

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, May 23, 2022

Note: *This meeting was held in person and virtually.*

Regular Open Board Meeting

ATTENDEES:

Board Members:

Donna K. Thewes	Board President, Republican Member
Diane L. Butler	Republican Member
Timothy J. Mummert	Republican Member (<i>virtually</i>)
Raymond M. Rankin	Democratic Member

Staff: Eric C. Brousaides, Esq.	Board Counsel
Guy C. Mickley	Election Director (<i>virtually</i>)
Charlotte B. Davis	Deputy Director (<i>virtually</i>)
Phyllis A. West	Board Secretary (<i>virtually</i>)

Absent: Ann M. Balcerzak	Vice President, Democratic Member
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Guests: Tiffany Ferrell	Staff
Ken Stevens	
Andy Butler	
Stephanie Bentu	

CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Board President Donna Thewes called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm with an established quorum present.

SWEARING IN OF 2022 GUBERNATORIAL PRIMARY ELECTION CANVASS BOARD

Wayne Robey, Howard County's Clerk of the Circuit Court, was asked to join the meeting.

Action: Mr. Robey proceeded to swear in members of the Board of Elections who were present in person as Canvass Board members for the 2022 Primary Election. These members then signed the Oath of Office of the Board of Canvassers, after which Mr. Robey departed. Members Tim Mummert and Ann Balcerzak, who attended virtually and were absent, respectively, will contact Mr. Robey to arrange to be sworn in as Canvass Board members in person.

The Pledge of Allegiance was then given.

WELCOME GUESTS

Donna Thewes welcomed guests and said they would have the opportunity to make comments and ask any questions at the end of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Copies of the draft minutes for the April 25, 2022 Regular Open Board Meeting and the May 16, 2022 Special 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 both sets of minutes and Tim Mummert seconded the motion.

Action: Minutes of the April 25, 2022 Regular Open Board Meeting and May 16, 2022 Special Open Board Meeting were approved as presented by those in attendance.

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 asked members and staff to contact her by email rather than text or phone if they need her prior to the meeting.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Guy Mickley explained to the public meeting attendees that the local Board of Elections also serves as the Board of Canvassers, hence the swearing in of the Canvass Board earlier in the meeting.

General Office Update:

The Director discussed what has been accomplished and what staff will be working on in the office and the warehouse as we gear up for the 2022 elections, which includes:

1. Voter Registration/Office Work –

The Director reported that registration numbers are relatively stable and picking up slightly. He indicated this will continue for the rest of this year. In general, the staff is keeping up with the voter registration daily work and verifying registrations.

2. Warehouse – Guy Mickley reported that the warehouse has been working on a multitude of projects that are impacted by associated functions, which include:

- a. **Voter Notification Cards –** As of last Friday, the warehouse has started mailing VNC's to voters again. A third-party vendor was preparing VNCs to all registered voters up to that point, and they should be mailed the first week of June.
- b. **Pollbook Printers –** The State has decided not to use the new pollbook printers in 2022. There was an issue that might cause the printers to suddenly stop working.

With no mitigation strategy and without the company replacing components inside the new printers, it's been decided to use the old printers for the 2022 elections.

