

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, September 27, 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. Broussides, Esq.	Board Counsel
Guy C. Mickley	Election Director
Charlotte B. Davis	Deputy Director
Phyllis A. West	Board Secretary

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.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the amended minutes for the June 28, 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 these minutes. Ray Rankin motioned to approve the amended minutes and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: The amended minutes for the June 28, 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 reported on the recent MAEO and SBE Biennial Conferences. She said that she, Diane Butler and Board Counsel Eric Brousaides attended the Conferences in person, with the other three Board members attending sessions virtually. She felt this year's MAEO Conference was well run and included a number of interesting sessions with good speakers. Ms. Thewes briefly reported on the sessions she attended and said the SBE Biennial Conference used many of the same speakers as MAEO. She felt the two conferences and extended schedule made for a long program this year. Ms. Thewes indicated she had copies of the handouts from the Conferences she could provide electronically if members wanted them. Guy Mickley stated that MAEO plans to post all handouts on their website in the near future.

Diane Butler agreed that the conferences and sessions were good this year. Ann Balcerzak asked a few questions concerning issues Ms. Thewes had discussed.

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 trickling in, which is expected to continue for the rest of the year.
 - i) *Street Maintenance* –Director Mickley stated there is no update this month on the project, as we are waiting for more information from GIS. He 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 has done the legwork on getting high-rise shelving to give us more room at the warehouse and continues to charge all equipment. They have begun packing supplies (pens, stickers, keys, etc.) for the voters and judges assigned to the current polling places. Once redistricting occurs, we will combine (or separate) supplies to accommodate the changes. Donna Thewes asked why new Voter Notification Cards are being sent out since Redistricting is coming soon. Director Mickley responded that the law states that any new or existing voter with a change must be sent a new VNC within 21 days.
 - iii) *MDVOTERS Records Cleanup* – The staff is 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.

- iv) *Website and Social Media Sites* – Val Patterson, Teresa Womble and Monica Fields continue to make sure that the website and social media outlets are updated and active. Tomorrow is National Voter Registration Day, so we have stepped up our posts (4-5 times per day) to create added focus during this time. Ann Balcerzak asked the Director to review the website and social media team members. He stated that Val Patterson is responsible for our website and that the County has changed their website, so we are making changes to provide more access and links for election judges, the public, etc. Monica Fields handles the social media sites – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Monica also prepared new judge recruitment flyers for the office. Rebecca Ayres and Mitchell White are also involved.
- v) *National Voter Registration Day* – We are supporting a large effort for this event being held at Howard County Community College tomorrow. This will include voter registration and judge information at the table as handouts.

2. **Polling Places and Early Voting Centers** – Staff has done site surveys at all current polling places and has surveyed multiple sites as potential Early Voting Centers. Guy Mickley said there are a few sets of options for Early Voting Centers that we are vetting with the County and private facilities and mentioned some that are being looked at now. We are also looking at new schematics to allow for separate entrances and exits if possible in case COVID is still an issue in 2022. Plus, a new law requires us to consider historically disenfranchised communities when placing election sites for future elections. SBE and the Attorney General’s office are currently working to identify where all of these communities are across the state of Maryland, so LBE’s can include them in their evaluations of potential sites.

Once our selections have been narrowed down to the final five, we will be partnering with the SBE IT division to provide us with mapping to make our final recommendations to the Board for approval at the next Board meeting. The State Board may not be taking our recommendations into consideration for their November Board meeting because of law changes, which may alter how the State Board approves the EV Centers because of where they may have to be placed.

3. **Budget** – Guy Mickley reported that we are in the new budget year, so the budget is tracking well. He will provide a budget sheet to the Board in October.
4. **Staffing** – Director Mickley stated that we welcomed two full-time State employees and a new contingent employee earlier this month. Cathy Michaels Comegys and Lisa Champagne Lance were hired as State employees and Bradley Lance will be working as a County contingent employee. They are already assisting wherever needed as we move forward toward the next election. Starting at some point closer to the next year, more contingents will be brought on board.
5. **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.

6. **Redistricting** – There is little to update this month on redistricting. The County and State have received their first sets of information, respectively. Guy Mickley reported that he attended the Howard County Council meeting a few weeks ago to field questions about the process if needed. Theo Wimberly, County Council Assistant, was able to handle the questions asked since Mr. Mickley had briefed him prior to the meeting. The Director will keep the Board informed on this issue.
7. **New Pollbooks** – The process is in the BAFO (Best and Final Offer) II Phase of the project. The vendors will provide these offers to SBE, and SBE will move forward with decisions at that time.
8. **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.
9. **State TTX** – The State Board is planning another tabletop exercise for some time in January 2022, and it will be held virtually. Several staff members are helping with this effort again this year. Board members may participate, at least to observe the process, if they are interested. More details will be distributed to the Board at a later date. Several Board members indicated they would be interested.
10. **Legislation** – Guy Mickley reported that MAEO has created and is actively finding support for a bill that would allow LBE's to open Mail-In Ballots before Election Day, as we did during the 2020 election cycle. If a Bill allowing this can't be passed under emergency legislation, we run the risk of not knowing who won contests in Howard County until after canvasses were completed, which is a week and a half after Election Day. This would cause an undue burden on the staff as many people would be calling/emailing during staff preparations for the canvasses.
11. **Candidate Filing** – We have had a few more candidates file in the past few months. 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.

Finally, Director Mickley indicated that some 2022 dates could possibly be changed depending on what happens with the redistricting process.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

Eric Broussides, Esq., stated that he enjoyed attending the MAEO and SBE Biennial Conferences and meeting his counterparts from other counties, most of whom attended in person. He reported that currently there is one case before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit, and there was a hearing last week. The issue relates to SBE's denial of a request from a non-resident

of Maryland to obtain a voter list for the state of Maryland. The Court found that SBE's argument concerning the non-resident issue was not valid but did agree with SBE in denial of the request since the requestor didn't certify that the list would not be used for non-electoral purposes. The Court indicated the respondent may go to each LBE and view the records, but not be sent a full list for the state of Maryland.

Guy Mickley stated that viewing a record in the LBE's office is much different than asking for a full list of Maryland voters, and Board members agreed. Ann Balcerzak asked Eric Brousaides if he would send Board members a web link, so interested members could review the details of the case. Mr. Brousaides stated he would do so.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

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 4:52 pm.

The next Regular Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections will be held virtually on Monday October 25, 2021 at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President