

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, April 25, 2022

Note: *This meeting was held virtually.*

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: Tiffany Ferrell	Staff
Joel Hurewitz	
David Zinner	
Joe Blair	

CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Board President Donna Thewes called the meeting to order at 4:02 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 guests and said they would have the opportunity make comments and ask any questions at the end of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the draft minutes for the February 17, 2022 Special Open Board Meeting and the February 28, 2022 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 both sets of minutes. Ray Rankin motioned to approve the minutes and Ann Balcerzak seconded the motion.

Action: The minutes for the February 17, 2022 Special Open Board Meeting and the February 28, 2022 Regular Open Board Meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

ADDITIONS OR CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Board members made no additions or changes to the agenda.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Donna Thewes first mentioned she had received many compliments from individuals signing up as candidates on the great job that staff members Tiffany Ferrell and Monica Fields have done in assisting them through the process and the many changes that have taken place this year. She asked Director Guy Mickley to please pass this on to the staff members with her thanks. She then reviewed the following:

1. Changes to Future Board Meeting Schedule:

- Reinstated June 27th Regular Board Meeting.
- Cancelled June 28th mandatory meeting due to move of Election date.
- Scheduled mandatory July 19th meeting on Election Day.
- Cancelled July 25 Regular Board Meeting due to Canvass Schedule.

2. Future Board Meetings – President Thewes stated that starting in May 2022, she wants to Begin holding Board meetings in person as well as virtually.

3. New Canvass Dates:

- Cancelled Dates – June 30th, July 6th, July 8th
- New Dates – July 21st, July 27th, July 29th (plus more if needed).

4. Swearing In of Gubernatorial Primary Canvass Board – This will be done in person at the beginning of the May 23, 2022 Regular Open Board Meeting.

Donna Thewes stated she would be unable to attend the July 27th Board meeting in person but would try to participate virtually by telephone. Ann Balcerzak then stated she would be unable to attend the May 23rd Board meeting but would arrange to be sworn in with the Clerk of the Circuit Court at a later date. All other Board members indicated they would attend the May 23rd meeting in person.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

See Attachment 1 for the full report. Votes and issues mentioned below reference the item numbers and/or letters in Attachment 1.

Board members asked a few questions concerning:

- **Item 2** - The impact of polling place consolidation on the budget, to which Guy Mickley said it would save money due to requirement for less judges and supplies, etc.;

- **Item 5** – The Director discussed the impact of New Legislation SB163 on tabulating votes. He said we can count Mail-In ballots prior to the election, tabulate and embargo them for the Primary Election. However, for the General Election, we can only tabulate results after Election Day from any canvass done before the election. This means we can't count them until the first canvass after Election Day, which is 2 days later. This could delay finding out who won a close race.
- **Item 7 – Early Voting Centers Location Changes.**
President Donna Thewes asked for a motion to approve the changes to 5 Early Voting Center Locations for the Primary Election per the Director's request. Diane Butler made a motion to accept the recommendations made to move the Early Voting sites for the Primary Election and Ray Rankin seconded the motion.
Action: The Board unanimously approved moving the Primary Election Early Voting Centers to the schools as recommended by the Director.
- **Item 8 – Drop Box Location Changes.**
President Donna Thewes asked for a motion to approve the changes to the Drop Box locations due to moving the Early Voting Center Locations for the Primary Election per the Director's request. Diane Butler made a motion to accept the recommendations made to move certain Drop Boxes for the Primary Elections and Ray Rankin seconded the motion.
Action: The Board unanimously approved moving certain Drop Boxes as recommended by the Director.
- **Item 9 – Redistricting Resolution.**
Director Mickley provided a Redistricting Resolution for the Board's approval since several polling place sites were unavailable for various reasons. President Donna Thewes asked for a motion to approve the Redistricting Resolution per the Director's request. Ray made a motion to approve the 2022 redistricting resolution and that the plan be immediately put into effect for the 2022 Election Cycle effective today, April 25, 2022. Tim Mummert seconded the motion.
Action: The Howard County Board of Elections unanimously approved the 2022 Redistricting Resolution as presented.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

Eric Brousaides, Esq., first concurred with President Donna Thewes that Director Guy Mickley has done an amazing job juggling all of the pieces and changes to prepare for the 2022 Elections. He then reported that Counsel Andrea Trento has left his position advising the State Board for another opportunity in New York, and his colleague Jim Lewis has replaced him in the short term.

