

# MINUTES

## MEETING OF THE ALLEGHENY COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2021, 2:00 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  
JESSICA GAROFOLO-DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DEPT. OF  
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
DAVID VOYE – MANAGER, DIVISION OF ELECTIONS  
CHET HARHUT-DEPUTY MANAGER, DIVISION OF ELECTIONS  
GEORGE M. JANOCKO-FIRST ASST. COUNTY SOLICITOR, LAW  
DEPT.  
ALLAN J. OPSITNICK - ASST. COUNTY SOLICITOR, LAW DEPT.

**I. CALL TO ORDER** – The meeting of the Allegheny County Board of Elections commenced at 2:00 PM. Meeting called to order by Chair Fitzgerald. Roll was called by Assistant Solicitor Opsitnick, all Board Members present either live or virtually.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT**  
Public comments were summarized by Mr. Opsitnick. There were five emails constituting public comment. Said public comments are posted with these Minutes. Ms. Hallam asked whether or not Elections can answer public comment. Chair Fitzgerald agreed. Mr. Voyer said that would be accomplished.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**  
Minutes of the following meetings were unanimously approved:  
October 20, 2020; November 10, 2020; November 23, 2020; November 25, 2020. Mr. DeMarco requested more detail in the Minutes.

**IV. MUNICIPAL PRIMARY PREPARATIONS**

Municipal Primary Preparations were discussed. Mr. Voyer indicated that the registration prior to removal or inactive voters was 937,826. The current registration is 926,620. More than 13,000 inactive voters were cancelled. There were approximately 6,000 party changes, 2,100 changes to Democrat, 1,400 changes to Republican. The ballots were changes to no party or other parties. There are currently 64,000 inactive voters, not ripe for removal.

Mr. Voye further described the process of voter registration and mail-in ballot voting at the jail. An Election's representative will bring the requested ballots to the jail.

Mr. Voye indicated that all 1,323 local polling places will be open with 30 polling places being changed, 11 of which do not yet have new locations.

Notices will be sent to all voters whose polling places will be changed.

- V. Mr. Voye indicated that there will be approximately 2,000 candidates and that sample ballots were being mailed to candidates starting last Friday. Mr. Voye also indicated that the Model 850 High Speed Scanners and the Model 200 Polling Place Scanners will be tested next week and that the first batch of mail-in/absentee ballots would be mailed next week.
- VI. Mr. Harhut discussed mail-in ballots and indicated that the first group of approximately 100,000 ballots are to be mailed. County is using MER, a new vendor. MER was used in 2020 by Lancaster and Delaware counties and were recommended. Mr. Harhut added that Elections is current with the processing of mail-in/absentee applications.
- VII. Ms. Garofolo discussed poll workers, indicating that the County has 3,784 poll workers assigned to polling places which equates to 57% of the polls being fully staffed. 75% of the Judge of Elections vacancies have been filled, 55% of the majority/minority inspectors were filled, and 26% of the clerks were filled.

Ms. Garofolo indicated that in-person poll worker training began on April 10, with 62 training sessions scheduled, continuing through May 15<sup>th</sup>. Online training will be available on April 19<sup>th</sup> for all poll workers. The online training is self-guided and can be done at any time with poll workers able to start and stop the online training program at their convenience. Though the Election Code only requires training once every 4 years, or when someone becomes an elected judge or inspect, the County has requested all local Board member attend training, whether it be online or in person.

- VIII. Mr. Tyskiewicz provided updates on the Elections website and the Allegheny Votes newsletter indicating that there will be no satellite voting sites for the May 18<sup>th</sup> primary but voted ballots can be dropped off in the lobby of the County office building starting with the Wednesday before the election and continuing until 8:00 on Election Day. The County office building lobby ballot drop off schedule is as follows:

Wednesday May 12 through Friday May 14, 8:30A-8:00P;  
Saturday May 15, 8A-5P;  
Sunday May 16, 11A-7P  
Monday May 17, 8:30A-8P;  
Election Day, Tuesday May 18, 7A-8P;

Mr. Tyskiewicz also indicated that, as has been the longstanding custom, ballots can be dropped off, applications can be completed, and ballots can be voted "over the counter" at the Elections Division office on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the County office building.

Post cards are to be mailed to poll workers regarding COVID vaccinations.

- IX.** Mr. DeMarco asked whether or not there will be a dashboard for mail-in/absentee ballots. Mr. Harhut indicated in the affirmative, indicating that Elections had received 70,000 Democratic mail-in requests, 13,500 Republican mail-requests, and 6,500 other mail-in requests, these numbers being approximations. There will be daily updates.
- X.** Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated the ballot will be two-sided and 17 inches in length and that Elections is working with MER to triage ballots so that the “bad” ballot incident of November will not be repeated. Chair Fitzgerald inquired about whether all inactive voters were removed and the reasons, therefore. Mr. Voye responded. Mr. DeMarco requested the Elections Division to advise the Board of the Elections Division to advise the Board of Elections of ongoing developments. Mr. Voye agreed to do that. Mr. DeMarco also asked whether or not the training materials for local boards would be made public as well, which materials would include provisional ballot procedure, how to use the precinct scanner, the Department of State directed revision in mail-in declaration envelopes. Mr. Voye explained those processes and confirmed that these training materials would be made public, further indicating that there are 8 training videos to be posted on the Elections website for public use. Mr. DeMarco urged implementation of the poll books.
- XI.** Ms. Hallam asked about drop box locations and hours. Mr. Tyskiewicz replied that ballots can be dropped off in the lobby of the County office building beginning Wednesday, May 12<sup>th</sup> and continuing through 8:00 PM on Election Day, Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Hallam indicated her concerns about County not using satellite voting and inquired as to the reason. Chair Fitzgerald indicated that the cost was high, the concerns regarding mail delivery were not as serious as they were in November, and that County cannot be all things to all people. Also, Chair Fitzgerald indicated that as this is municipal primary election, there should be a low turnout.

