

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, June 22, 2020 – 4:00 pm

Note: *This meeting was held by Conference Call 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: Guy Mickley	Director
Charlotte B. Davis	Deputy Director
Phyllis A. West	Board Secretary
Michael S. Molinaro	Board Counsel

Absent: None

Guests: None

CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Board President Donna Thewes called the meeting to order at 4:03 pm with an established quorum present. Since members were in different locations without flags available, the President indicated the Pledge of Allegiance would not be given for this meeting.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the May 18, 2020 Board meeting minutes were provided to Board members by electronic mail for their review prior to the meeting. President Thewes asked for a motion to approve the May 18, 2020 minutes as updated via email. Ray Rankin motioned to approve the minutes as updated via email and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: The May 28, 2020 Board Meeting minutes were unanimously approved as updated via email.

ADDITIONS OR CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Board members made no additions or changes to the agenda.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Thewes said that she was so impressed and proud of what the Howard County Board of Elections staff had accomplished in less than two months, handling two elections under difficult and changing conditions. She applauded everyone for managing the stress and long hours needed to successfully accomplish both the Special General and Presidential Primary Elections. Board members agreed.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT**1. Continuing Items**

- a. General Office Update: Director Mickley reported on what has been accomplished and the several things being worked on as the staff at both locations winds down the Presidential Primary Vote by mail Election cycle. The items are broken down as follows:

- aa. Primary Election -- The Presidential Primary Election was held as a primarily vote by mail election on June 2, 2020.

1. The Director reported that Howard County held six canvasses and averaged processing approximately 14,650 ballots per day. The first three days of the canvass the staff processed an average of 23,000 ballots per day. If the Presidential General Election is a vote by mail election, he plans to add more high-speed scanners and two additional staff.
2. He stated that in-person voting was not attended in large numbers. Keeping within COVID-19 guidelines, we provided the right amount of equipment and staffing. He has received emails from the public indicating that they appreciated our focus on safety for the voters at the voting centers.
3. The staff will be updating voter records from individuals who provided changes during the past election cycle.
4. Guy Mickley reported that there is an active "Lessons Learned" document currently circulating for staff input. This will be used to make improvements prior to the November Presidential General Election. He asked Board members to email him if they had any suggestions or comments to improve the process.
5. The Director stated that all equipment used for the Primary Election should be released in July so that staff can start the Post-Election Maintenance process.

- 2. Registration** – Registration numbers continue to slowly rise. The books have reopened following the Presidential Primary Election and the first Voter Notification Cards post-election will be sent out this week. Staff continues to do a good job of cleaning up the election and getting new registrations and changes made on a continuing basis. The current situation in Maryland continues to result in a slow down of registrations, since the MVA and

most other State and County agencies are operating on limited schedules with the public. He does expect a spike in registrations in September and October prior to the Presidential General Election.

3. **Budget** -- Guy Mickley reported that the County approved our additional funds request for the FY2020 budget. The funds were placed in the budget last week, and he stated he would be moving funds and spending them this week, primarily to replenish our post office accounts. He reported that the vote by mail process is an extremely intensive back end process, with very long hours for the staff over several weeks. Some of the additional funds will help to cover overtime costs.
4. **Staff Work Schedules** -- Director Mickley reported that staff at the office and the warehouse have returned to a telework schedule. He stated that until we learn how we will be conducting the Presidential General Election, we will use our past experience with all types of voting to prepare for a wide array of voting options. We will also develop options as to how we will proceed with implementing a probable hybrid system of voting. Mr. Mickley stated that even if a regular election is held, he believes that there will be a high demand for Absentee Ballots and staff will have to keep up with that demand. He currently has two people staffing the office each day in June and July and anticipates bringing more staff back to the office in the August-September timeframe.

He also reported that staff at the warehouse is currently preparing for election judge training for the November election. Staff is also working on how we will proceed with incorporating our current training schematic with the addition of COVID-19 guidelines.

5. **Decision on the Upcoming Election** -- The Director stated that the Governor's Office and the State Board of Elections must come to a decision as to how we will conduct the next election sooner rather than later. He has had several inquiries as to using Vote Centers, drop boxes, in-person voting and vote by mail, and he currently cannot answer any of these. He hopes to hear something in the next few weeks so that we can move forward with preparations.
6. **Document Request** -- The National Federation of the Blind has asked for documents regarding the BMDs. The staff is currently gathering these for the Attorney General's Office to respond to the request.

Donna Thewes asked the Director about the status of the MAEO Conference. He reported that the Conference is currently rescheduled for August 23-25, 2020 and indicated that staff had taken a vote and the Howard County staff will not be attending. He stated our staff is concerned about attending a large gathering with the current COVID-19 situation and he concurs.

Ann Balcerzak asked if the office was open to the public. The Director said not yet, as there has been no clearance from the State Board yet to do so. However, our staff assists people outside the office door if they call ahead, or if someone drops by and just needs a form or general information. Social distancing is always part of the process.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

Michael Molinaro, Esq., stated that he had very little to report. He indicated that the bi-weekly teleconference calls between the State Board and local board counsels will start again in October. He stated that usually during an election year we usually have state and county questions on the ballot, which are due in late July or August. He asked if any had been submitted.

Guy Mickley stated that the deadline for all questions is the second week of August. He reported that just an hour ago the Charter Review Commission had submitted 11 questions to the County Council. He has told those involved that this number of questions added to the ballot would result in creating a three-page ballot for this election, requiring much longer voting times for each person and potentially very long voter lines at the polls. He reported that this would have additional consequences such as the need for more equipment and more judges (who are already hard to find), so that staffing polling places would be even more difficult. Plus, the additional costs required for equipment and staffing could be significant.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business

BOARD OF CANVASSERS MEETING – Congressional 7 Special General Election -- April 28, 2020

President Donna Thewes asked for a motion to recess the Regular Open Board Meeting so that the Board of Canvassers for the Special General Election could convene for their 2nd Post Certification Canvass Board Meeting. Ray Rankin moved to recess the meeting and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: The Board voted unanimously to recess the meeting at 4:27 pm to meet as the Board of Canvassers for the Special General Election.

The Regular Open Board Meeting reconvened at 4:35 pm. Donna Thewes reported that the Board of Canvassers for the Congressional 7 Special General Election had approved all Canvass Board Minutes for the Special General Election, including the 1st Post Certification Canvass Board Minutes. Since no ballots were presented, the Special General Canvass Board adjourned their meeting.

BOARD OF CANVASSERS MEETING – Presidential Primary Election – June 2, 2020

President Donna Thewes then asked for a motion to recess the Regular Open Board Meeting so that the Board of Canvassers for the Presidential Primary Election could convene for their 1st Post Certification Canvass Board Meeting. Ray Rankin moved to recess the meeting and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: The Board voted unanimously to recess the meeting at 4:46 pm to meet as the Presidential Primary Board of Canvassers.

The Regular Open Board Meeting reconvened at 4:48 pm. Donna Thewes reported that the Board of Canvassers for the Presidential Primary Election had rejected 69 ballots as untimely. The Board reviewed and approved five days of Canvass Board Minutes. Canvass Board Secretary Diane Butler will finalize the remaining minutes for approval at the July 27, 2020 Canvass Board Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

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 4:49 pm.

The next regular Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections will be held on Monday, July 27, 2020 at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President