

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

MEETING MINUTES

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Monday, February 27, 2017 – 4:00 am

Regular Open Board Meeting

ATTENDEES:

Board Members:

Donna K. Thewes	Board President, Republican Member
Ann M. Balcerzak	Vice President, Democratic Member
Patrick R. Mullinix	Republican Member
Raymond M. Rankin	Democratic Substitute
Diane L. Butler	Republican Substitute (by telephone)
Michael S. Molinaro	Board Counsel

Staff:

Guy C. Mickley	Director
Charlotte B. Davis	Deputy Director
Phyllis A. West	Board Secretary

Visitors: None

Absent: None

CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Board President Donna Thewes called the meeting to order at 4:09 pm with an established quorum present. The Pledge of Allegiance was then given.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Draft copies of the minutes from the January 23, 2017 meeting were provided to Board members by electronic mail prior to the meeting and a paper copy was made available to each member at the meeting. Members made no changes to the minutes. President Thewes asked for a motion to accept the minutes. Patrick Mullinix motioned to accept the minutes as presented and Ray Rankin seconded the motion.

Action: The January 23, 2017 minutes were unanimously accepted as presented.

ADDITIONS OR CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Board members made no changes or additions to the agenda.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence to discuss.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Donna Thewes asked if all Board members had completed their Financial Disclosure Reports. All members indicated they had completed their reports.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. ***Post-Election Wrap-Up*** – Guy Mickley reported that post-election clean-up continues at the warehouse. Post-election maintenance has been completed on the scanners and the BMD's, and staff is now performing PEM on the pollbooks. Once this is complete, the staff will move on to the voting booths, removing old election signage, cleaning up the booths and ensuring that all parts are there and nothing is broken.
2. **Continuing Items:**
 - a. ***Early Voting Centers*** – Director Mickley stated that staff has continued to do the background work on choosing a fourth Early Voting Center for Howard County. He will present findings and recommendations to the Board at the March meeting.
 - b. ***Polling Places*** – The polling place realignment project is going smoothly. All potentially affected schools and possible new schools for the combined polling places have been visited and measurements of all areas that may be used as a polling place have been taken. We will be presenting our findings and suggestions for Board approval at the March meeting. This process, as well as that for the fourth Early Voting Center, has been slightly delayed due to shifting the staff to the warehouse to complete PEM (the same individuals are assigned to both projects).
 - c. ***Candidate Training*** – The State Board of Elections recently held candidate training for staff members responsible for that function. Our staff performed a test run here to ensure that they are ready to receive candidates. Candidate filing for the 2018 Primary Election officially starts tomorrow, February 28, 2017.
 - d. ***Registration*** – Director Mickley reported that voter registration numbers continue to rise slowly. He believes this will continue to be the trend until Universal Registration begins, with registrations coming from many agencies as well as the MVA and the State Board.
 - e. ***Budget*** – Guy Mickley reported that in the last two weeks he met with our budget analyst from the Department of Finance followed by a meeting with the County Executive. He stated that the County Executive has accepted our budget proposal, which will be presented to the County Council for final approval. The County continued to give the Board of Elections accolades on how well we qualify and present our budget materials and request. A copy of the budget request was provided to Board members in the handouts. The BOE budget request is a modest increase over last year.

- f. **Judges** – The Director then discussed a proposed increase in judge salaries for 2018, which have not been raised in ten years. He recommended that the new salaries for Chief Judges be increased to \$250 (a \$30 raise) and for all other Election Judges be \$190 (a \$25 raise). Donna Thewes asked for a motion to increase judge salaries in Howard County. Patrick Mullinix so moved, and Ray Rankin seconded the motion.

Action: The Board unanimously moved to increase the judge salaries to \$250 for Chief Judges and \$190 for all other Election Judges starting with the 2018 Gubernatorial Election cycle.

- g. **UOCAVA** – Staff members attended training for UOCAVA processing to begin preparations for the 2018 Election. Military and Overseas Voters will be processed by the local LBE's once again.
- h. **Warehouse Move** – Guy Mickley stated that the County has begun to look for new office space for those currently located in the Dorsey building, which includes the BOE warehouse. Following his meeting with the County Executive, he met with the head of Howard County's Department of Public Works - Bureau of Facilities, who is in charge of the County's relocation effort. The Director requested the County's consideration of moving the BOE warehouse to a vacant building across the parking lot from the BOE office. He believes that a warehouse move will happen in this calendar year, since 2018 is an election year and a move then is not a viable option. Board members concurred that the Director's recommendation for the new location of the warehouse was an excellent choice.

3. Legislative Issues – The Director reported on several bills that could affect elections which have been submitted, and he reviewed those listed below that are of interest at the local level or could have a direct impact on the office if they were signed into law:

- a. **HB 1299 – Howard County School Board Elections** – This bill would require the School Board to have 5 districts that follow County Council lines, but Board members would only be elected every four years instead of every two years. The bill would essentially eliminate the need for the non-partisan ballot in our Gubernatorial Primaries. It also would lengthen the ballot in the Presidential Primary and General Elections, probably requiring a two page (or more) ballot.

