

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, February 22, 2021 – 4:00 pm

Note: *This meeting was held virtually due to the current COVID-19 restrictions and the Governor's directives concerning limiting in-person gatherings & meetings.*

Regular Open Board Meeting

ATTENDEES:

Board Members:

Donna K. Thewes	Board President, Republican Member
Ann M. Balcerzak	Vice President, Democratic Member
Diane L. Butler	Republican Member
Timothy J. Mummert	Republican Member
Raymond M. Rankin	Democratic Member

Staff: Eric C. Brousaides, Esq.	Board Counsel
Guy C. Mickley	Election Director
Charlotte B. Davis	Deputy Director
Phyllis A. West	Board Secretary

Absent: None

Public: Lisa Kim
Sean Murphy
Cindy Skalny
Paul Skalny

CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Board President Donna Thewes called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm with an established quorum present.

Since Board members were in different locations without flags available, the President indicated the Pledge of Allegiance would not be given for this meeting.

WELCOME GUESTS

Donna Thewes welcomed the guests on the call and informed them that after all reports had been completed, guests would be given the opportunity to ask questions or offer comments. She requested that they limit their comments to three minutes.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the minutes for the January 25, 2021 Regular Open Board Meeting were provided to Board members by electronic mail for their review prior to the meeting. President Thewes asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Ray Rankin motioned to approve the minutes as presented and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: The minutes for the January 25, 2021 Regular Open Board Meeting were unanimously approved.

ADDITIONS OR CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Board members made no additions or changes to the agenda.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Donna Thewes stated that the Board has now obtained Nitro document signing software, and the Board Secretary can now send minutes and other documents directly to Board members. She then said that members may want to review the information on pending legislation in Maryland and she thanked Guy Mickley and Ray Rankin for forwarding the links to Board members.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. **Petition:** The Director said with the President's permission, he was going to move the Petition item to first on his report. He stated that the petitioners against CB63-2020 had garnered 5,738 valid signatures from their current signature submission, and he had sent an email to Lisa Kim with that information. He said that the petitioners need 7,170 valid signatures to put the issue on the ballot for the 2022 election as a local referendum. He asked if there were any questions, and guest Lisa Kim asked if the Director had any idea when the question language would be done. Director Mickley stated that the Howard County Office of Law formulates the language for the question and he does not know their timeframe. However, if the petition garners the signatures needed, the question will appear at the end of the ballot after any state questions.
2. **General Update:** Director Guy Mickley reported on the following accomplishments and what the office and warehouse staff will be working on as they finish cleaning up from the Presidential General Election and start gearing up for the 2022 elections:
 - a. **Voter Registration** – Voter registration numbers for the month have returned to pre-election cycle numbers. This is anticipated to continue for the rest of this year.
 - i) ***Street Maintenance*** – The Director will be assigning staff members a set of specific precincts to review starting next week. Additional research will be documented by several members of the IT department when required.