- c. **Equipment & Supplies** – All booths, scanners, BMDs and other polling place and early voting supplies have been packed and staff is ready to perform Logic and Accuracy testing on all equipment in the next few weeks. In order to perform the tests, we will need databases and test decks from the State Board of Elections. The Director reported these should be received in the next few weeks.
3. **Mail-in Ballots** – During the first week of June, the State will be sending out mail-in ballot applications to anyone that is registered as Unaffiliated or Other Party voter as well as to anyone that has changed an address since the last mailing to Democrats and Republicans. Once these are received, we expect to see a small surge for the mail-in ballot numbers.
4. **Staff Schedules** – The staff is now in the office every day with adjustments for virtual work for a day or two if needed.
5. **Election Judges** – The Director reported that we currently have filled all positions for Early Voting Centers and Election Day polling places. We continue to receive requests from individuals who wish to serve as election judges, and they are being added to our wait list. He said since we will use slightly more judges in the General Election, these people will work as election judges for that election.
6. **Judge Training** – Judge training will be a blend of virtual, live Q&A, hands on and a week of Open House training as we have done in the past. All Chief Judges will have the usual full training sessions, but other judges will have the blended trainings. All judges were given access to the links for all online content last Friday. Chief Judge training has been moved to the week of June 21st to ensure that individuals have their training as close to the election as possible and to combine those trainings with Open House training for all other judges. Chief Judge training will be June 21-25, 2022 at 9:00 am, 1:00 pm, 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm and will be held at Oakland Mills Middle School in the café and gym. Board members are welcome to attend any of the trainings. Judges will still be able to access multiple videos on their specific job functions, information on Chapters 1-4 of the judge manual, and other items through Election Day and beyond if they so choose.
7. **Judge Manual** – 460 printed manuals have been received to date and the remainder of the manuals are expected to arrive in the next 10 days. Judges will be sent their manuals by mail immediately on receipt so that they can combine the written and virtual experience before they have their hands-on session and Q&A.
8. **Vote By-Mail (Mail-In Voting)** – Director Mickley reported that there are currently 22,809 Howard County voters scheduled to receive a ballot by mail in the Primary Election, and 15,191 of those voters are now permanent mail-in voters, meaning that they will always receive a ballot for an election via mail. This number will go up once the second mailing for the Unaffiliated and Other Parties goes out, as over 25% of our

voters are in this category. We expect to have approximately 30,000 mail-in ballots for this election, which would be roughly 63% of the 2018 Primary turnout.

9. **Budget** – Guy Mickley reported that he had a work session with the County Council two weeks ago. They asked questions about redistricting and its impact, mail-in ballots and the move of the election date. They also asked about the 50/50 split with the State and what, if anything, would change with SB158 going into effect, which generally only codifies what the State Board does with the split. He has asked the State Board for a detailed summary of everything that is part of the 50/50 split to provide to the County Council and auditors. Generally, the County Council didn't touch our budget request, and the auditor suggested that any funds left over from FY2022 be moved to FY2023 at the end of the fiscal year since we have both elections in one fiscal year.
10. **Call Center** – The call center is up and running and we have been getting phone calls on a regular basis. It has definitely been a smoother transition and they are doing a much better job than in 2020.
11. **Early Voting Centers** – All of the “leg work” for all five of the Early Voting Centers has been done. The equipment will be delivered the day before early voting starts and will be set up by staff. The schools offer ample space for judges and voters alike to enhance the early voting experience, while still having the “safe” aspect with regard to increasing COVID numbers in the State of Maryland.
12. **Drop Boxes** – The Director will advise the Board as soon as he learns when the drop boxes will be placed in the field for voters. He was informed that a drop box is being placed at the prison (detention center) in Jessup, and that the State is employing individuals to pick up anything placed in the box and deliver it to us at the Board of Elections. He does not have any other details at this time.

Donna Thewes asked who was paying for this box? The Director didn't know since he just found out about the box on Friday prior to the meeting but will ask the State.

Diane Butler asked how long we keep the security videos for the Drop Boxes, and the Director reported they are kept for 30 days. There was discussion on keeping them 22 months, as other election materials are kept. He stated that if the State wants to keep them 22 months we will do so; otherwise we will use the industry standard of 30 days. A question was also asked regarding damaged drop boxes, and Mr. Mickley stated those would be reported to the State if that happened.

Finally, the Director stated that the ballots had been proofed with the help of a number of staff members, and he has ordered the ballots.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

Eric Broussides, Esq., stated that SBE had set the following dates for LBE Counsel Conference Calls – June 14, June 28 and July 12th. Director Mickley asked Mr. Broussides to email him the

dates so that he could keep up with any issues raised that he would need to address. Mr. Brousaides said he would do so after the meeting.

GUEST COMMENTS

Guest Stephanie Bentu asked if the Board could share how the voter rolls are cleaned up. President Thewes explained the process and said this has been done for many years per existing rules. Guy Mickley added a few more details of the voter rolls cleanup process.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

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 Diane Butler seconded the motion.

Action: Board members voted unanimously to recess the Regular Open Board Meeting at 4:31 pm.

The Regular Open Board Meeting was reconvened at 4:37 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 January 24, 2022 and February 17, 2022 meetings.

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 4:38 pm.

The next Regular Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections will be held on Monday, June 27, 2022 at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President