

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Tuesday, November 23, 2021 – 4:00 pm

Note: *This meeting was held virtually due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and safety concerns 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.

Guy C. Mickley	Board Counsel
Charlotte B. Davis	Election Director
Phyllis A. West	Deputy Director
Tiffany Ferrell	Board Secretary
	Staff

Absent: None

Guests: Alyssa Gruneberg
Krista Threefoot

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 guests Alyssa Gruneberg and Krista Threefoot to the meeting and said they would have the opportunity to speak and ask any questions at the end of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the draft minutes for the October 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 and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: The minutes for the October 25, 2021 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

There was no correspondence.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Donna Thewes said that members usually handle the Director's review in January, and the State has requested employee reviews in December. She asked Board members if they wished to change the date to December, and members indicated they preferred to keep the review in January. The Director said he would advise the State that it will be scheduled in January 2022, and this should not be a problem.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. **Early Voting Centers** – Director Guy Mickley reported that Howard County is now mandated by 2020 legislation to have five (5) Early Voting Centers and referred members to the handout electronically prior to the meeting. (A copy of the Director's Power Point Presentation including information on Early Voting Centers and Ballot Drop Boxes is attached to these minutes.) Guy Mickley reviewed the five sites the staff recommends for Early Voting Centers, which are similar to the shape of our county. Required voter density within 5 miles of Early Voting Centers is 80%, and with the recommended sites, coverage in Howard County will be 92.1%, which is the highest we have had since Early Voting started in the state (in 2020, our previous highest coverage was over 91%). This is a testament to the County Government working with us on locations and gave the County kudos for providing the locations for our use. It also is due to the hard work of the staff to include locating the best facilities to cover the Elkrige and western Howard County voters. He also mentioned that the addition of St. John Baptist Church added a larger facility as well which covered more voters.

Guy Mickley stated that the Early Voting Centers recommended for use during the 2022 Gubernatorial Elections are as follows:

Meadowbrook Athletic Complex - 5001 Meadowbrook Lane, Ellicott City, 21043

Gary J. Arthur Community Center - 2400 Route 97, Cooksville, 21723

The Bain 50+ Center - 5470 Ruth Keeton Way, Columbia, 21044

North Laurel Community Center - 9411 Whiskey Bottom Road, Laurel, 20723

St. John Baptist Church - Fellowship Hall - 9055 Tamar Drive, Columbia, 21045

Donna Thewes congratulated the Director and staff for going beyond the requirements and said they had done an amazing job. She also was grateful that St. John Baptist Church has allowed us to use their facility for this effort. Ms. Thewes asked the Director to thank the staff on behalf of the Board who worked on this. Diane Butler concurred. Guy Mickley said that the staff members who worked on this project were Jeff White, Mitchell White, Rebecca Ayres, Jordon Cipolla, Roy Smith and Doug Swift.

President Thewes then asked for a motion to accept these five (5) recommended facilities as Early Voting Centers for Howard County for the 2022 Gubernatorial Elections. Ray Rankin made a motion to approve these five (5) facilities as Howard County Early Voting Centers recommended to the Board for the 2022 Gubernatorial Elections. Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: The Howard County Board of Elections unanimously approved the five (5) recommended facilities as Howard County Early Voting Centers for the 2022 Gubernatorial Elections.

Donna Thewes then reported that she had just received a nice message from the League of Women Voters supporting the choice of these five Early Voting Center locations.

2. **Ballot Drop Boxes** – Director Guy Mickley reported that Howard County proposes ten (10) ballot drop boxes for the 2022 Gubernatorial Elections, compared to nine (9) for the 2020 Presidential Election. (See attached for detailed information.) These have been geographically located and spread throughout the County to maximize voter coverage, while at the same time considering voter density and providing coverage to “Historically Disenfranchised Communities”. Five of the drop box locations will be at Early Voting Centers, one will be at the Board of Elections Office and the other four will be located at a police station, a fire station, a community center and the George Howard Building in Ellicott City. Staff talked to representatives at each location to ensure that our drop box sites would have no impact on their operations.

The Director stated that these ballot drop boxes turn into “mini Early Voting Centers”, which require quite a bit of paperwork for each one. Donna Thewes asked if all ballot drop boxes would have security again, and Guy Mickley stated that all will have 24-hour video cameras for security coverage. Ms. Thewes then asked how the Historically Disenfranchised Communities were chosen by the State and explained to guests that this is a new term and State requirement for 2022. The Director indicated he was not sure what criteria the State used to select these communities, but in Howard County, they appear to primarily represent minority populations of African American, Asian and Hispanic descent.

Guy Mickley then stated he was recommending for the Board’s approval the use of ten (10) drop boxes at the locations listed below for the 2022 Gubernatorial Elections:

Ten Proposed Drop Box Locations for 2022 Gubernatorial Elections

Gary J. Arthur Community Center	2400 MD-97	Cooksville	MD	21723
West Friendship Vol Fire Dept.	12535 Old Frederick Rd	Sykesville	MD	21784
George Howard Building	3430 Court House Dr	Ellicott City	MD	21043
Meadowbrook Athletic Complex	5001 Meadowbrook Ln	Ellicott City	MD	21043
The Bain Center	5470 Ruth Keeton Way	Columbia	MD	21044
Scaggsville Howard Co. Police Dept.	11226 Scaggsville Rd	Laurel	MD	20723
St. John Baptist Church	9055 Tamar Dr	Columbia	MD	21046
Howard County Board of Elections	9770 Patuxent Woods Dr, Suite 200	Columbia	MD	21044
North Laurel Community Center	9411 Whiskey Bottom Rd	Laurel	MD	20723
Elkridge 50+ Center	6540 Washington Blvd	Elkridge	MD	21075

Donna Thewes then asked for a motion to accept the staff's recommendation for ten(10) ballot drop boxes at the locations shown above. Ray Rankin motioned to approve the ten (10) ballot drop boxes at the recommended sites. Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: The Howard County Board of Elections unanimously approved using ten (10) ballot drop boxes at the locations recommended for the 2022 Gubernatorial Elections.

Guy Mickley thanked the Board for their patience. He stated that the paperwork will be sent to the State before the 11/29/2021 deadline so that the sites can be presented and approved by the State.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

Eric Brousaides, Esq., stated he had one item to report, which was an update on the case before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit related to Maryland Election Law. He reported that last Friday the Court of Appeals ruled to uphold the District Court's decision, which upheld Maryland Election Law. He said that the Court of Appeals had made a quick decision on this case. Mr. Brousaides said he would send Board members a web link so they could review the details of the decision (which he did after the meeting).

GUEST COMMENTS

There were no comments or questions from guests.

OLD BUSINESS

Guy Mickley stated that he had discussed holding a holiday party this year with the office supervisors, and the final decision was that the office will not hold a holiday gathering this year.

Donna Thewes then stated that since there were no issues to discuss next month, the regular December 2021 Board Meeting was cancelled.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

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 4:31 pm.

The next Regular Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections will be held on Monday, January 24, 2022 at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President