

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, April 24, 2017 – 4:00 pm

Regular Open Board Meeting

ATTENDEES:

Board Members:

Donna K. Thewes	Board President, Republican Member
Ann M. Balcerzak	Vice President, Democratic Member
Patrick R. Mullinix	Republican Member
Raymond M. Rankin	Democratic Substitute
Diane L. Butler	Republican Substitute

Staff:

Guy C. Mickley	Director
Charlotte B. Davis	Deputy Director
Phyllis A. West	Board Secretary

Visitors: None

Absent: Michael S. Molinaro Board Counsel

CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Board President Donna Thewes called the meeting to order at 4:06 pm with an established quorum present. The Pledge of Allegiance was then given.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Draft copies of the minutes from the March 27, 2017 meeting were provided to Board members by electronic mail prior to the meeting and a paper copy was made available to each member at the meeting. Members made no changes to the minutes. President Thewes asked for a motion to accept the minutes. Ray Rankin motioned to accept the minutes as presented and Patrick Mullinix seconded the motion.

Action: The March 27, 2017 minutes were accepted as presented.

ADDITIONS OR CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Board members made no changes or additions to the agenda.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence to discuss.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Donna Thewes stated that there were two items she would discuss. The first was that the President of the Montgomery County Board of Elections contacted her recently and would like to have Board Presidents from the largest Maryland counties meet to discuss common issues. She informed him that Howard County would be interested in participating. Ann Balcerzak asked which counties were the largest and would Baltimore City be included in this meeting? Guy Mickley said that the largest Maryland counties/city would be Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Montgomery County, Prince Georges County and Howard County. He would assume those would be on the list. Ann Balcerzak said she would advise Howard not to participate unless Baltimore City was included in the meeting. President Thewes said she would keep the Board informed.

The second item she discussed was the passing of former Board member Charles Coles' daughter, Beth Coles. Beth served Howard County as both a regular judge and a Chief Election Judge. Donna Thewes asked if Board members would like to attend the viewing and/or service together. Some indicated they would, while others stated they would attend on their own. The Board agreed to send a card and a plant to the family and discussed the possibility of a memorial tribute or living legacy. Patrick Mullinix suggested a scholarship, perhaps connected to the 4-H All Star program she was very active in for Howard County. He will look into what can be done. Several Board members indicated they would be willing to contribute, as did Director Mickley.

Guy Mickley then stated that former staff member Sue Collins passed away on April 7th. A card was sent to her family from the staff. Ann Balcerzak stated she thought Board members should also send a card since Sue was a long time employee of the Board of Elections. Board members agreed, and this was done after the meeting.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. **SBE Director's Meetings** – Director Mickley reported that SBE held an in-person Director's meeting in March and a call-in meeting on Thursday, April 20th. He stated that a decision had been made not to use the BMD's exclusively for Early Voting in 2018. The process will be the same one used during the 2016 elections. He also stated that SBE will now hold a meeting for directors every month.
2. **Candidacy Filings** – Mr. Mickley informed the Board that four candidates have filed in our office to run in the 2018 election for the following offices: Judge of the Circuit Court, County Council and the Democratic Central Committee. Several more have filed at the state level for the state legislature, State Comptroller and the U.S. House of

Representatives. A list of those who have currently filed is available on the State Board of Elections website.

3. **State Board of Elections Biennial Conference** – He provided a reminder that the Conference is scheduled for Monday, October 23, 2017 (one day) at the DoubleTree Hotel in Annapolis. Attendance is mandatory for Board members and Board Counsel.
4. **Voter Registration** – Registration numbers continue to increase slowly, which will probably continue to be the case until Maryland has Universal Registration (when registration will come in from many agencies rather than just MVA and the State Board).
5. **Budget** – Directory Mickley reported that his budget meeting with the County Council will be scheduled sometime in May. There have been no changes to the requested budget to date during the review process. Board members asked several questions, including whether the next election and the annual equipment payment were included in this budget. He said that both were included in the budget request. The Director stated that approximately 89% of the office budget is unfunded state mandates over which we have no control. The remaining 11% covers areas such as temporary personnel and supplies.
6. **Temporary Staff** – Mr. Mickley reported that due to the decreased workload, he has reduced work hours to three days per week for temporary staff. Several temporary staff members are working on a project to develop judge training videos which will be posted on the website. Once work at the warehouse is completed, several more staff members will assist with this effort. Board members were very supportive of this project.
7. **Warehouse Relocation** – The County continues to look for space for our warehouse in the area, but it will not be in the same corporate park as our headquarters office. Hopefully it will be within a mile of the office somewhere off Snowden River Parkway. Director Mickley will meet with a space planner this week to discuss the warehouse and also look at more effective use of our current office space. He indicated he will keep the Board advised on developments.
8. **Legislation** – Director Mickley reviewed the bills which did and did not pass during the 2017 Maryland Legislative Session:

Bills that passed:

- a. **HB 1299 – Howard County Board of Education Bill;**
- b. **HB 73 – Lowers the Minimum Age of Election Judges to 16** – Individuals must be registered to vote to serve as Election Judges;
- c. **HB 143 – Petitions** – The filing date for recount petitions is changed from two days to three days after certification of an election;
- d. **HB 353 – Polling Place and Early Voting Site Changes** – Effective July 1, 2017, if we are changing a polling place or Early Voting Center, we must announce this in our public meeting notice and it must be posted at least 48 hours in advance including what the proposed changes would be. He stated this should not affect us for the next election since our changes will be done before then.