Mr. Tyskiewicz discussed costs indicating that in November there were approximately 40 employees at each location for each satellite session plus deputy sheriffs to escort ballots to the warehouse at the end of the day. The satellite voting locations generated power concerns and necessitated the use of generators and there was extensive manpower usage in setting up and tearing down the various equipment to be used, especially the IT gear.

Chair Fitzgerald indicated that the satellite would be an unfunded mandate by the state and that County has 1,323 polling locations plus the ability to mail ballots plus the ability to drop off voted ballots in the lobby of the County office building. County requires state funding. Voting is more secure than ever.

Ms. Hallam inquired whether satellites will be used ever again or just last November for the Presidential election. Chair Fitzgerald indicated that by comparison, there were 300,000 mail-in ballots in November 2020 and 90,000 mail-in ballots now.

Ms. Hallam indicated that in 2020, Allegheny County sent mail-in applications to all voters. This is not the case this year. Mr. Fitzgerald agreed, indicating that we are somewhat post-COVID regarding the ability to vote in person.

Mr. Tyskiewicz discussed mail-in applications in November 2020, indicating that County mailed 682,000 and received 41,000 back, at 6% return. Part of the reason was that numerous other groups and candidates mailed applications to voters as well.

Ms. Hallam asked if there was any marking plan for the primary. Mr. Voyer indicated that there would be weekly updates and Allegheny alerts and press releases.

Ms. Hallam inquired as to outreach to unaffiliated voters because of the referendum questions where unaffiliated voters can vote. Mr. Voyer indicated that Elections would consider that. Ms. Hallam indicated whether County received a reimbursement from Midwest Direct for the ballot error in November's election. Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated that County received full credit.

Ms. Hallam asked to be informed of poll worker training so that the Board may attend. Ms. Garofolo indicated that the Board would be informed of the training schedule.

Ms. Hallam asked whether or not postcards were mailed only to affected voters, that is where the polling place has moved and asked whether there was any backlog of the mail-in applications received. Mr. Harhut confirmed that only affected voters would receive a postcard and that there was no current backlog of applications.

Ms. Hallam asked whether or not people can track their application. Mr. Harhut indicated that information will be fed into the system in real time. Ms. Hallam asked if this system is any different than November 2020. Mr. Harhut said that there is no difference and indicated that the system will only indicate if a mail-in ballot is received. Mr. Voyer added that the applications received will be able to be viewed as well.

Ms. Hallam inquired as to staffing inquiries. Mr. Voyer said his office is fully staffed. Ms. Hallam inquired about voicemail messages when calling Elections. Mr. Voyer indicated that there is a new phone system that should eliminate most voicemail messages especially given a lower turnout election this year. Mr. Voyer continued that voicemail is a default in calls to Elections.

Ms. Hallam asked if Midwest Direct provided a credit to the County for future services. Mr. Tyskiewicz indicated that there was a reduction in the balance due and paid Midwest Direct and not a credit. Mr. Tyskiewicz also indicated that there was a labor component to the credit.

Ms. Hallam stated, as Allegheny County will be receiving funding from federal sources, might that permit use of satellites in 2021. Chair Fitzgerald replied that there will no satellites used regardless of funding.

Ms. Hallam inquired as to the quality control used by MER. Mr. Voyer indicated that test decks and files for each ballot were created.

**XII.** Mr. DeMarco inquired as to the County referendum question, noting that the language on the signature petition was longer. Mr. Janocsko explained the Elections Codes limitation on question length and the Election Codes "plain English" requirement. Mr. Voyer indicated that the plain English explanation would be posted in all polling places and included in County's newspapers ads. Mr. DeMarco asked whether or not the County referendum question was prohibited by the County's home rule charter in that it possibly dealt with criminal statutes. Mr. Janocsko indicated that the ballot question dealt with punishment and did not deal with

Pennsylvania crimes code. Mr. Opsitnick echoed this sentiment, indicating that the referendum question would not change would not change the Pennsylvania crimes code. Ms. Hallam stated that most people in the County jail are there on detainers. Ms. Hallam further suggested that more meetings be held, perhaps monthly. Chair Fitzgerald indicated there was no need for monthly meetings and that Allegheny County was a model in 2020 regarding public meetings and transparency.

Ms. Hallam indicated that the things that made County a model in 2020 are not occurring now and that there is no downside to scheduling monthly meetings.

### **XIII. NEW BUSINESS**

Chair Fitzgerald initiated discussion of the default rate for Election Board members, pre-2020 COVID increases noting that pre-2020 the default amount was \$115 per Board member with an additional \$25 the Judge of Elections. This was raised to \$200 for all Board members and constables in 2020.

Chair Fitzgerald suggested that the County adopt a default amount of \$150 for inspectors, clerks, and constables with an additional \$25 Judge of Elections and so moved. Seconded by Mr. DeMarco. Ms. Hallam indicated that she prefers a high amount as this would be approximately \$10 an hour for the day. Chair Fitzgerald indicated that the pay amount has gone up significantly over the last few years. After discussion, the matter was approved 3-0.

### **XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business, Mr. DeMarco moved for adjournment. Seconded by Ms. Hallam. Approved 3-0. Meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.