act) as passed by Congress. Continuing, she explained that this is the same funding source used by the GA Secretary of State for sending out prefilled absentee ballot applications and to provide matching grants to counties for purchasing PPE, ADA supplies, security related items, and absentee ballot drop boxes. Continuing, Ms. Bailey presented a grant proposal for reimbursement under the CARES Act of COVID related expenses from the March, May, June, and August elections and for projected COVID related expenses from the November Election.

Specific items outlined were:

- \$100,000 to send out prefilled absentee ballot applications, to process returned absentee ballot requests, and to process returned absentee ballots
- \$75,440 in reimbursements from the June 9<sup>th</sup> General Primary
- \$11,650 in reimbursements from the August 11<sup>th</sup> NP Runoff
- \$7,233 for absentee ballot drop boxes
- \$14,440 for electronic envelope openers to facilitate opening absentee applications and ballots
- \$117,000 funding to cover budget overages from the November election
- \$54,000 to establish a mega Advance Voting center at the Bell Auditorium

- Total grant request from the Board of Elections \$379,730

Following a general discussion on the matter, Mr. Dicks made a motion that the grant application be approved as written and that Director Bailey be authorized move forward administratively to apply for full funding under Rounds 1 and 2 as outlined in the application. Mrs. Barnes seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Item #5 - Discussion of the 2021 Budget

Ms. Bailey reported that the 2021 Budget would soon be submitted and that other than the special election on March 16, 2021 the budget submission will be normal with no new personnel or special project requests. Chair McFalls requested that funding be included to permit restocking of PPE supplies.

Item #6 - Old Business

Ms. Bailey reminded the Board of the election certification meeting on August 19, 2020.

Item #7 - New Business

Mr. Dicks relayed to the Board a recommendation that he received encouraging the Board to consider establishing ways for enhanced transparency of ballot tabulation and the processes leading up to tabulation. Chair McFalls suggested the development of an exploratory committee headed up by Mr. Dicks be convened to discuss and bring forward ideas and suggestions to the entire Board for discussion. Chair McFalls requested to be invited to the meetings of the exploratory committee. The Board agreed by consensus to the establishment of the exploratory committee as described.

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

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brown, Secretary for the Board

Approved.



Timothy McFalls, Chair