

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, January 25, 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: Guy C. Mickley	Election Director
Eric C. Brousaides, Esq.	Board Counsel
Phyllis A. West	Board Secretary

Absent: Charlotte B. Davis Deputy Director (excused)

Public: None

CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Board President Donna Thewes called the meeting to order at 4:00 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.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the minutes for the December 21, 2020 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 December 21, 2020 Regular Open Board Meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

ADDITIONS OR CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Board members made no additions or changes to the agenda.

CORRESPONDENCE

Donna Thewes reported there was no correspondence. Director Guy Mickley stated that there was one item – a petition – which he would discuss during his Director’s Report.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

1. **Ethics Reports:** President Thewes reminded Board members to complete and file their Ethics Report if they had not already done so and said a link had been included in the notice to download the required form.
2. **New District 9A Delegate:** Donna Thewes stated that Reid J. Novotny is the new District 9A Delegate, replacing Warren Miller.

Donna Thewes then reminded members there would be an Executive Session at the end of the Regular Board Meeting.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

1. **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 -- All voter information has been updated in MDVoters including all voter update form changes from the vote centers. All Voter Notification Cards (VNC’s) have been mailed and are being regularly sent again on a bi-weekly basis.
 - i) *Inactive Voters* on the Rolls – the required maintenance has been performed per Maryland State Law to remove voters that meet federal criteria.
 - ii) *Street Maintenance* – Staff will once again be doing the semi-annual project of reviewing streets and precincts to ensure that all streets are placed in the correct precinct. This is especially important this year with redistricting on the horizon.
 - iii) *Redistricting* – Guy Mickley recently had a conference call with the County Council to once again review the tight time frame the office will have to complete redistricting at the end of this year and into early 2022. The Council members understand our needs. It has been reported that census data is arriving late, which puts the entire process behind. We are hopeful to still be able to finish the process before the 2022 election deadline.
 - b. Election Judges – All Election Judges have now been paid for their work during the General Election cycle. Some lost their checks and those have been reissued, but it was a fairly clean process this time.
 - c. Warehouse – The warehouse staff has put all unused ballots from the Presidential General Election into containers to be recycled and has reorganized all of the carts.

Staff is currently performing Post-Election Maintenance on all machines used in the Presidential General Election as well as “decommissioning” the old pollbooks.

2. **Budget** – Director Mickley has submitted the budget request for the FY22 budget year to the County. He has included additional money for personnel since at this point, we are unsure of how elections will be conducted in Maryland in the future. Otherwise, the budget request is about the same as previous submissions. He will provide a copy of the budget to the Board after it has gone through the reviews at the Howard County budget office.
3. **Telework** – The office staff continues to primarily do telework. Supervisors and management continue to monitor the work that is being done. The warehouse staff is in most days, as there are more hands-on items to be done there, and they continue to practice social distancing while working. There are some days when they do telework, and they are given special assignments when doing this process.
4. **New Pollbooks** –The State will either purchase or lease new pollbooks for the 2022 and future elections. Focus groups consisting of many local election employees have been established and have already met. The team that will be evaluating and advising the State on procurement has been established. Bids should be in next week, so the process should start moving along at that point. As part of this ongoing process, while the warehouse staff is doing Post-Election Maintenance on the current pollbooks, they will be removing the software from the pollbooks to prepare them for return to the State Board of Elections.
5. **Manual Audit for the Presidential General Election** – The manual audit will be conducted on February 22, 2021 at 9:00 am with February 24, 2021 at 9:00 am being reserved as the date in case of inclement weather. 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 this announcement will be posted on our website as well as informing the State Board officially before the end of this week. Full Board attendance is not required, but member attendance is always appreciated. He asked Board members to please be cognizant of the fact that we only have so much space in the training room at the office, so social distancing rules and guidelines will truly dictate how many people we can have in the room at any one time as the pandemic continues.
6. **Legislation** – Director Mickley reported there is a wide array of election-related bills in the Maryland General Assembly at this time, and many of these contradict each other. He will continue to look at the bills as we start to see a clearer picture of what will actually get out of committees and onto the floor. MAEO, as well as the management of this office, is very interested in how elections will be conducted in the future. As bills are starting to be heard, the Director will keep the Board apprised of MAEO’s position and any other insights he may have as the session moves forward.
7. **Candidate Filing** – Candidates can begin filing next month. As candidates file, we will provide the Board with monthly updates.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

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

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Ray Rankin reported that he had just received a notice from the County that W-2's are available for downloading. Guy Mickley said that if any Board members need to have him call the County to have their W-2 mailed to them, they should let him know.

Ann Balcerzak mentioned that there was a nice human-interest article in the Baltimore Sun on Howard County Election Judge David Zinner and his wife.

BOARD OF CANVASSERS MEETING

President Donna Thewes then stated that Board members would leave the Regular Board Meeting to convene as the Presidential General Election Board of Canvassers for the 2nd Post Certification Canvass Board Meeting at 4:44 pm.

The Regular Open Board Meeting reconvened at 4:57 pm. Donna Thewes reported that the Board of Canvassers for the Presidential General Election had approved three sets of Canvass Board Meeting minutes from Canvass Board meetings held on November 12th, November 13th and the 1st Post Certification Board Meeting minutes from November 30, 2020.

In addition, Guy Mickley had presented 17 Mail in Ballots that had been received after the Election was certified, The Canvass Board rejected these as untimely.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Thewes then 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 personnel issues. 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 4:58 pm.

The Regular Open Board Meeting was reconvened at 6:00 pm. President Thewes reported that the purpose of the Executive Session was to conduct the semi-annual performance reviews of the Director and Board Secretary and to approve the Executive Session minutes from the July 27th and December 21, 2020 meetings.

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 6:02 pm.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President