

MINUTES

City of Charlottesville Electoral Board Meeting of October 6, 2020

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6:04 p.m. on Tuesday October 6 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. Voter Registration Manager Jamie Virostko was also present for a portion of this meeting.

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

On a motion by the Vice Chair, seconded by the Chair, the minutes from the September 14 meeting were unanimously approved without change.

Public Comment

Mr. Daniel Moy, Chair of the Charlottesville Republican Committee, was the only member of the public present for this meeting. He made no comment but asked several questions during the meeting concerning the recruitment of additional Republican officers of election, the preprocessing of mailed ballots, and provisions for authorized party observers at the polls on November 3.

Report of the General Registrar

Ms. Morton requested and received Board concurrence with respect to granting Ms. Yowell full access to the Hart election computer system and to expanding Voter Registration Manager Jamie Virostko's access to the system to enable her to conduct the pre-processing of mailed ballots.

Three national press organizations have requested all-day access to several Charlottesville polling places. Ms. Morton suggested that access for only a portion of the day would be more appropriate and that access be discouraged (*denied?*) to locations with space constraints such as the Tonsler precinct. The Board members concurred with her recommendations.

Ms. Morton also provided an update on voting by mail and in-person early voting. In-person voting has been at consistently high levels with waiting times occasionally extending to one hour, but few complaints have been heard and cards, phone calls and even gifts of food have been received from grateful voters. Many voters are turning in

ballots received by mail having decided instead to vote in-person. Nevertheless, voting by mail has also been at a much higher pace than in previous elections. As a result, to date ballots have already been cast by approximately 20% of Charlottesville active voters. Ballots arriving by mail, or in the drop box outside the office, are checked each day for missing signatures and address discrepancies. Voters whose ballot envelopes display such errors are advised by phone, email, or letter of the opportunity to come to the office to make a correction.

Procurement of new pollbooks

Ms. Morton reported that the uncertainty concerning the acquisition of new electronic pollbooks for the November 3 election has finally ended with news from the vendor of further delays in the certification process that will delay delivery until after the election. The Chair expressed disappointment with this news coupled with relief that a crash program for last-minute training of election officials on the new equipment has been avoided. The Chair stressed the need for thorough testing and preparation of the aging computer-based pollbooks to include the purchase of all necessary cables, connectors, etc. to ensure reliable operation for this election.

The Vice Chair enquired about the implications of the loss of the new pollbooks for the pre-processing of mailed ballots and asked specifically if paper pollbooks would now be required for this work. Ms. Morton acknowledged that paper pollbooks would be the only available option and that this would substantially increase the number of manhours required to process these ballots. Voter Registration Manager Jamie Virostko joined the meeting to provide details on this issue. She noted that voting by mail, while extremely high, has not reached expected levels due to a surprisingly high level of in person early voting. With that in mind Ms Virostko expressed confidence that processing of all ballots received by election day could still be completed on November 3 so that nearly complete unofficial results could be posted as usual on election night.

Other election preparation issues

Ms. Yowell provided the Board members with a roster of officers of election assignments for each precinct. The roster includes an extraordinarily high percentage of new officers largely due to the reluctance of many older veteran officers to serve during the Covid pandemic. All key positions at each precinct have been filled with individuals with leadership experience in prior elections. The Chair congratulated Ms. Yowell for doing such a remarkable job with this task so soon after appointment as Deputy Registrar and Election Manager.

There was an extended conversation concerning the implementation of the mandate for drop boxes for mailed ballots at all polling places. Ms. Morton has ordered locked metal boxes for use as precinct drop boxes. These boxes would be placed outside the rooms

in which voting would take place and would continuously be attended by two election officials to ensure that only marked absentee ballots are inserted in them. At several precincts, the sole option for placement of the drop box would be outdoors and this prompted a discussion on weather concerns. The likely need for rain canopies and heaters was raised and Ms. Morton indicated that she has already asked the City Public Works Department for assistance with these.


The final item was a review of ballot needs for both absentee/early voting and election day voting. With in-person early voting exceeding predictions, the Registrar had informed the Chair a few days prior to the meeting that an additional 2000 ballots were urgently needed. Rather than risk printing in-house on a printer that has recently proven unreliable the Chair directed Ms. Morton to immediately order the ballots from Hart Intercivic. For election day voting the Board and Registrar reached a consensus that 17,000 ballots would be needed. Ms. Morton will place the order for these ballots by the end of the current week. The Board members agreed that it would be unwise to plan for any in-house printing for this election.

The next meeting will be held in the office of the Charlottesville General Registrar at 8:00 a.m. on Monday, October 26.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:


James Nix, Secretary


Anne Hemenway, Chair


Jon Bright, Vice Chair