

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, November 18, 2019 – 4:00 pm

Regular Open Board Meeting

ATTENDEES:

Board Members:

Donna K. Thewes	Board President, Republican Member
Ann M. Balcerzak	Vice President, Democratic Member (arrived late)
Diane L. Butler	Republican Member
Patrick R. Mullinix	Republican Member (arrived late)
Raymond M. Rankin	Democratic Member
Michael S. Molinaro	Board Counsel

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

Absent: None

Visitors: Jay Gerarden
David Zinner

CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Board President Donna Thewes called the meeting to order at 4:07 pm with an established quorum present. The Pledge of Allegiance was then given.

WELCOME GUESTS

Donna Thewes welcomed the two guests and asked if they wished to make any remarks. David Zinner made a proposal to the Board to do a fun promotion of Early Voting by having the Howard County Cycle to Health Bike Club do a bike ride between three of the Early Voting Centers. Board members discuss this and Guy Mickley indicated it could be promoted on the website and social media as an FYI and have the contact as David Zinner. The Board of Elections would have no liability. Mike Molinaro said this was not something the Board will sponsor or endorse. Mr. Zinner indicated the bike club already is covered by insurance. Guy Mickley indicated he would talk further with Mr. Zinner about the details in the coming weeks.

Jay Gerarden indicated he had nothing to discuss.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

A draft copy of the minutes from the September 23, 2019 meeting was provided to Board members by electronic mail prior to the meeting with one edit from the Board Counsel, and a paper copy was distributed at the meeting with an addition suggested by Mike Molinaro. President Thewes asked for a motion to approve the September minutes as modified. Ray Rankin motioned to approve the minutes as modified and Diane Butler seconded the motion.

Action: The September 23, 2019 minutes were unanimously approved as modified by those present.

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 then mentioned the passing of Elijah Cummings and Board members discussed his loss. She then briefly discussed the SBE Conference, and Ann Balcerzak stated she felt it was a good conference.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. *Continuing Items*

a. *General Office Update:* Guy Mickley reported on issues and projects that the staff has been working on as we gear up for upcoming elections. They include:

aa. *Special Election-* The Director reported that we will have a Special Election for the vacancy in Congressional 7 on February 4. We have secured all the polling places for the election and are currently assigning all judges. Training for these judges will begin with an aggressive schedule in January. Fortunately, we will not have to retrain these judges for the Primary Election, since all the same procedures will be in effect for both elections.

1. The Special Election will have the same type of close of registration, canvasses and timeframes as a regular election.
2. We do not expect a large turnout, as historically, a Special Election is not a well-attended election.
3. The Special Primary will NOT have early voting.
4. The State is working on changing the Absentee request form to accommodate this election.
5. The Nursing Home Absentee Process will be done for the Special Primary.
6. We anticipate using our current inventory of equipment and turning it around for the Primary Election...this will result in massive overtime for the staff to

turn the equipment around in the short window between elections...we are prepared to do the job.

7. The Director submitted a supplemental budget to the County but will be making minor adjustments due not leasing equipment for the Special Election...the supplemental budget will be for \$487,044.

In answer to questions, the Director indicated at this time he does not know if all Howard County Schools will be closed and does not know if the Governor will give state employees an exemption to work at the polls. He said that judges are being assigned now for the Special Primary Election and we will have approximately 570 judges. Judge Training will be done over a three-week period, with three classes per day on most days. Canvasses will be the same days as in previous elections, and the Election will be certified after the final canvass on Friday, February 14th. Canvasses for run concurrently for the Presidential Primary and Special General Election. Only Democrats and Republicans can vote in the Special Primary election.

There will be a Nursing Home & Assisted Living Program for the Special Election. Board member Diane Butler had some questions about the Nursing Home process and Board Secretary Phyllis West, who handles that program, explained the process and answered her questions.