GUEST COMMENTS

President Thewes then asked the guests in attendance if they had any comments or questions. Guest Joel Hurewitz asked questions about drop boxes and electioneering distances, and Guy Mickley stated that the 100' rule also applied to the drop boxes. He asked about the legislation that required the same number of polling places that were used in 2018, and the Director and Board members indicated this was done by the legislature, we simply follow the laws. Guest David Zinner complimented Director Mickley on his impressive work on redistricting and

preparations for the upcoming elections with the many changes that have occurred. He asked if there would be a mask requirement at polling places, and Guy Mickley said there was none per state guidelines. He asked a few additional questions, and the Director indicated the issues he mentioned all were state requirements.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Ann Balcerzak said she has been approached by a County women's group to speak, and she wanted to clear this with Donna Thewes since Ms. Thewes is the official spokesperson for the Howard County Board of Elections. Donna Thewes said she appreciated Ms. Balcerzak following procedures and informing her of the request. She approved and asked Ms. Balcerzak to provide her with an outline of what she planned to discuss for the record.

Diane Butler asked if we were participating in any funding of the election from non-profit groups this year, and Guy Mickley indicated there was no plan to do so. She also asked if there could be a review prior the canvass as to the rules for accepting or rejecting ballots, and Board members agreed it would be good to refresh everyone on the canvass process. Donna Thewes asked Board members if they would be available to come to the first canvass a little early to do this, and members agreed to do so.

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 5:45 pm.

The next Regular Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections will be held on Monday, May 23, 2022 at 4:00 pm. *(A Special Open Board Meeting was subsequently scheduled for Monday, May 16, 2022 to move a polling place for the Primary Election.)*

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President

Attachment 1

Director's Report- April 25, 2022

1. Continuing Items

- a. General Office Update: We have accomplished and will be working on several things here in the office and the warehouse as we start gearing the office for the 2022 elections. The items are broken down as follows:

- aa. Voter Registration/ Office Work- registration numbers are stable, slightly picking up pace. We can anticipate this to continue for the rest of this year.

1. Warehouse- The warehouse has been working on a multitude of projects that are impacted by associated functions.

- a. The warehouse continues to be the mail house for Voter Notification Cards from the office. A note about cards going out for redistricting- I have encumbered a third-party vendor to send the cards out after redistricting. Since the county was about 92% affected in some way by redistricting, I am sending a new card to every registered voter. This will ensure that everyone gets a new card no matter if something changed or not and will allow the staff to do other much needed tasks instead of spending three weeks (we do not have at this point) to send out cards. This will also serve as a mass mailing for the office staff to be able to further clean the voter rolls.
- b. The staff has received all the new printers for the election and done the acceptance testing on the printers. All of our old printers have been sent back to the State warehouse. In the event something would happen, and we had to go back to the old printers, they will be there for us to use.
- c. The staff has executed a plan on equipment allocation from the numbers you will see later from redistricting. These numbers include the number of carts, scanners, poll books, BMDs, booths, number of judges, and number of supplies for judges and voters that we will be using for the Primary 2022 election.
- d. We have decided that we will not be using the Cradlepoint routers to connect to the State in 2022 in the election day polling places. There was not enough time to perform robust testing and without that completed requirement, we told the State we would not connect. We will, however, continue to connect with these routers during the Early Voting cycle.
- e. Supplies that can be packed have mostly been packed for the Primary Elections, but the staff will now use the new allocations to see where things need added or deleted.

2. In general, the staff is keeping up with the voter registration daily work, and then going back and doing verifications on the work that is done. The State will be (momentarily) sending out mail-in ballot applications to anyone that is a registered Unaffiliated or other party, and to anyone that has changed an address since the last mailing to Dems and Reps. We expect to see these coming into the office in the next few weeks.
3. The staff is now in the office every day. Of course, people that may need to work at home a day or two, simply ask permission, and it is granted for the time being. As we move closer to the election date, we obviously will be 100%, no questions asked, "in the office."
4. Election Judges- We currently have roughly 300 less judges than we would have needed if we kept the same number of individual sites for the election day portion of the election. We have the same number of "precinct polling places", which is a polling place for every precinct, but we did have to consolidate several polling places. Judges are extremely hard to come by this year, all across the State. A July election is not helping matters, as we have heard of a lot of judges bowing out because of vacation. More on this later.
5. Judge Training- Judge training will be a blend of virtual, Live Q&A, hands on, and a solid week of Open House training as we have run in the past. All Chief Judges will have the usual full training, but other judges will have the blended trainings. All judge training will start the second week of May and will complete, at least the hands-on portion, by the end of May. Judges will still be able to access a ton of videos on their specific job functions, information on Chapters 1-4 of the manual, and other items all the way through election day, and beyond if they so choose! I will share a schedule with the Board once it is completely finalized. (We could not finalize because of redistricting.)
6. Judge Manual- We finally got the approved, Howard County updated version of the judge manual back from the State, so we will be sending it to print this week. The manual, once again, is written by the State, and we are allowed to update certain things with our county information. Judges will not only have this as a reference, but as in other elections, we will be providing them with our checklists and step-by-step guides that they have used for many years, as well as the aforementioned litany of videos and power points.

