

MINUTES

City of Charlottesville Electoral Board Meeting of Mar 16, 2021

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6:05 p.m. on Tuesday, March 16 in the office of the Charlottesville General Registrar. Those present were Electoral Board members Jon Bright (Chair), Anne Hemenway (Vice Chair), and Jim Nix (Secretary), Director of Elections and General Registrar Melissa Morton and Deputy Registrar Taylor Yowell.

On a motion by the Secretary, seconded by the Vice Chair, the agenda was unanimously approved with one minor change, the replacement of the term "redistricting" with "precinct redrawing" in one agenda item.

On a motion by the Vice Chair, seconded by the Secretary, the minutes from the February 2 and February 24 meetings were unanimously approved without change.

Public Comment

Ms. Bekah Saxon, Co-chair of the Charlottesville Democratic Committee, was present but made no comment.

Registrar's Report

Ms. Morton informed the Board that Ms. Taylor Yowell had completed her new-hire probation period and has now been formally appointed as Deputy Registrar.

Ms. Morton also informed the Board that the annual review of our election security standards has been completed. The Board members signed a letter of transmittal for the updated security standards to the Department of Elections.

Discussion Items

Appointment of Election Officials

Ms. Yowell presented applications for reappointment from 42 officers of election whose terms had recently expired. The Board members reviewed the applications and, on a motion by the Vice Chair, seconded by the Chair, they were unanimously reappointed for a three-year term. A list of those reappointed is attached.

Acquisition of New Electronic Pollbooks (EPBs)

Ms. Morton updated the Board of the latest twists and turns in this drawn-out acquisition effort ending with the news that payment for the new EPBs had been sent to the vendor several days before the meeting. Furthermore, she reported that delivery is expected by the end of March followed by acceptance testing the first week in April. Election officials will be trained on the new EPBs during the normal pre-election training sessions for the June 8 primary. Ms. Morton explained that, while the hardware would be different, with tablets replacing lap-top computers, the software would be little changed from that used in recent elections.

Precinct Boundary Review

The Vice Chair reviewed the steps taken thus far in getting started with this effort. The committee that will undertake the redrawing of precinct boundaries and the selection of polling places will be co-chaired by Ms. Hemenway and Ms. Morton. The membership in the committee has been established and those approached have agreed to serve. The initial meeting of the committee will be held by Zoom in April, but concerns were raised about the difficulty of conducting the map-drawing effort virtually. The census data essential to make the changes in precinct boundaries is now unlikely to be delivered before September, placing limits on what can be accomplished in the short run.

Results of the State-wide Risk Limiting Audit

Ms. Yowell distributed copies of the summary results of the audit compiled by the Department of Elections. Those results show that the audit confirmed the results of the Presidential and Senate elections as well as the vote margins in both contests.

Changes in Voting Rules for the June Primary

The Secretary reported that the Governor has proposed budget amendments that would advance the effective date of several election law changes passed by the legislature in the recently completed special session. Those amendments, likely to pass when the legislature reconvenes, would mandate the use of drop boxes for absentee ballots, require registrars to offer ballot cure for ballots cast by mail or by drop box and provide pre-paid postage for the return of ballots by mail. These measures had been scheduled to take effect July 1 but will now apply to the June 8 primary. However, barring court intervention due to the pandemic, the witness requirement for ballots returned by mail or by drop box will be once again in effect for the June primary and the November general election.

Preparation for Ballot Printing for the June Primary

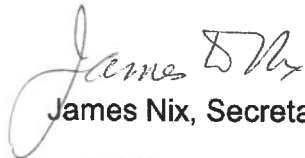
Ms. Morton reminded the Board that in-house printing would be employed for all ballots for the June 8 primary. In the discussion that followed it was agreed that in-person election day voting was likely to represent a larger percentage of the total votes cast than in the November election due to declining concerns about the pandemic. In discussing the printing of absentee ballots all agreed with the wisdom of using separate ballot styles for in-person and by-mail voting for security reasons. While no attempts were made to project turnout for this election, it was acknowledged that in-house printing provided needed flexibility to accommodate demand and adjust to evolving turnout projections.

There followed a general discussion of the draft schedule for the June primary and the Board members expressed agreement with the dates proposed for key activities including logic and accuracy (L&A) testing and election official training.

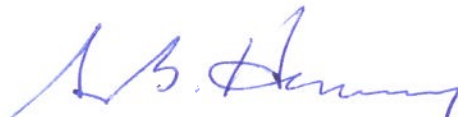
The next meeting will be held in the office of the Charlottesville General Registrar starting at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, April 19, 2021 to be immediately followed with L&A testing in preparation for the start of early voting.

On a motion by the Vice Chair, seconded by the Chair and unanimously passed, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:


James Nix, Secretary


Jon Bright, Chair


Anne Hemenway, Vice Chair