We will be able to use our current inventory of equipment and staff will have to put in overtime to turn it around to be ready for the Presidential Primary Election. The Director and Board discussed scenarios if we should receive snow or severe weather. Donna Thewes asked how the ballot would be created for the Presidential Primary and Special General. Director Mickley said Congressional 7 would have a two-page ballot, with page one being the Presidential Primary ballot and page 2 the Special General Election Ballot. He stated that 17-year old's will not be able to vote the Special General Ballot.

bb. Voter Outreach – Mr. Mickley reported that we have finished the Voter Outreach schedule through October decided to scale back Voter Outreach except for requests due to the Special Election. A summary of Voter Outreach statistics and the schedule is provided.

cc. Same Day Registration (SDR) – Guy Mickley stated that this is proceeding as scheduled. We have had three pollbook, database, and equipment tests. The new equipment we will be using for SDR has been tested in a polling place environment and then load tested at the State level. There are some minor bugs that must be worked out, but we are confident in moving forward. We will be performing this function during the Special Primary Election.

dd. ADA Reviews – The Director reported that all schematics and ADA Accessibility surveys have been completed for all polling places in Howard County.

ee. Review of Street Files – Street database check is around 40% complete. Not finding any errors to speak of, this project may be placed on the back burner because of the Special Election.

ff. Two New Initiatives & Committees – Two new initiatives the Director has tasked members of the staff with are a COOP Plan, or Continuity of Operations Plan, and a Cyber Incident Management Plan, which will be addendums to our Disaster Recovery Plan. Previously, these two projects were due by the end of December, but because of the Special Election, the deadline has been extended to the end of July. We will eventually complete these plans.

2. **Voter Registration** – The Director stated that registration continues to be typical of an off-election year. He reminded the Board that registration will close 21 days before the Special Primary for Congressional 7 only. The staff will continue to process all other registrations within the County. This will cause a small backlog for 67 precincts in Howard County.
3. **Candidate Filing for 2020** – Mr. Mickley stated that a few more candidates have started to file for the 2020 election. A list has been provided to members that includes both the Presidential Primary and the Special Election. Special Election candidates have until tomorrow to file.
4. **Awards** – Sally Chen, James Holton, Jonathan Holton and Guy Mickley from Howard County were named Election Officials of the Year at the State Biennial Conference for their continued efforts on the Statewide Tabletop Exercises and all the other work that they have done in Howard County in elections and throughout the State. The Director stated they were extremely honored to accept the Governor's Citations.
5. **New Pollbooks** – The Director reported that we will be receiving an additional 10 pollbooks to be used throughout the upcoming election cycles. This gives us an additional 20 pollbooks for the 2020 elections.
6. **New Scanners** – Guy Mickley stated we have received 21 additional scanners for the upcoming election to be added to several polling places and Early Voting Centers for 2020.
7. **Deposition** – Guy Mickley stated he will be deposed by the lawyers for the Federation of the Blind lawsuit against the State Board of Elections on December 6 in Baltimore. He indicated he was used as a subject matter expert by the State in the case.
8. **Staffing** – The Director stated the office has lost two employees. Adrienne Denne has left State employment and Mitchell White accepted State employment with another Election Office. Both will be missed tremendously. He will be advertising for the two open State positions as soon as possible and plan to hire an additional set of County contingent employees at the same time to cover the office for this busy election year.
9. **Holiday Party** – The Holiday Party is December 11.

10. **Leave** – The Director stated that he is continuing allowing the staff, as well as himself, to use up our leave as much as possible so that we do not lose it. The office has several staff members that are in a “use or lose” scenario, and they will be off and come in on days that he deems mandatory for deadlines or the good of the office going into this Special Election. Starting the first full week of January, everyone will be here every day. There will be no leave approval as of this time up to and through the Presidential Primary Election. We have a long several months ahead of us.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

Michael Molinaro, Esq., reported that the SBE Conference Breakout session he participated in was well attended with 100% participation by Maryland’s Election Boards. Andrea Trento, Counsel for the State Board of Elections, lead the discussion and reviewed state cases, including the case brought by the Federation for the Blind. He said he met several new attorneys from some of the smaller counties.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

The Board had no new business.

Guest Jay Gerarden asked about Early Voting for the Special Election, and indicated voters were used to it. Donna Thewes stated there was no provision for it in the law there would be no Early Voting for this election.

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 Diane Butler seconded the motion.

Action: Board members present unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:23 pm.

The December Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections has been cancelled unless any issues arise. The next Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections will be held on Monday, January 27, 2020 at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President