- e. **HB 619/SB 882 – Campaign Signs** – Signs can now be posted at 5:00 pm the day before the election, rather than 7:00 pm;
- f. **HB 1382/SB 1121 – Circuit Court Candidates Rule Change** – Candidates who fail to garner the nomination from their party in the Primary cannot run for office of any kind in the succeeding General Election;
- g. **HB 1626 – Early Voting Address Changes** – Registered voters who change their address during Early Voting do not have to show proof of residency any longer. In response to questions from Board members, Director Mickley said this brings the process in line with our regular process when address changes are received in the office prior to the election.

Bills that did not pass:

- h. **HB 741 – Automatic Voter Registration;**
 - i. **SB 406 – Ballot Scanners** – This required two scanners per polling place and an automated digital review of every ballot post-election;
 - j. **SB 423 – Same Day Registration at Polling Places on Election Day.**
9. **Fourth Early Voting Center** – Guy Mickley reported that after a thorough search by the election staff of venues across Howard County, he was presenting the Old Bingo Hall at the Howard County Fairgrounds as our choice for Howard County’s Fourth Early Voting Center.

He praised staff members who had worked on this search, including Jeff White, Walter Maddox, Jim and Jon Holton and Tony Neafsey. We looked at several churches in the Columbia area, the Meeting Place in Columbia, the Ten Oaks Ballroom in Clarksville, the East Columbia Library and the Fairgrounds. Director Mickley stated that many venues were unavailable for eight days during each election cycle since many had long-term contractual commitments with various groups (particularly on Sundays with church groups). And venues such as The Ten Oaks Ballroom are booked years in advance. Although the East Columbia Library could accommodate us, this would not provide any additional coverage for the voters in the County.

With the addition of the Howard County Fairgrounds as the Fourth Early Voting Center, we will have over 94% coverage of county voters within a five mile radius of an Early Voting Center. The Fairgrounds adds about 8% coverage, and we have never had coverage in western Howard County. Also, precincts just outside of the circle to the west and southwest will now have a site much closer than before. Adding these potential voters to the above, there will be more than 10% additional coverage. We

believe this will have a positive impact on the number of voters voting at the Fairgrounds.

Looking at the Early Voting numbers, we believe that this new site will relieve pressure from both The Bain Center and Miller Branch Library, since significant numbers of voters that typically go to these locations will now go to the Fairgrounds instead.

Director Mickley provided handouts for the Fourth Early Voting Center showing voter statistics and schematics for the proposed new site. He also discussed the voting statistics Jeff White and Bill West had compiled going back to the 2012 Elections. Election Staff believe that voters from Election District 4 will be more apt to vote during Early Voting now. In the past their numbers were very low for Early Voting, since the closest sites were quite a distance away from them. Currently voter turnout in this area on Election Day is over 80%.

Board members asked if over 80% coverage was required by the State, which Director Mickley confirmed. Several Board members indicated that this location made sense geographically and was a good site with adequate parking. Mr. Mickley stated that the current proposed rental cost for the Hall is \$150 per day.

The Board then discussed the parking challenges at Ridgely's Run and what options were available, as several felt it became unsafe during the last election due to lack of parking spaces and little lighting. Guy Mickley indicated he has had conversations about this issue with Jen Terrasa, the County Council representative for this area. Although this is a private facility, other county groups also have functions there (Health Fairs, Christmas Bazaars, etc.). There is word from the community association that they are discussing paving the overflow parking lot at the facility, which would certainly help. He is going to contact the organization and Jen Terrasa to see what can be done to make this happen.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

There was no report.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Thewes asked for a motion to recess the Regular Open Board meeting at 5:30 pm so that the Board could meet in Executive Session according to the Open Meetings Act General Provisions Article §3-305(b). This was to discuss personnel matters. Patrick Mullinix offered the motion, which was seconded by Diane Butler.

Action: The Board unanimously voted to recess the meeting at 5:30 pm so that the Board could convene in Executive Session. So that Board members could hold their discussion in private, Director Guy Mickley, Deputy Director Charlotte Davis and Board Secretary Phyllis West were excused.

At the conclusion of the Executive Session, President Thewes reconvened the Regular Open Board Meeting at 6:42 pm. She reported that the semi-annual performance review of the Director was completed during the Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President Thewes asked for a motion to adjourn the Regular Open Board meeting. Patrick Mullinix offered the motion, which was seconded by Ray Rankin.

Action: The Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 pm

The next regular open meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections is scheduled for Monday, May 22, 2017 at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President