

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, October 25, 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.	Board Counsel
Guy C. Mickley	Election Director
Charlotte B. Davis	Deputy Director
Phyllis A. West	Board Secretary

Absent: None

Guests: Jay Gerarden

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.

WELCOME GUESTS

Donna Thewes welcomed guest Jay Gerarden to the meeting and said he 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 September 27, 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. Diane Butler motioned to approve the minutes and Ray Rankin seconded the motion.

Action: The minutes for the September 27, 2021 Regular Open Board Meeting were unanimously approved.

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 stated that since the BOE office is still following COVID protocols and most of the staff is working virtually, Board meetings for the rest of 2021 will continue to be held virtually via Google Meet. She then discussed the potential need to change the date of the next Board meeting, which is scheduled for November 15, 2021. Board members all indicated they would be available on November 22nd for a meeting. Director Guy Mickley said that moving the date to November 22nd would be helpful, since he might not have the information the staff and Board needed from the State Board of Elections (SBE) by November 15th for the Board to make decisions on the Early Voting sites. The Board agreed to move the meeting to November 22, 2021.

Donna Thewes then discussed the 2022 Tentative Master Board Meeting, Election and Canvass Schedule prepared by Board Secretary Phyllis West. Ms. Thewes mentioned that all holidays, including those religious holidays identified by Howard County as dates no meetings should be held, have been considered when creating the schedule. She asked Board members to review the tentative schedule, to mark their calendars for the elections and canvasses, and to ensure they have no issues with the Board meeting dates. Board members agreed to the date changes and meeting cancellations suggested on the tentative schedule. Donna Thewes thanked Ms. West for her work in preparing this 2022 Tentative Board Meeting Schedule.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. **General Office Update:** Director Guy Mickley reported on recent accomplishments and what the office and warehouse staff will be working on as we gear up for the 2022 elections:
 - a. Voter Registration/Office Work – Voter registration numbers have stabilized and are still trickling in, which is anticipated to continue for the rest of the year.
 - i) *Street Maintenance* –Director Mickley stated that once again there is no update this month on the project. We are waiting for more information from GIS and will share any new information that comes from the last check of streets at either the next Board meeting or when the information is received.

- ii) *Warehouse* – The warehouse continues to serve as the mail house for the office and to send out the Voter Notification Cards. Staff continues to charge all equipment. Warehouse staff has a meeting scheduled with the installers for the high-rise shelving tomorrow to determine the best route forward in the process, exactly how much shelving to order, etc. They should be ordered in the next few weeks for installation by the end of the year (depending on shipping and supply chain issues). We have received our ballot trays for the Ballot Cards from the vendor, and these will prevent the ballots from shifting in the ballot carts during transport.
- iii) *MDVOTERS Records Cleanup* – The staff is still keeping up with the daily work, verifying that day’s work, and going back and reviewing older records to ensure that they are clean and correct. The staff has done an excellent job ensuring that the daily work is verified before the warehouse sends voter notification cards out.
- iv) *Supervisor and Staff meetings* – We have continued bi-weekly supervisor and staff meetings to ensure everyone is on task and the daily assignment calendar is completed and on time. Donna Thewes stated she was glad to hear how well staff is doing, since teleworking can be challenging.

2. **Early Voting Centers** – Guy Mickley reported that we have made the selections we would like to use as Early Voting Centers and have received County Administration approval for the centers, but we do not yet have the map of “historically disenfranchised communities” from the State Board of Elections. Therefore, the Director said he would not be presenting the Early Voting Centers for approval at this meeting. He stated that all of the proposed centers pass all tests for space, parking and general usability and meet the coverage specification of State law. However, until we receive the findings from the State on the historically disenfranchised communities in Howard County, we won’t be able to determine if these choices cover the areas identified by the State or if additional changes will need to be made to these choices. The list of Early Voting Centers that we currently plan on presenting for approval by the Board next month is 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

Guy Mickley reported that with these tentative centers, coverage for the the Western part of the county extends further out with change to the Gary J. Arthur Community Center (but still covers Clarksville, Dayton and other regions). We now will have coverage on the eastern side of Columbia with the addition of St. John’s Baptist Church, which we have never had before. Using the North Laurel Community Center instead of Ridgely’s Run gives us much needed ample parking in the southern tier of the County. Meadowbrook Athletic Complex covers Ellicott City and northern Columbia, and The Bain 50+ Center gives us

coverage for the rest of Columbia. The staff feels this is a very evenly distributed group of Early Voting Centers. Maps and numbers will be provided from the State for the next Board meeting, after the aforementioned information on historically disenfranchised communities is disseminated.

