

MINUTES

City of Charlottesville Electoral Board Meeting of July 21, 2021

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 21 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), and Acting Director of Elections and General Registrar Taylor Yowell.

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

On a motion by the Secretary, seconded by the Chair, the minutes from the May 26 meeting were unanimously approved without change.

On a motion by the Vice Chair, seconded by the Secretary, the minutes from the June 8-11 meeting were unanimously approved without change.

Public Comment

Ms. Sue Lewis, representing the League of Women Voters (LWV) was the only member of the public present for this meeting. She asked about the potential for the employment of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in Charlottesville elections and mentioned that the LWV strongly favors its use. There followed an extended discussion of the technical challenges posed by RCV, which are greater in general elections when write-in votes are allowed. RCV is authorized for use in City Council elections but would be extremely difficult to implement in Charlottesville where two or three council seats are filled in a single at-large election. Changing to a ward system would eliminate the special complications of ranked choice ballot counting in a multi-seat election thus facilitating the adoption of RCV for Charlottesville City Council. Ms. Lewis reported that the LWV has no position on the question of adopting a ward system.

The Vice Chair recalled some LWV-sponsored forums on local government issues that she had attended in the past and suggested that the organization consider organizing future forums on issues such as RCV.

Budget Review

Ms. Yowell provided the Board members with printed copies of an end of fiscal year budget summary that elicited questions on individual line items for staff salaries and a few expense categories. While some expense line items exceeded the budgeted amount there were reductions elsewhere that more than compensated for the overages

and the Board commended the Acting Registrar for finishing the year significantly under budget. The Chair asked that an effort be made to tighten the budget for the next fiscal year as much as possible.

Ballot Printing for the November 2 Election

The decision on whether to print ballots in-house or order them from an outside vendor involves balancing the cost savings of in-house printing against burdens it imposes on the office staff. Ms. Yowell observed that low-capacity printers were available for all staff members to use for routine printing tasks and that major printing efforts for training and election day materials could easily be scheduled around ballot printing. Coupled with the fact that the budget for the current fiscal year did not anticipate expenses for external ballot printing, the Board decided in favor of in-house printing for this election. The Vice Chair emphasized the need for printing in sufficient quantities to ensure that election day stress over ballots is eliminated and to instruct chief election officials to anticipate ballot needs well before supply becomes critical on election day.

Preparation for the November 2 General Election

Ms. Yowell distributed copies of an updated calendar for the election prompting a discussion that focused mainly on training. There was general agreement that smaller sessions with only three precincts represented at each were preferable and that hands-on training with voting equipment was especially effective. For example, it was suggested that setting up an electronic poll book at each precinct table would be better than having a single setup at the rear of the room.

For the training of Chiefs, Closers and Research Specialists it was agreed that holding a single session with officers in all three categories attending the entire session was preferable to holding separate sessions.

Sunday Early Voting

A new law, passed in the recent session of the General Assembly, allows localities to schedule voting on one or more Sundays during the early voting period. The Vice Chair reported receiving questions about Sunday voting from the Charlottesville Democratic Committee and the Registrar's Office has received calls from voting activists on this issue. While the Acting Registrar and the office staff are understandably reluctant to add a seventh day of work to what are already busy six-day weeks in the run-up to elections the Board members agreed that it is important to reach out to the community to see if there is voter interest in a Sunday voting trial. To this end, the Chair agreed to contact the Charlottesville Clergy Collective for indications of community interest in establishing Sunday voting.

Closed Session

On a motion by the Secretary, seconded by the Vice Chair and passed unanimously, the Board agreed to meet in closed session to discuss a personnel matter, namely the preparation of the annual performance evaluation for the General Registrar.

Following the closed session, on a motion by the Secretary, seconded by the Vice Chair and passed unanimously, the Board certified that only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed session.

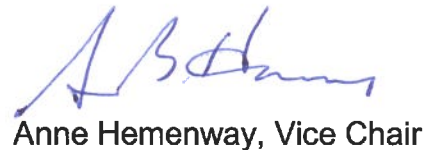
The next meeting will be held in the office of the Charlottesville General Registrar starting at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday September 1.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:


James Nix, Secretary


Jon Bright, Chair


Anne Hemenway, Vice Chair