- ii) *Redistricting* – The Director has been notified that census information may not be sent to the local boards until September. This would have a significant impact on our timeframe for completing redistricting prior to the 2022 Primary Election. Phyllis West mentioned that a TV news story at the end of last week said the census deadline has now been moved from July until September 30, 2021, and Guy Mickley said we would then not receive it until October. There is a redistricting committee meeting at the State Board level on Thursday of this week, and he is a part of the committee. Guy Mickley indicated he would keep the Board informed of any new information on this topic.
Diane Butler asked what happens if the redistricting is not completed by the next election. Guy Mickley said he assumes it would take legislation to delay or move the date back. He reminded the Board that this must be passed by the Board’s February 2022 meeting for it to be approved by the State Board at their March 2022 meeting, and the state and legislative redistricting may not be able to be completed by then.
 - iii) *Warehouse* – The warehouse staff continues to finish the Post-Election Maintenance and to prepare the pollbooks for return to the State in anticipation of new pollbooks. The Director has also tasked the warehouse staff with creating a new in-house inventory system for all of our supplies. He also reported that Doug Swift is assisting the State Board with our annual inventory audit of State equipment.
- 3. **Budget** – Director Mickley reported that our current budget is tracking well due to the grant money we received and being able to move other funds. He will provide the Board with a copy of next year’s proposed budget as soon as he receives approval from the Howard County Budget Office after the first phase.
- 4. **Telework** – The office staff continues to primarily do telework. Supervisors and management continue to monitor the work being done. The warehouse staff is in most days as there is more hands-on work to be done there. Staff continues to practice social distancing while working.
- 5. **New Pollbooks** – The State continues to look into either purchasing or leasing new Pollbooks for the 2022 and future elections. Focus groups consisting of many local election employees have been established and have met. The team that will be evaluating and advising the State on procurement has been established. Submissions to the RFP have been made. More information will be provided to the Board as the State goes through the process.
- 6. **Manual Audit for the Presidential General Election** – The manual audit will be conducted on February 24, 2021 at 9:00 am. The audit will include ballots from Absentee, Provisional, Early Voting and Election Day, and the Director believes it will be completed in one day. He stated that the updated announcement is posted on our website and all social media. Full Board attendance is not required, but member attendance is always appreciated. He is planning to use the training room as well as the front office space to help meet social distancing rules.

7. **Legislation** – Director Mickley reported there are too many bills to review them all at this meeting, and none have progressed very far yet in the legislature. He provided the board with access to MAEO’s “bill summary”, which includes MAEO’s position on the bills. So far MAEO has primarily taken “no position”. He stated that at the federal level, HR1 – For the People Act of 2021, would require among other things 15 days of Early Voting for every state. With proposed Maryland legislation changing Early Voting Hours from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm every day, this would be a “game changer” for election administration in Maryland. The Director reminded Board members that they can speak with their legislators on these issues. One Maryland bill that directly relates to the Board, SB58, would change the composition of the Board to reflect the majority and minority parties of the registered voters in each county, regardless of the party of the sitting Governor.

Ray Rankin mentioned there were other bills being proposed that would have an impact on local boards of elections, including a proposal to have each County Executive appoint members of their local Board of Elections, and another which could require video of every meeting.

8. **Candidate Filing** – The Director reported that candidate filing starts tomorrow. Because of COVID-19 concerns, the office will be taking candidates filings by appointment only for the next few months, and this information has been posted on the website. Appointments will be held on Wednesday’s only. Diane Butler ask if any appointments had been set up yet, and the Director indicated no, that typically Howard County candidates have filed later in the process.

Donna Thewes then informed the Board that two of the three Republican members on the State Board of Elections had resigned and are being replaced by the following individuals:

- Severn Miller has replaced Kelly Howells
- Sky Woodward will replace Michael Cogan (former Chairman)

The new Chairman of the State Board of Elections will be selected by the Board, and the only person with experience is William Voelp.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

Board Counsel Eric Brousaides, Esq., stated that he had nothing to report.

GUEST QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Donna Thewes asked members of the public who were in attendance if they had any questions or comments. They had none.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business

BOARD OF CANVASSERS MEETING

President Donna Thewes asked for a motion to recess the Regular Open Board meeting to convene as the 2020 Presidential General Election Board of Canvassers for the 3rd Post Certification Canvass Board Meeting. Ray Rankin made a motion to recess the Regular Open Board Meeting and convene as the Board of Canvassers. Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: Board members voted unanimously to recess the Regular Open Board Meeting at 4:32 pm and to convene as the Board of Canvassers.

The Regular Open Board Meeting reconvened at 4:33 pm. Donna Thewes reported that the Board of Canvassers for the Presidential General Election had approved the Canvass Board minutes from the 2nd Post Certification Board Meeting held on January 25, 2021. Since no ballots had been received to present to the Canvass Board at this meeting, the 2020 Presidential General Canvass Board meeting was adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Donna Thewes asked for a motion to adjourn the Regular Open Board Meeting. Ray Rankin made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: Board members unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 4:34 pm.

The next Regular Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections will be held on Monday March 22, 2021 at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President