President Thewes and other Board members indicated they like the county wide distribution of Early Voting Centers with larger facilities, and they are grateful St. Johns Baptist Church is allowing us to use their facility. Guy Mickley indicates that we will have separate entrances and exits at each Early Voting site to improve the flow, and that we are looking at polling places to try to do the same thing there as much as possible.

2. **Budget** – Guy Mickley reported that we are in the new budget year, so the budget is tracking well. He provided Board members with a budget tracking sheet electronically prior to the meeting.
4. **Telework** – The office staff continues to primarily do telework. Supervisors and management continue to monitor the work being done. The warehouse staff comes in several days a week as there is more hands-on work to be done there and staff continues to practice social distancing while working. Management will continue to revisit our teleworking and in-person schedules on a monthly basis. The Director reported that staff will probably be returning to the office in larger numbers in late January or early February.
6. **Redistricting** – There have been proposed draft maps provided from the Maryland Citizen’s Redistricting Commission. They can be found at <https://redistricting.maryland.gov/Pages/final-proposed-draft.aspx>. If these were the maps to be approved by the legislature, all of Howard County would be in Congressional 3. We would have Senatorial Districts 14, 26, and 27. We would have Delegate Districts 14B, 14C, 26, 27A, 27B, and 27C. Guy Mickley indicated we will have to wait to see what the legislature approves, which probably won’t be until mid to late January 2022.
7. **New Pollbooks** – Director Mickley stated that the State has informed us that the new pollbooks will not be used until the 2024 election cycle. We will use new printers with the old pollbooks for the 2022 election. Donna Thewes asked if we would have ballot on demand printers, and Guy Mickley indicated we won’t have that capability.
8. **Mock Election** – Guy Mickley reported that the State Mock Election is underway. We have proofed mock ballots and we are currently waiting on test ballots and a test database to do a new mock Logic and Accuracy (L&A) test. The way that L&A will now be completed will be spreading a whole test deck out across all of an Early Voting Center’s 4 voting units, instead of using a full test deck of every ballot on every machine. We have been told that our test decks for Howard County in Early Voting for this upcoming election will be 3,088 pages. This is because of reporting by precinct, and for three ballot styles for each precinct – Republican, Democrat and Non-Partisan. Director Mickley indicated he would report to the Board at their November meeting how things are going with the Mock Election.

9. **State TTX** – Guy Mickley reported that the State Board is planning another tabletop exercise for January 24, 2022. Several staff members are helping with this effort again this year. The TTX will be a virtual event, but attendance will not be mandatory. He said that Board members may participate if they are interested. Several Board members indicated they would be interested. The Director said he will have more information closer to the date of the event. Donna Thewes asked if it would conflict with the Board meeting scheduled at 4:00 pm on that date. Guy Mickley indicated it should not, as they plan to end the TTX at 3:00 pm.

11. **Candidate Filing** – Director Mickley stated we have had a few more candidates file. Their names can be found on the State Board website. He then asked Tiffany Ferrell, who handles Candidate Filing, to provide candidate information. She briefly reviewed who had filed and who had changed their filing. Tiffany Ferrell said there was a lot of hesitancy due to the redistricting process, which could alter the district where someone runs as a candidate. She indicated that many will wait until the last minute, as usually happens. Guy Mickley indicated we will continue scheduling candidate filings only on Wednesday's until we start to get more of a candidate showing and will probably go to five days a week after the New Year when activity usually picks up. Candidate filings will still be handled by appointment. Donna Thewes indicated she likes the idea of appointments to keep things operating smoothly. She then thanked Ms. Ferrell for her report.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

Eric Broussides, Esq., stated he had nothing to report.

GUEST COMMENTS

Donna Thewes asked guest Jay Gerarden if he had any comments or questions. Mr. Gerarden indicated he has been following the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission's work and believes it would be better to have single member districts rather than have districts represented by multiple members. President Thewes and Board members indicated that this is not within the Board's purview, and suggested he contact the Commission and/or his state representatives to discuss his comments and concerns.

OLD BUSINESS

Guy Mickley stated that copies of the new judge recruitment flyers mentioned at the last Board meeting had been sent to members prior to the meeting as requested.

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 4:50 pm.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President