

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE ALLEGHENY COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

FRIDAY, October 22, 2021, 3:00 P.M., PUBLIC MEETING-CONFERENCE ROOM 1 OF THE ALLEGHENY COUNTY COURTHOUSE, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA.

BOARD MEMBERS: HONORABLE RICH FITZGERALD, CHAIR-present
HONORABLE BETHANY HALLAM, MEMBER-present
HONORABLE SAM DEMARCO, MEMBER-present

IN ATTENDANCE: JERRY TYSKIEWICZ – DIRECTOR, DEPT. OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
JESSICA GAROFOLO-DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DEPT. OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
DAVID VOYE – MANAGER, DIVISION OF ELECTIONS
CHET HARHUT-DEPUTY MANAGER, DIVISION OF ELECTIONS
ALLAN J. OPSITNICK - ASST. COUNTY SOLICITOR, LAW DEPT.

I. CALL TO ORDER – The meeting of the Allegheny County Board of Elections commenced at 3:00 PM. Meeting called to order by Chair Fitzgerald. Roll was called by Assistant Solicitor Opsitnick. All Board Members present. Additional County personnel in attendance, as listed above.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Emailed comments were received from the following individuals:

- William Towne submitted a four-page document covering a wide range of subjects. Mr. Towne's document shall be attached to these meeting minutes as posted on the internet.
- Ron Bandes submitted four items regarding public notice, equipment chain of custody form, transparency, and a quality control position with the Elections Department.
- Seth Warren submitted comments regarding postage required to return mail-in ballot and stating his position that the County should pay for said postage.
- Melissa Ragona submitted comments requesting a mandatory mask policy at polling places.
- Nancy Scialabba commented regarding false claims of November 2020 election impropriety further indicating that she is a Judge of Election in Shaler.
- Christy Kozar commented on issues in West Mifflin District 21.
- Live public comment by Robert Howard. Mr. Howard reiterated his emailed comments and requested information on the funding Allegheny County has received for elections operations from any non-County sources.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 20, 2021, MEETING

Approval moved by Member DeMarco. Seconded by Member Hallam. Minutes approved 3-0.

IV. MUNICIPAL ELECTION PREPARATION

Mr. Voye provided the following information:

- Overall voter registration has increased by approximately 1,800 voters since September 2020. Democratic voters are 528,668. Republican voters are 260,776. Total registered voters in Allegheny County, including third party and no party, are 924,731.
- There are 1,733 candidates on the ballot, 499 of them are local board election officers, that is Judges of Election and inspectors. This candidate number includes the six judicial retention elections.
- Letters to affected voters and signage at affecting polling places will be mailed/posted for those polling places that are changing for the May election.
- 35 mail vote applications have been received from the County Jail. Elections personnel will visit the jail on October 29th to obtain voted ballots.

Ms. Garofolo indicated that 90% of polling places are staffed, totaling 5,914 individuals. 96% of the Judge of Elections positions are staffed, with 50 needed. Areas of JOE need were throughout Pittsburgh, West Mifflin, White Oak, and McKees Rocks. The party registration of election board members are 4,472 to Democrats, 1,362 Republicans, and 241 other parties/no party. 140 County employees will be working in the elections warehouse on election day and 200 County employees working in the field.

The ballot drop-off in the County office building shall continue beginning the Wednesday before the election from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Monday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Saturday, 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM on Sunday and 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM on Tuesday election day, the same hours as the polls were open. The ballot drop-off will be on the Ross Street side of the County office building with a drop-box in the Real Estate Department as there is construction and restrictions on the Forbes Avenue side. Member DeMarco acknowledged this and agreed with Chair Fitzgerald and Mr. Opsitnick that the Forbes Avenue drop location would not work for this election.

Mr. Harhut discussed warehouse issues, stating that all machines are packed and will be shipped out starting Monday using two experienced moving firms. Minimal problems are anticipated.

138,396 mail/absentee applications have been received. 37,220 have been returned. 30,054 are registered Democrats. 5,205 are registered Republicans.

In response to inquiries by Member DeMarco and Member Hallam regarding poll worker training, Mr. Voye indicated the poll worker training requirements, that is all new poll workers must participate in required training. Member DeMarco also asked how people who are not being forced to attend are handled and indicated problems with the updated mail-in lists. Chair Fitzgerald indicated that once a voter applies for a mail-in ballot that voter cannot vote live except by provisional ballot, unless that voter turns in his declaration envelope and ballot at the polling place. Mr. Voye echoed Chair Fitzgerald's statement regarding voting in person if the mailed ballot and declaration envelope are both tendered to the local Board of Elections. Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated that the poll book is marked for somebody voting by mail/absentee.

Chair Fitzgerald inquired as to the party balance of poll workers. Mr. Voye indicated approximately 3,000 Democrats and approximately 1,000 Republicans.

Member Hallam indicated why there were no drop boxes being used. Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated there was great expense and other logistical issues being involved. Member Hallam asked how much additional drop boxes/drop off locations would cost. Chair Fitzgerald indicated additionally that more ballot drop off locations would create a huge chain of custody issue and that this would also constitute an unfunded mandate and that Allegheny County has drop boxes called mail boxes. Member Hallam inquired as to why County cannot have some drop boxes manned 24 hours. Mr. Tyskiewicz reiterated logistical and funding concern. Member Hallam inquired as to whether or not ARB funds could be used. Chair Fitzgerald replied that the County is spending lots of money on the current system. Member Hallam indicated that there are issues with the USPS. Chair Fitzgerald disagreed. Member Hallam asked where she can obtain cost information. Member DeMarco also mentioned two million dollars received from Center for Tech and Civic Life. Member Hallam indicated why the County is not making voting more accessible. Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated he would contact the budget office for certain financial information.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Opsitnick indicated that Allegheny County is not legally required to provide ballots and other election information in languages other than English in Pennsylvania. There were three Pennsylvanian counties so required. Ballots in Spanish are in Philadelphia, Berks and Lehigh counties.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business or comment, Chair Fitzgerald adjourned the meeting at 3:40 PM.