

HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES
9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 200
Columbia, MD 21046

Friday, April 10, 2020 – 4:00 pm

Note: *This meeting was held by Conference Call due to the current COVID-19n pandemic and the Governor’s directives concerning limiting in-person gatherings & meetings.*

Emergency 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
Michael S. Molinaro	Board Counsel

Staff: Guy Mickley	Director
Charlotte B. Davis	Deputy Director
Phyllis A. West	Board Secretary
Teresa Womble	Staff
Val Patterson	Staff

Absent: None

Guests: Tiara Bradford (joined late)

CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Board President Donna Thewes called the meeting to order at 12:02 pm with an established quorum present. Since members were in different locations without flags available, the Pledge of Allegiance was not given.

Donna Thewes stated that this meeting was called to discuss a letter being sent by the Boards of Elections of several Maryland Counties to Governor Larry Hogan requesting a delay in the Presidential Primary from June 2nd until July 7, 2020, and whether Howard County’s Board wishes to join in signing this letter.

Ann Balcerzak asked what the significance of the July 7th date would be. President Thewes stated that it is the first Tuesday of the month, which is a typical date when elections are held,

Donna Thewes also said hopefully by that time things will start getting back to normal to some degree from the Corona-19 Virus Pandemic.

Director Guy Mickley stated that this additional time would allow the office time to finish the Special General Election Canvasses and resolve any issues before starting the Presidential Primary. He said it will be difficult to have adequate time to prepare for the Presidential Primary on June 2nd, since ballots for the Presidential Primary Election (PP) will be sent out and begin to be returned just as the office completes the Special General Election canvass. Additionally, during the canvass preparation process, the staff must continue to process registration and absentee applications, hire judges, test equipment and prepare to equip and staff voting centers for June 2, 2020.

Donna Thewes stated that at recent State Board meetings, the State Board of Elections Office (SBE) has asked for several exceptions to the HAVA rules. She feels this change to July would allow the office to completely comply with HAVA regulations. Ray Rankin said he agreed that the extra time would be beneficial and allow the staff more time to resolve any issues.

Donna Thewes asked for a motion for the Howard County Board of Elections to join other County Boards of Elections in signing a letter to the Governor requesting his consideration to change the Presidential Primary Election to July 7, 2020. Diane Butler made the motion to join other Boards in signing the letter, and Ray Rankin seconded the motion.

Action: The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion to join other Maryland County Boards of Elections in signing a letter to the Governor requesting his consideration to change the date of the postponed Presidential Primary Election from June 2 to July 7, 2020.

Board members then discussed the need to look carefully at plans for the November Presidential General Election. The Director indicated that the State Board is already in the planning phase and is discussing different ways the election might be handled in November. These discussions include the need to protect voters, judges and staff.

Board Counsel Mike Molinaro asked if he could inform the State Board Counsel of the Board's position immediately, and Guy Mickley and the Board agreed that he should do so. Guy Mickley will also inform Nikki Charlson at SBE of the Board's decision.

President Donna Thewes stated that the Howard County Board of Elections puts the safety of the staff and Howard County citizens first and commended the Director as an excellent advocate for the election staff.

The Board and Board Secretary Phyllis West then discussed the logistical details for the upcoming Swearing-in of the Canvass Boards for both the Special General and Presidential Primary Elections to ensure the safety of all participants. Phyllis West will prepare a notice to post on the website announcing the swearing in of the Canvass Boards.

Guy Mickley reported that PPE for the staff won't arrive until April 22nd or 23rd. He also discussed the video and audio plans for the Canvass and has drafted procedures for challenges to decisions on a ballot, a copy of which has been sent to SBE for approval.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Donna Thewes asked for a motion to adjourn the Emergency Board Meeting. Tim Mummert made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Diane Butler seconded the motion.

Action: Board members unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 12:25 pm.

The next Regular Open Board Meeting of the Howard County Board of Elections is scheduled for Monday, May 18 at 4:00 pm (via teleconference). *NOTE: This date was changed due to the Memorial Day holiday the following week.* Information will be provided on the Howard County Board of Elections website in the near future as to how the public can call in to join this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis A. West, Board Secretary

Donna K. Thewes, Board President