

MINUTES

City of Charlottesville Electoral Board Meeting of December 3, 2020

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday December 3 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 Vice Chair, seconded by the Chair, the minutes from the November 3-9 meeting were unanimously approved without change.

Public Comment

Ms. Sharon Webb, Co-chair of the Charlottesville Democratic Committee, was the only member of the public present for this meeting. In a brief statement Ms. Webb thanked the staff and the Board for their excellent work in conducting the November 3 election.

Registrar's Report

Ms. Morton informed the Board that there have been five requests under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act for election related information. She added that one of these has already been satisfied, another was withdrawn because of cost issues and three were still in process. Those three require voter data that it is the responsibility of the Virginia Department of Elections to provide.

During the canvass of the November 3 election two voters were found to have attempted to vote twice and the Board advised the Registrar to bring this to the attention of the Commonwealth's Attorney. Two other cases were identified by the staff and Ms. Morton reported that all four had been turned over to the office of the Commonwealth's Attorney. A further referral to the Virginia State Police was made where it was determined that no crime had been committed.

Ms. Morton updated the Board members on the status of the lease of the warehouse for storage of voting equipment and supplies. The current lease ends on March 31 and a renewal is under review with a late December deadline for agreement.

The Chair asked the Registrar about the cost for the November 3 election. Final figures are not yet available, but Ms. Morton responded with an estimate of about \$100,000 including approximately \$72,000 for salaries for officers of election on election day and during the 45-day early voting period. She added that, while the final figures are not yet available, she believed that Registrar's Office funds, including some from the CARES Act, would be sufficient to cover the costs. Furthermore, she will be working closely with the City staff for the remainder of this fiscal year to address any budget shortfalls that may occur. *[Subsequent to the December 3 Electoral Board meeting Ms. Morton received an email from the Department of Elections indicating that additional funds might be available from the Department to cover election related funding shortfalls]*

Ms. Morton also informed the Board that all provisional voters whose ballots had been rejected had been informed by letter.

Discussion Items

Post-election Survey

The Deputy Registrar provided the Board members with printed copies of post-election surveys prepared by the Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs, Closers and Research Officers in each of the precincts. The survey focused on an assessment of the pre-election training as well as the conduct of the election and the responses were generally positive. The discussion that followed covered specific issues raised by the election officials as well as observations by the Board members. The Board commended Ms. Yowell for the excellence of the training and for the success of her efforts to staff the precincts noting that she had started work just a few weeks before the election.

Acquisition of New Electronic Pollbooks

Once again, the subject of the frustrating wait for new electronic pollbooks (EPBs) was discussed. Ms. Morton reported that both the hardware and software for the new EPBs had received State certification and that Dem Tech is ready to complete the order. The sole remaining step is to schedule a training visit to inform the staff and Board members about changes resulting from upgrades since the previous demonstration. Ms. Morton assured the Board that she would press for this training to occur during December and that the vendor would ship within a few days of receiving the order.

Budget for Fiscal Year Starting July 1, 2021

The Board reviewed printed copies of the budget spreadsheet and asked a number of questions largely focused on the multitude of lines in the chart covering salaries. This difficult to understand breakdown of employee compensation is a consequence of the system of job categories established by the City. Ms. Morton has been working with the

City Finance Office to remove the election officials from the City payroll and instead designate them as independent contractors. This would markedly simplify the process of compensating the officials and she hopes to have this change accomplished before the next election. A complicating factor with the budget is the likelihood that there will be three elections during the fiscal year July 2021 to June 2022. The decennial redistricting is unlikely to be completed in time to conduct a primary in June 2021 leading to its postponement until probably August 2021. A concern for the current year's budget is that a June 2021 primary is still likely for those state-wide offices not affected by redistricting. Because the turnout for elections in the next two years is expected to be much lighter than for the Presidential election Ms. Morton has recommended that ballots for these elections be printed in house. The Board members agreed with this decision. The formal presentation of the budget will be in a Zoom meeting on December 10 and the Chair will represent the Board at that meeting.

Precinct Boundary Review

The Registrar and the Board have recognized for some time that the mapping of the voting precincts in the City needs revision. This need is driven by the fact that the Johnson Precinct is approaching the legal limit of 5000 voters, that there is a major imbalance in the voting population in the City's nine precincts, and that several of the polling places are inadequate with regard to space, parking and other access issues. Changes to the precinct configuration and polling locations require action by the City Council in a multi-step process that Ms. Morton has initiated by informing the City Council of the need for action. It is the understanding of the Board that a committee must be appointed to conduct the review and make a proposal to the Council and that its membership should include representation from one or more City departments, the Registrar's office, the Electoral Board and the political parties. The current configuration is frozen by statute until May 15, 2021 but a good deal can be accomplished before that date. The Registrar and Deputy Registrar have started work on this project and it will be the main topic of the next meeting of the Electoral Board.

The next meeting will be held in the office of the Charlottesville General Registrar starting at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday December 16.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

James Nix, Secretary

Anne Hemenway, Chair

Jon Bright, Vice Chair