7. Vote By-Mail (Mail-In Voting)- We currently have 21,506 voters scheduled to receive a ballot by mail in the primary, and 14,292 of those voters are permanent mail-in voters, meaning that they will always receive a ballot for an election in the mail. This number will go up once the second mailing for the Unaffiliated and others goes out, as over 25% of our voters are in this category. We still expect to be around the 30,000 mark for Mail-In Ballots for this election, which would be roughly 63% of the 2018 Primary turnout.
2. Budget- Since the election is now in the new budget year, and most of the money that is spent is for the election, I have talked with the budget division, and generally everything at the end of this fiscal year will just be brought forward to the next fiscal year, since that is when the money will be spent. I do not even know what that looks like at this point, but as soon as I see it, I will give it to the Board.
3. New Pollbooks- The Board of Public Works has approved the contract for the new pollbooks. We will implement these pollbooks for the 2024 election. I kept this in my report to reiterate that we will be getting new pollbooks at a later date in 2023.
4. Candidate Filing- The candidate filing deadline has passed. All candidates have been filed. The candidate withdraw deadline may be extended by the Court through Wednesday. We will find out today.
5. Legislation- There are a few bills that passed through the session.

HB45/SB158- 50/50 split for all election related equipment. Must use the same amount of "precinct polling places" as were used in 2018.

SB163- Passed, with amendments. We can count Mail-In Ballots before the election, but we can only tabulate results before the election in the Primary election. After that, we cannot tabulate results until election day from any canvass done before the election. This presents challenges with equipment and procedures for the local boards, but we have not been able to vet anything past this election with the State Board as to how this will work. There will be more to follow on this at a later date.

6. Call Center- The call center is up and running and we have been getting phone calls on a regular basis. It definitely has been a smoother transition than in 2020. There have been a few recent hiccups, but it seems as though they are much more responsive than in 2020.

7. Early Voting Centers- After visiting Early Voting Centers last Thursday, we were unable to come to an agreement with Parks and Recreation for an amenable amount of space to hold the primary elections. It became apparent that we would have to switch sites, and to make the process easier for the voters, we decided to shift the whole Early Voting process for the Primary Election to the schools. The other two sites that we had previously selected also had some mild conflicts because of the change in date, so the full switch makes sense. The schools that we have selected as the emergency replacements for the Primary Election are Marriott's Ridge High School, Wild Lake High School, Long Reach High School, Reservoir High School, and Howard High School. Four of these five sites were used in 2020, and Howard High would replace Meadowbrook from the 2020 schema. The Board needs to vote on this today, so that the State Board can grant emergency approval on Wednesday at the Board meeting, which I have already gotten on the agenda to finish the process.
8. Drop Boxes- Because of the changes in Early Voting Centers, the drop box locations also have to be updated. I had to move other drop boxes because of their proximity to new Early Voting Centers, and to cover other areas, like Laurel. The list of new drop box locations was given to the board. Once again, we need to approve these today to move forward with this process.
9. Redistricting Resolution- I provided the Board with a Redistricting Resolution for the meeting today in an email. Generally, I will go over all the information with the Board, including maps. We started and finished the redistricting process with 118 precincts thanks to ingenious thinking on the part of the staff to figure out how to combine and split things to keep the same number of precincts in Howard County. Several items had to be considered when choosing polling places. Some of the items are as follows:
 5. Several sites are unusable for the Primary Election. (Hammond High School is under construction and Hawthorn Neighborhood Center had already been booked.) Hammond High School is a one time move- we will be using it in the General in 2022, but the rest, to reduce voter confusion, will stay the same through the 2022 elections.
 6. Several private installations that would close under COVID protocols cannot be used in 2022, as we would not be able to shift a polling place on a moment's notice. We consolidated away from those places to alleviate any short turnaround problems and associated voter confusion. Several of the sites simply did not send the contract back to us signed because of this fact. We will revisit these sites for future elections, considering where we are with COVID, but not for 2022.
 7. We are roughly 300 judges short of what we would need to run the election as we have run it in the past.
 8. Most of the consolidations are places that already voted in the same place. Instead of COMBINING, which was what we had talked about for several years, we simply

consolidated them into the same rooms in the school, meaning they still vote in the same places. This allowed us to still have the same amount of “precinct polling places” for the election.

9. Other consolidations are because of the impact of redistricting, with lines moving and or cutting precincts.

Once again, this resolution needs to be approved by the Board for us to move forward with the plan for the election.