

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, June 28, 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: Eric C. Brousaides, Esq.

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

Absent: None

Guests: 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.

WELCOME GUESTS

There were none.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the minutes for the May 24, 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 as presented and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: The minutes for the May 24, 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 an updated MAEO and SBE Biennial Conference agenda was recently sent to Board members electronically. She and Diane Butler will attend the conference in person along with Board Counsel Eric Brousaides. All other Board members will attend the SBE Biennial Conference via video conference.

Ms. Thewes reported that Monica Fields will be taking over handling Howard County BOE's social media Twitter site. Monica will be posting some Board information on the site, with certain information posted after the meeting minutes are approved by the Board. The President asked Board Secretary Phyllis West to provide members with the address information for the Twitter and Instagram accounts. Guy Mickley stated these sites provide a different way to post information in addition to our website which Val Patterson handles, and the postings will be a collaborative effort between Val Patterson, Monica Fields and Teresa Womble.

Donna Thewes then reviewed the Board Meeting schedule for the summer months. As decided last month, the July 26th and August 23rd, 2021 meetings have been cancelled unless any issues arise that need the Board's attention. The next Regular Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections will be held at the Howard County Board of Elections Office in person (if COVID conditions permit) on September 27, 2021.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. **General Office Update:** Director Guy Mickley reported on accomplishments and what the office and warehouse staff will be working on as they finish cleaning up from the Presidential General Election and gear up for the 2022 elections:
 - a. Voter Registration/Office Work – Voter registration numbers for the month have returned to pre-election cycle numbers. This is anticipated to continue for the rest of this year.
 - i) *Street Maintenance* –The County GIS Department has been sent another file to compare their street file database to ours from MDVOTERS. After receiving this next iteration of comparison, staff will make any appropriate changes to our database from the information provided while using mapping software and maps on our end to certify any changes. We will then work on the written precinct boundaries and ensure they are up to date as we move forward towards redistricting.

- ii) *Polling Place Surveys* – In July and August, teams of two employees each will perform our usual off-election year survey of all Howard County polling places to make sure that nothing has changed, that any changes which have been made will be documented and staff will speak with school officials concerning upcoming projects that could affect the elections moving forward.
 - iii) *Warehouse* – The warehouse continues to serve as the mail house for the office and to send out the Voter Notification Cards. Most of the warehouse team has been tasked with implementing another TTX (Tabletop Exercise) for SBE, and that work is well underway. We will be hosting the State and ES&S in our warehouse for several months as they do upgrades to all servers for the voting system. We expect this process to begin in mid-July. We also had new lighting installed in the warehouse through a free program that BGE was conducting in the area. The new LED lighting has made a significant improvement.
 - iv) *MDVOTERS Records Cleanup* – The staff is keeping up with the daily work, and then going back and verifying that day’s work as well as reviewing older records to ensure that they are clean and correct.
 - v) *Website and Social Media Sites* – As discussed earlier, Val Patterson, Teresa Womble and Monica Fields have and continue to take part in making sure that we have a strong social media presence. We now have Facebook, Twitter and a new Instagram account, and will be posting regularly on all three platforms, especially as we move toward the next election cycle.
2. **Budget** – Guy Mickley reported that as we work towards the end of this fiscal year and begin the 2022 fiscal year, the mailing accounts have been replenished and we have ordered supplies to restock from this budget cycle. He indicated he was able to carry forward a \$200,000 earmark from 2019 to help offset any costs that are unforeseen going into this upcoming election year.
 3. **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. As the County and State of Maryland start to “reopen”, management will continue to revisit our teleworking and in-person schedules. We plan to do this on a monthly basis.
 4. **New Pollbooks** – The process is in the evaluation stage. All vendors have been looked at and the process continues to move forward. The Director indicated he will keep the Board informed as SBE provides information to local Boards on any decisions that are made.
 5. **New Software for Voting System** – The new software for the voting system was not approved by SBE, so Maryland will be using the same software on the voting system that we have used in the past several elections. The State Board did extensive testing on the new software and found that “inefficiencies discovered in portions of the software suite would

negatively impact the election calendar, processes and workflows used in Maryland. In keeping with SBE's goal to continuously enhance and improve elections, ES&S and SBE will proactively collaborate to ensure future software suites meet or exceed the standards and needs of Maryland."

6. **Mock Election** – The State still has a Mock Election scheduled for the November 2021 - January 2022 timeframe. The portion of the Mock Election which was to include the new voting system software is now moot. The Board will be advised as more information becomes available.
7. **State TTX** – The State Board is planning another tabletop exercise for the last quarter of 2021. Several Staff members are helping with this effort again this year. More details will be distributed to the Board at a later date.
8. **Legislation** – The Legislative Session is over, and the key areas affected are listed below as to what action the office and/or SBE has taken in response to the new laws passed:
 - a. *Early Voting* – We have visited several installations over the past several weeks to look for new and/or improved Early Voting Centers as we move toward implementing five (5) Early Voting Centers in 2022. We will continue looking at sites and, in the months to come, we will present a new plan to the Board.
 - b. *Mailing Out Mail-in Ballot Applications/Permanent Mail-In List* – The State has added a checkbox for Permanent Mail-In List to MDVOTERS for the registration side of Mail-In Ballots. The State Board approved the new Mail-In Application at the SBE Board meeting last week. It will be available July 1, 2021.
 - c. *Drop Boxes* – There has been no movement on this topic to date.
 - d. *Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act* – There has been no movement on this topic to date.
 - e. *Teleworking*– Generally, teleworking will continue under the new law.
8. **Candidate Filing** – We have had three candidates file for County Council. Their names can be found on the State Board website. We will continue scheduling candidate filings on Wednesday's only until we start to get more of a candidate showing.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

Eric Brousaides, Esq., Board Counsel, stated that he had nothing to report. Ann Balcerzak asked if Mr. Brousaides had contacted any other County Board Counsels. He stated that he has spoken to Andrea Trento, Esq., Assistant Attorney General for Maryland's Office of the Attorney General but has not spoken to other County Board Counsels yet. He will be meeting many of them at the MAEO Conference.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Guy Mickley stated that three individuals have been added to Howard County's confidential voter rolls, and the Board needs to approve these additions.

Donna Thewes asked for a motion to approve the addition of the three individuals to the confidential voters list for the county. Ray Rankin made the motion and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the addition of these three to the confidential voter rolls.

Guy Mickley then stated that he understands the Chicago Post Office found one or two of our ballots there from the 2020 Election. He will keep the Board advised as he gets more information.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Thewes read the closing statement and 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 3-305 (b)(1) to discuss a personnel issue. A motion to recess the Regular Open Board Meeting to go into Executive Session as per Item 1 was made by Ray Rankin, and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: Board members voted unanimously to recess the Regular Open Board Meeting at 4:33 pm.

The Regular Open Board Meeting was reconvened at 4:58 pm. President Thewes reported that the purpose of the Executive Session was to conduct the semi-annual performance review of the Director and to approve the Executive Session minutes from the May 24, 2021 meeting.

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 4:59 pm.

Since the June and July Board meetings have been cancelled, the next Regular Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections will be held on Monday September 27, 2021 at 4:00 pm. The meeting will be held in person at the Howard County Board of Elections Office.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President