

MINUTES

City of Charlottesville Electoral Board Meeting of September 26, 2019

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 10.06 a.m. on Thursday, September 26, in the second-floor conference room of the Charlottesville City Hall. Those present were Electoral Board members Anne Hemenway (Chair), Jon Bright (Vice Chair), and Jim Nix (Secretary), Acting Director of Elections and General Registrar Jamie Virostko and Charlottesville City Manager Dr. Tarron Richardson.

Public Comment

Ms. Dianne Gilliland was present for this meeting but did not make any comment.

Discussion with City Manager

Memorandum of Understanding: The Chair introduced the members of the Electoral Board and explained that this discussion constituted the annual meeting between the Board and the City Manager called for in the May 2015 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Chair presented Dr. Richardson with a draft update of that MOU and highlighted the only substantial change proposed by the Board – a statement that the City’s grievance procedures should apply to the staff of the Office of Voter Registration. Without agreeing immediately Dr. Richardson informed the Board that the City is working on a revision of its employee manual and employment policies and added that he sees no problem with this proposal. However, the grievance issue may not be settled until the new HR director has an opportunity to weigh in and John Blair reviews the final draft. Dr. Richardson added that he felt it was important for the General Registrar to attend the bi-weekly meetings of the Leadteam along with other City department heads.

Purchase of New Electronic Poll Books: The Chair informed the City Manager of the need for new poll books and reviewed the steps taken thus far for their procurement by the Board and the Registrar’s office staff working in conjunction with the City finance office. The Chair explained that competing bids by three vendors had been reviewed by the Board and the Registrar’s office staff and provided the rationale for the decision by the Board to select the DemTech system for procurement. The Chair acknowledged that, while the Registrar’s Office budget includes significant Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds for this procurement, additional funds will be required. Dr. Richardson raised issues about coordination with the City’s IT Department and emphasized the benefits of centralized purchase of technology to ensure that we get the best price and that the City can offer technical support. The Chair explained that the voting equipment is completely separate from the City’s computer network and that

technical support is provided by the equipment vendors under their procurement contracts. The City Manager indicated that there should not be a problem with finding the balance of CIP funds needed for the purchase of the new poll books but added that the office budget should reflect planning for financing future such upgrades over their ten-year lifetime.

Compensation Rates for Election Officials: The Chair informed the City Manager that the current system of setting compensation for Election Officials (EOs) at hourly rates rather than as flat rates for a full or half day shift has led to budget shortfalls that have grown under the City's living wage policy. She further pointed out that the EOs are not city employees but rather contractors brought in to work on Election Day and that in nearly all other Virginia localities EOs are paid on a flat rate basis as was the case in Charlottesville until a couple of years ago. Dr. Richardson indicated that he was okay with the flat-rate proposal but in the discussion that followed there was uncertainty about whether the City Council or the Electoral Board has the responsibility to set the compensation rates for EOs. The relevant statute (Code of Virginia 24.2-116) states that the localities shall pay the officers and provides a minimum daily compensation rate. The cost of compensating EOs is included in the Registrar's Office budget but, other than that, the role of the Council in setting the rates is unclear and Dr. Richardson will seek an answer.

Move to Office of the General Registrar

Following the discussion with the City Manager the Board members and Ms. Vrostko moved to the Registrar's Office where Deputy Registrar Martin Mash and Voter Equipment Technician Robert Hodous joined the meeting.

Appointment of Officers of Election

The Deputy Registrar presented applications for seventeen individuals wishing to become officers of election. The board reviewed the applications and, on a motion by the Secretary, seconded by the Chair, the following were unanimously approved for appointment to a three-year term:

Virginia Abraham
Amy Anderson
Maureen Carey-Medlock
Karen Christiansen
Kenneth Crespo
Miriam Dickler
Susan Friedman
Judy Harmon
Stephen Haske

Mohamoud Hassen
Robert Kemmel
Andrew McNichols
Robert Stroh
Krista Townsend
Pat Trimmer
Lyndele von Schill
Michelle Washington

Ballot Printing

Ms. Vrostko reported a phone call she had received from the Deputy Commissioner of Elections expressing concern that our reported number of ballots planned for printing appeared insufficient for the upcoming election. By explaining that our ability to print ballots rapidly in the office eliminated the need for us to over order Ms. Vrostko was able to alleviate some of those concerns. The board reviewed the turnout projection and the plan to print 7000 election day ballots in addition to the 1000 absentee ballots already printed. A decision was made to spool 5000 more election day so they would be available to print on short notice if needed. For absentee voting, 500 additional absentee ballots have already been spooled. The Secretary suggested that, in future reporting of ballot printing plans, the number of ballots ordered should include the number of ballots spooled for later printing to avoid giving the impression that we were inadequately prepared for the election. Mr. Hodous confirmed for the Board that ballots already spooled could be printed at a rate of 1000 per hour using the certified office printer.

The next meeting of the Board will take place in the office of the Charlottesville General Registrar at 5:45 p.m. on Tuesday, October 8, 2019.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

James Nix, Secretary

Anne Hemenway, Chair

Jon Bright, Vice Chair