

## HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200  
Columbia, MD 21046

**Monday, April 26, 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

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

**Absent:** None

**Guests:** David Zinner

#### CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Board President Donna Thewes called the meeting to order at 4:02 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

President Thewes welcomed David Zinner to the meeting.

#### APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the minutes for the March 22, 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 March 22, 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**

This will be discussed under the President's Report.

#### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

President Donna Thewes first read a thank you card sent by Mike Molinaro to Board Members. She then asked Board members if they were available for a Board Meeting on May 24<sup>th</sup>, since the meeting had originally been cancelled. Members indicated they were available. She stated there will now be a Regular Open Board Meeting held at 4:00 pm on May 24, 2021.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

1. **General Office Update:** Director Guy Mickley reported on accomplishments and what the office and warehouse staff will be working on as they finish cleaning up from the Presidential General Election and gear up for the 2022 elections:
  - a. Voter Registration/Office Work – 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 County GIS Department has the files of streets from MDVOTERS and is doing a point by point comparison. When they have completed their comparison, staff will use it as a reference guide to continue step two of the street validation process.
    - ii) *Warehouse* – The warehouse continues to serve as the mail house for the office and to send out the Voter Notification Cards. Staff has completed about 65% of equipment labeling and entering data into the inventory system. They had a welding company install steel bars in the ballot carts to strengthen them for future elections. Warehouse staff is also packaging up voted ballots and moving them to the storage container for the 22-month retention period.
    - iii) *MDVOTERS Records Cleanup* – Office staff is still verifying every record being entered into MDVOTERS. Several new procedures have been put in place to keep up with this on a daily basis, Staff has also reverified all records entered since July 2020.
2. **Budget** – Guy Mickley reported that he had provided a copy of the budget to Board members electronically now that the County has sent it to the County Council and allowed him to release the information. The County has moved the funds identified for pollbooks to

PAYGO, which is a separate account for certain County expenditures. Without the poll book funds, our budget numbers are similar to last year's budget. There is an addition of funds for one new state position in anticipation of the move towards mail-in ballots, which has come to fruition.

3. **Telework** – The office staff continues to primarily do telework. Supervisors and management continue to monitor the work being done. The warehouse staff comes in several days a week as there is more hands-on work to be done there. Staff continues to practice social distancing while working.
4. **New Pollbooks** – The process is ongoing. The Director indicated he will provide more information whenever it becomes available.
5. **New Software for Voting System** – The state is currently testing new software for reporting and tallying for the DS200's, BMs and servers. He will advise the Board as more information on whether this will be used in the future and the timeline associated with it.
6. **Mock Election** – The State has scheduled a Mock Election in November, which as of this time would include the new software for the voting system and the new pollbooks. He will keep the Board advised as more information becomes available.
7. **Legislation** – The Legislative Session has ended, and the key changes are listed below:
  - a. *Early Voting* – Operating times for all Early Voting days will be from 7:00 am – 8:00 pm, and Howard County will have five (5) Early Voting Centers. We are looking at new locations for a fifth site in Columbia and may also move some of the other locations.
  - b. *Mailing Out Mail-in Ballot Applications/Permanent Mail-In List* – New laws will require that we mail out ballot applications to all registered voters in 2022 and 2024 as well as create a permanent mail-in voter list from the receipt of these applications. Guy Mickley has no information yet as to the new procedures and processes yet, but expects it to be forthcoming.
  - c. *Drop Boxes* – These have become a permanent part of future elections, and we may have additional drop boxes in the future. Nearly 70% of those in Howard County who voted mail-in ballots used drop boxes in 2020.
  - d. *Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act* – In the future, when an LBE is establishing precinct boundaries and designating the location of polling places, the LBE shall contact and obtain input from large residential institutional communities, including institutions of higher education, continuing care retirement communities, senior communities and military installations. SBE shall add and maintain on its website information that explains requirements for students enrolled in institutions of higher education on how to register to vote in the State and includes links to information regarding requirement for registering and voting by absentee ballot in other States. SBE shall establish a process for accepting FPCA applications electronically and use the Common Access Card to sign the FPCA. A public institution shall designate a staff member as the Student Voting Coordinator. They shall develop and implement a student voting plan to increase student

voter registration and voting in collaboration with faculty, staff, recognized student organizations, and other appropriate stakeholders at the institution. The plan shall include wide dissemination of information about voter registration and voting opportunities to all students including the voter registration process and deadlines, the process and deadlines for requesting and returning a ballot by mail, etc. Reasonable accommodation and collaboration with the LBE regarding the placement of an Early Voting Center or precinct polling place on campus if requested by the local board, parking, campaign signs, voter access to campus without ID, polling place space requirements in compliance with State Board regulations, public education campaign, ballot drop box siting and any other factors relating to the conduct of an election, etc.

e. *Teleworking*– Generally, teleworking will continue under the new law.

8. **Candidate Filing** – Candidate filing has started, but no candidates have filed locally. For the time being, candidates can make an appointment to file at the office on Wednesdays between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm.
7. **MAEO Annual Conference** – The MAEO Annual Conference is tentatively scheduled for August. The Director indicated he is allowing staff to choose whether or not they wish to go, and many are indicating they do not wish to attend. The one-day State Biennial Conference will take place on Wednesday, August 25<sup>th</sup> during the MAEO Conference. For those who wish to attend virtually, it will be streamed. Virtual attendance will suffice as the state’s requirement for mandatory attendance.

Board members asked for the exact dates of the MAEO Conference and the date of the SBE Biennial Conference, which were provided by the Director. Members discussed their possible attendance, and some indicated they would be unavailable during those dates.

#### **BOARD COUNSEL REPORT**

Eric Broussides, Esq., Board Counsel, stated that all is quiet and there was nothing to report.

#### **GUEST QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

Donna Thewes asked David Zinner if he had any questions or comments. He said he hoped the new pollbooks have more versatility than the old ones and that judges will be able to make more contributions to the registration process prior to future elections.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

President Thewes read the closing statement and asked for a motion to recess the Regular Open Board Meeting so that the Board could convene in closed Executive Session according to the Open Meetings Act General Provisions Article 3-305B to discuss a personnel issue. A

motion to recess the Regular Open Board Meeting was made by Ray Rankin, and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

**Action:** Board members voted unanimously to recess the Regular Open Board Meeting at 4:26 pm.

The Regular Open Board Meeting was reconvened at 4:35 pm. President Thewes reported that the purpose of the Executive Session was to approve the minutes of the last meeting and discuss filling the Board Counsel contract position in July at the start of the new contract year. The Board approved the Executive Session minutes from the March 22, 2021 meeting. She indicated the Board selected Eric C. Brousaides, Esq., to fill the Board Counsel position for the next contract year. Mr. Brousaides was invited to join the Executive Session and accepted the position.

#### **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 4:37 pm.

The next Regular Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections will be held on Monday May 24, 2021 at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

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Donna K. Thewes, Board President