Board members discussed the bill and its potential impact on Howard County voters and this office. There were several concerns, including longer lines at the polls, cost increases, longer canvasses and confusion due to current wording in the bill as to whether the bill was changing the School Board election cycle from two to four years or not. After discussion, Board members felt that it might be useful to provide legislators with a letter offering information on these issues. President Donna Thewes will draft a letter which will be sent to Board members for their review and input.

- b. **HB143 – Elections - Misc.** – This bill changes the timeframe for a challenge to the election or recount from two days to three days after certification.

- c. **HB169 – Streaming Live - SBE Board Meetings** – The bill would require the State Board to live stream online their board meetings, making it easier for us at the local level as well as the public to see first-hand what is going on during a board meeting.
- d. **HB741 – Automatic Voter Registration** – This bill would require “THAT THE APPLICANT SHALL BE REGISTERED TO VOTE OR SHALL HAVE A VOTER REGISTRATION RECORD UPDATED, IF APPLICABLE, UNLESS THE APPLICANT DECLINES TO REGISTER TO VOTE OR UPDATE A VOTER REGISTRATION RECORD OR IS DETERMINED NOT TO BE ELIGIBLE TO REGISTER TO VOTE.”
- e. **SB960 – Reporting of Precinct Results** – Results would be reported “by precinct, INCLUDING ALL VOTES CAST BY VOTERS REGISTERED IN EACH PRECINCT WHO VOTED: 1) ON AN EARLY VOTING DAY; AND 2) BY ABSENTEE BALLOT.”

Board members discussed how this might work, the need to maintain voter privacy if a limited number of voters participate at a polling place, and the potential financial implications involved in reprogramming systems, among other issues.

- f. **SB882 – Election Signs at Polling Places** – Changes the time that a political sign can be placed at a polling place from 7:00 PM to 4:00 PM.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Anti-Bullying Policy** – Guy Mickley reported that the State of Maryland has implemented an Anti-Bullying policy for state employees. He has reviewed this policy with all full-time State staff members at this office. He stated that Board members must sign an acknowledgment form for him that he has read and understands the policy.
2. **MAEO** – The Director reported that the majority of the full-time office staff will be attending the MAEO conference in June since the program has been tailored more to elections since his last report to the Board. There is still only a 45-minute segment for Boards and Attorneys, so he continues to believe that the State Board of Elections biennial in October would better serve Board members and the Board Counsel. SBE will not be part of the MAEO program this year. The full staff (both state and county employees) as well as the Board and Board Counsel will attend the State Board’s biennial one-day meeting in Annapolis this October.

Board members asked that they be informed as soon as the meeting date is known for SBE’s October meeting. They discussed MAEO membership and believe it is a valuable organization that we should continue to support. All would like to see more agenda topics focused on issues that would be more educational and useful to Board members. Members would also like to see speakers on election issues and trends at both the state and national level. Additional breakout sessions for Board Counsel would also be of value.

Ann Balcerzak then asked Director Mickley what the status was for staff pay raises and position evaluations/job titles which was being worked on by MAEO some time ago. Director Mickley provided a brief history of what had been done through MAEO's personnel committee when he was a member and what the current committee was doing. He is hopeful that the new position descriptions and staff raises will be approved this year by the State Board. Board members asked several questions and indicated they are glad this is being addressed.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT:

Board Counsel Michael Molinaro, Esq., indicated he had nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS

Guy Mickley stated that the County Bill designating Howard County as a Sanctuary County had been passed and has now been vetoed by the County Executive. The County Council will need four votes to override the County Executive's veto. If the veto is overridden, there could be the possibility of a petition, as he received a visit recently asking questions about petitions.

RECESS OF BOARD MEETING TO CONVENE BOARD OF CANVASSERS MEETING

Donna Thewes asked for a motion to recess the Board meeting so that the Board of Canvassers could meet to approve Post Certification Canvass Board minutes. Patrick Mullinix made a motion to recess the meeting, which was seconded by Ray Rankin.

Action: The Board unanimously voted to recess the Board meeting at 5:37 p.m.

At the conclusion of the Board of Canvassers Meeting, President Thewes reconvened the Board meeting at 5:41 p.m. She stated that minutes from the first and second Post Certification Canvass Board Meetings held on December 14, 2016 and January 23, 2017, respectively, had been approved. Since no additional absentee ballots have been received, the Canvass Board meeting was adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President Thewes asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Patrick Mullinix offered the motion, which was seconded by Ray Rankin.

Action: The Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:41 p.m.

The next regular open meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections is scheduled for Monday, March 27, 2017 at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President