

# MINUTES

## MEETING OF THE ALLEGHENY COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

MONDAY, September 20, 2021, 3:00 P.M., PUBLIC MEETING-VIRTUAL MEETING VIA  
MICROSOFT TEAMS, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA.

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**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  
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.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Approximately 25 identical emails were sent to the Board of Elections, one of which will be attached to these minutes when posted, urging adoption of a “pro-voter agenda”.

Bobana Bulatovic commented on judge training should be simple and understandable.

Naomi Siegel commented in favor of continuing no excuse mail voting and remote voting available to all and urging drop boxes in every borough and town as well as making Election Day a holiday.

Ellen Doyle, Chair of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Committee, and Betty Thomas, Treasurer of the Allegheny County Democratic Committee, commented on the location of four polling places in the Oak Hills section of Pittsburgh, straddling the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Wards.

Roger Valente indicated that he intends to be present at the Elections Warehouse on Election Day. Mr. Opsitnick indicated to Mr. Valente that he must have authorization from a candidate or party.

Eliana Beigel spoke about a jail issue. Ms. Beigel was ruled out of order by the Chair.

Roger Valente of the Quaker Valley Republicans commented on adjudication of ballots at the warehouse on Election Day and inquired why a two-person/bi-partisan group was not used. Mr. Valente referred to the resolution boxes used at the warehouse indicating that the only person

involved in that resolution process were Democrats. Mr. Opsitnick, Mr. Harhut, and Mr. Voye commented that the party affiliation of anybody in the Elections warehouse was not known and that all people working in the Elections warehouse take an oath which specifically prohibits altering or tampering with any ballots or returns.

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JUNE 7, 2021, MEETING**

The Board unanimously approved the Minutes of the June 7, 2021, meeting.

### **IV. NOVEMBER 2, 2021 MUNICIPAL ELECTION PREPARATION**

Mr. Voye commented that, because of an additional Common Pleas Court vacancy, the Common Pleas seats appearing on the ballot increase from nine to ten. There are approximately 923,000 registrations, down approximately 3,000 from the Primary due to normal and required list maintenance. As to mail-in/absentee ballot applications, there were 116,000 on file.

Mr. Harhut described the new double window envelope and indicated that County's current mailing and printing vendor was NPC of Claysburg, Pennsylvania who was both the low bidder but also referred and recommended by Montgomery, Chester, and Bucks Counties. Mr. Harhut also indicated that only one stamp will be needed to return mail-in/absentee ballots, regardless of the large envelope size and that the required logic and accuracy tests were to be performed next Monday.

Member DeMarco asked whether logic and accuracy was open to the public. Mr. Voye confirmed that.

Chair Fitzgerald requested weekly updates to the Board of Elections. Mr. Voye confirmed that that will happen.

Mr. Harhut described the ballot itself which will be a 14 inch ballot unlike the 17 inch ballot used at the Primary. The ballot will be double sided.

Member Hallam inquired as to the status of a mailed ballot when no stamp is added. Mr. Harhut indicated that, while delivery is likely, it would not be guaranteed.

Member Hallam asked whether or not the current printing and mailing company is a new vendor. Mr. Voye confirmed. Member Hallam further inquired as to what persons or departments changed the bid specifications to add the distance radius for bidders to 150 miles. Mr. Opsitnick and Mr. Tyskiewicz replied that Elections, Law Administrative Services, and Purchasing, together, felt that a maximum distance was necessary to efficiently process the ballots.

Mr. Voye indicated that, while the County has procured approximately 4,500 poll workers, a full complement, that is each of the County's 1,323 polling places being fully staffed, would require approximately 6,600 persons. Mr. Voye also indicated that live poll worker training begins on October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Member Hallam inquired about the number of poll workers needed and Mr. Voye said the 6,600 would be five persons per polling place but that given the local election in November with a lower turnout, four persons per polling place would be sufficient.

Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated that there will be a ballot return site in the lobby of the County office building starting the week before the election and continuing to 8:00 PM on election night, as has been the case previously. Also, ballots can be delivered and voted over the counter at the Elections Division office on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the County office building.

Member DeMarco asked whether or not the ballot collection site was manned. Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated in the affirmative and that County representatives received the ballot from a voter, asked the voter if that is their ballot and their signature before the County representative deposits the ballot in a locked ballot box.

Member DeMarco indicated that training should emphasize provisional ballots and cancellation of mail-in ballots where a voter could vote in person. Mr. Tyskiewicz acknowledged and agreed.

Member Hallam asked whether or not training was any different for the November election. Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated that it was not considerably different but just more emphasis on certain areas, that is training was enhanced.

Mr. Voye added the poll worker training requirements, that is new poll workers were obligated undergo training.

Member DeMarco asked how Elections is to deal with people who are not being forced to attend training and indicated problems with voter's not signing the poll book and updated mail in ballot lists and postings. Mr. Voye responded we have reached and will continue to reach out to election boards that are not updating the poll books correctly.

Chair Fitzgerald stated that once a voter applies to vote by mail they cannot vote in person except by provisional. Member Hallam commented that it always does not happen that way. Mr. Voye and Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated that a mail-in voter can vote in person if they tender their ballot and envelope to the local Board of Elections. The poll book will be marked with the voter's mail-in/absentee ballot status. Chair Fitzgerald asked about the party affiliation of poll workers. Mr. Voye estimated about 3,000 Democrat and 1,000 Republican.

Member Hallam indicated why drop boxes are not being used. Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated there will be a ballot drop off location in the County Office Building, i.e., satellite locations, ballot delivery, are expensive. Member Hallam asked the cost. Chair Fitzgerald indicated that the satellite locations are expensive and create a huge chain of custody issue and also constitute an unfunded mandate. Chair Fitzgerald also indicated that the County does have drop boxes called mailboxes. Member Hallam asked why the County cannot have drop boxes (ballot return locations) that are manned 24 hours a day. Mr. Tyskiewicz replied and described the administrative concerns. Member Hallam asked whether or not ARP funds can be used. Chair Fitzgerald indicated that the County is spending lots of money already. Member Hallam noted issues with the USPS. Chair Fitzgerald indicated there were really no such issues. Member Hallam asked where the Board can get cost information.

Chair Fitzgerald and Member Hallam discussed the ballot drop off process. Member Hallam inquiring why ballot drop offs are not being made more accessible. Mr. Tyskiewicz said he would contact the budget office for financial information and subsequently are report.

Member Hallam went through the “pro voter agenda” email item by item and asked whether each voter receives a mailing regarding their polling place at each election. Mr. Tyskiewicz replied no.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

Member Hallam reviewed the points in the pro-voter emails and questioned whether or not Allegheny County is obligated to print ballots in a foreign language. Mr. Opsitnick indicated that ballots are printed in English only. Mr. Voye detailed the circumstances where ballots other than English are necessary.

Member Hallam asked whether or not ballots be in languages other than English are necessary to meet accessibility guidelines. Mr. Opsitnick replied in the negative and indicated that he will detail the foreign language ballot requirements at the next scheduled meeting.

Member Hallam requested an updated meeting schedule. Chair Fitzgerald indicated that meetings will be scheduled as needed.

Member DeMarco thanked County Communications Director, Amie Downs, for live streaming these meetings.

Member DeMarco referred to legislation he forwarded to Allegheny County Council regarding an election matter and asked how to livestream the pre-canvas and canvassing from the warehouse.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

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