

MINUTES

City of Charlottesville Electoral Board Meeting of September 14, 2020

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 11:12 a.m. on Monday September 14 in the office of the Charlottesville General Registrar. Those present were Electoral Board members Anne Hemenway (Chair), Jon Bright (Vice Chair) and Jim Nix (Secretary), Director of Elections and General Registrar Melissa A. Morton and Deputy Registrar and Election Manager Taylor Yowell.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair, the agenda was unanimously approved without change.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair, the minutes from the September 2 meeting were unanimously approved without change.

Public Comment

Ms. Bekah Saxon, Co-chair of the Charlottesville Democratic Party was present for this meeting. She did not make a comment but responded to several questions on voter registration efforts. She remained to observe the logic and accuracy (L&A) testing.

NBC Channel 29 reporter Mr. Daniel Grimes was present and recorded portions of the Electoral Board meeting and the L&A testing.

Report of the General Registrar

Ms. Morton introduced Ms. Taylor Yowell, recently hired to serve as Deputy Registrar and Election Manager. Ms. Yowell's work will focus in the immediate future on the assignment and training of election officials for the November 3 election. The Board members offered her words of welcome and encouragement for the challenges ahead.

Regarding election preparation Ms. Morton informed the Board that the City Housing Director has authorized department personnel to conduct outreach to City Public Housing residents on voter registration and voting by mail. She also provided an update on the production and dissemination of public service announcements (PSAs) on various aspects of registration and voting. This prompted the Chair to speak about questions from voters that demonstrate confusion in the community concerning absentee voting, early voting and voting by mail. These questions stem from the many changes in election law in effect for the first time in this election and she expressed hope that wide dissemination of the PSAs would answer many of these questions.

In a positive development, Ms. Morton reported that the 18,000 absentee ballots ordered from Hart Intercivic were delivered on Friday, September 11. Nearly 6500 requests for ballots by mail had been processed by meeting time and, with many additional requests being processed daily, she expects that approximately 8000 would be mailed out on Friday, September 18. Experienced election officials will be brought in daily to assist with preparing the ballot packages for mailing and also to assist during busy times with in-person early voting. Both staff members and election officials working on early voting will receive temperature checks and must be symptom free.

Ms. Morton also reported delivery of a ballot drop box to be installed just outside the door to the registrar's office. This box, a standard Post Office type mailbox, will be securely bolted to the pavement and to the brick exterior of the building in a location under 24-hour video security. Ballots will be removed from the box multiple times each workday by two members of the staff and, on weekends, by a staff member with Board member assistance. A signature log will be maintained to document the chain of custody for ballots received in the drop box. There followed a discussion on the inconsistencies in the law regarding who may drop off absentee ballots. The current law, which has not been repealed, permits voters to drop off only their own absentee ballots at the registrar's office while the new law appears to remove this limitation for those using a drop box. A consensus was reached that voters seeking to drop off another person's ballot would be asked to deposit it in the drop box.

Appointment of Officers of Election

Ms. Morton presented applications from 18 individuals seeking appointment as Officers of Election and reported that many more applications continue to be received but, since we now have a large surplus of appointed officials, no more will be recommended for appointment for the upcoming election. On a motion by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair, the following were unanimously appointed as Officers of Election for a three-year term:

Andrew Young
Stephon Harris
Robert Amacker
Laura Boyle
Elizabeth Reynolds
Courtney Tern
Ray McDavitt
Julian Carta
Cleo Engle
Stacey Trader
Cara Souto
Nomita Dave

Katherine Ballen
Abby Rothernberg
Abigail Plein
Saoirse Lee
Aaron Cole
Jillian Roberts

Procurement of new pollbooks


There appears to be no end to the frustration surrounding the acquisition of the much needed electronic pollbooks (EPBs). Further delays in state certification of the new EPBs have now eliminated the possibility that they would be available for use with in-person early voting, which begins on Friday, September 18. Employment of the new EPBs offered the potential for faster processing of the many voters expected to take advantage of the new early voting option. Absent the new equipment, in-person early voters will be processed directly in the voter registration system as in previous elections. Ms. Morton remains optimistic that the new pollbooks will be delivered in time for use in pre-processing ballots received by mail, which is to start October 16.

The next meeting will be held in the office of the Charlottesville General Registrar at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 6.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:08 p.m. and was immediately followed by logic and accuracy testing of voting equipment to be used for in-person early voting.

Respectfully submitted:


James Nix, Secretary


Anne Hemenway, Chair


Jon Bright, Vice Chair

