

MINUTES

City of Charlottesville Electoral Board Meeting of June 2, 2020

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 5:51 p.m. on Tuesday, June 2. In compliance with the continued restrictions on assembly due to the coronavirus threat this meeting was held via video conference. Fortunately, the technical difficulties that marred the first virtual Board meeting in April were not encountered during this meeting. Those present were Electoral Board members Anne Hemenway (Chair), Jon Bright (Vice Chair) and Jim Nix (Secretary) and Director of Elections and General Registrar Melissa A. Morton.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair, the agenda was unanimously approved with a single change requested by the Secretary, the addition of a discussion of a phone conversation with the Fairfax City General Registrar concerning voting by mail.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair, the minutes of the May 4 meeting were unanimously approved without change.

Public Comment

Two members of the public were present for the meeting: Bekah Saxon, co-chair of the Charlottesville Democratic Committee and Nolan Stout, reporter for the Charlottesville Daily Progress. Neither made a statement but Ms. Saxon, in a response to a question by the Secretary, provided information on a proposal under consideration by the Democratic Committee to distribute masks at the polls for voter use on June 23.

Report of the General Registrar

Ms. Morton had distributed a brief written report to the Board in advance of the meeting. Significant items included the announcement of plans to pre-process mailed absentee ballots on June 4 and 18 and the submission of an application for a Homeland Security Grant for funds to purchase equipment required to process the greatly increased volume of by-mail ballots anticipated in the fall.

Ms. Morton also updated the Board on preparations for the June 23 primary focusing on measures to address safety concerns during the Covid pandemic. Adequate supplies of cleaning materials and personal protective equipment are either on hand or on order. The Office of Elections will ask voters to wear a mask when voting and would provide one to voters who do not have one. The Secretary asked Democratic Committee Co-chair Bekah Saxon if it was true that the Committee was planning to have masks

available for voter use at tables outside the polling places. Ms. Saxon informed the Board that this is under consideration, but no decision has been made to date. In the discussion that followed the Chair expressed the view that it would be inappropriate for a political party to take on what should be a city responsibility. The Office of Elections will continue to work with community leaders and the City Democrats to acquire additional masks for the voting public.

Appointment of Officers of Election

Prior to the meeting Ms. Morton had emailed to the board members PDF copies of applications for twenty-six individuals wishing to be appointed as officers of election. On a motion by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair the following were unanimously appointed to a three-year term:

Robert D. LeHeup
John Wills Lloyd
Shane Thackston
Adam D. Seid
Margaret Elaine Gardiner
Megan Healy
Melissa Ann Henriksen
Caroline June Wagner
Elizabeth Jackson
Stephen Dause
Pardis Minucheher
Nadiya Khaydari
Kimberly Carpenter Emery
Elodie Wolfe
Blythe Kerry Shannon
Betty Joyce Nash
Laurel Detert
Samantha Rae Hart
Kendell J. Bills
Rachel A. Potter
Gabriela Toledo Lugo
Gail L. Kitch
Worthy N. Martin
Jill Marie Golaszewski
Zachary Warren Bills
Lina Schneider
Roger Shields
Elizabeth Ann Ragosta

Information of Interest Obtained from the Fairfax City General Registrar

The Secretary attended a May 28 on-line panel discussion on voting by mail in Virginia sponsored by the Virginia Public Access Program. Among the panelists was Ms. Brenda Cabrera, General Registrar for the City of Fairfax, who reported on the May 19 Fairfax election and accommodations to the Covid pandemic. The Secretary contacted Ms. Cabrera by phone with additional questions. Turnout in Fairfax was higher than normal for a May local election and, as expected, a far larger than normal fraction of ballots was cast by mail. The ballots received by mail were preprocessed several days before the election as authorized by Virginia Election Law. Ms. Cabrera provided details of the process followed for pre-processing along with suggestions for the conduct of in-person absentee voting and voting at the precincts on the day of the primary. Several of her suggestions were discussed and adopted for employment in the June 23 primary in Charlottesville.

Preparation for the June 23 Dual Primary

Prior to the meeting the General Registrar had provided the Board members with a memo on the preparation for the Primary. Included was a detailed description of the set up for accomplishing logic and accuracy (L&A) testing for the voting equipment to be used on June 23. The L&A will be conducted by the Board members and staff at a secure warehouse on Wednesday June 17 with careful attention to sanitizing and social distancing requirements.

Ms. Morton reviewed the changes to set up of the polling locations to ensure protection of the voters and officers of election. The number of voters entering the polling places will be limited to four at a time, equipment will be spaced to maintain social distancing, the floor will be marked with tape to keep voters adequately separated and frequent cleaning of surfaces will be emphasized. Voters will be instructed to wear masks inside the polling places but voters who neglect to wear a mask will not be prevented from voting. Furthermore, in accordance with Department of Elections policy, voters will not be asked to remove masks for identification purposes.

The Vice Chair raised the issue of visually impaired voters requiring assistance in navigating the polling places. This is particularly a concern for Clark precinct, which usually has a number of visually impaired voters who need assistance requiring physical contact, such as a hand on the shoulder. Ms. Morton reported that one of the Clark officers of election has agreed to assist these voters.

The next meeting of the Board will be at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 23, in the office of the Charlottesville General Registrar in conjunction with the canvass of the Primary Election.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

James Nix, Secretary

Anne Hemenway, Chair

Jon Bright, Vice Chair