

City of Richmond



CHERLYN STARLET STEVENS
SECRETARY

JAMES M. NACHMAN
CHAIR

JOYCE KING SMITH
VICE-CHAIR

Electoral Board

Meeting Minutes

August 27, 2020

“SIC ITUR AD ASTRA”

SUCH IS THE WAY OF THE STARS

Call to Order

The Electoral Board was called to order at 4:04 PM by Chairman James Nachman. In attendance were Joyce Smith, Vice-Chair; C. Starlet Stevens, Secretary; J. Kirk Showalter, General registrar; Jerry Ingram, Deputy Registrar; Johanna McKee, Absentee Coordinator; CeTia Thomas, Acting Executive Asst. to the Board; Tyler Links, the Virginia Accounts Manager of Printelect. Others in attendance were Elizabeth Butler, James Ferguson, Sallie Freeman, Carol Stephens, Mr. Newell, Jessica Killeen and Doris M. Bey.

Public Comment Period for Items on the Agenda

There was no one from the public for comments.

Approval of Minutes

There were no minutes available for approval.

Closed Session: Cybersecurity review

Ms. Stevens motioned to hold a closed meeting pursuant to [Section 2.2-3711](#) of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act to discuss the building of equipment security, Ms. Smith seconded the motion. Persons sitting in on the closed meeting were Board members and Mr. James Ferguson of Cyber Security from the City of Richmond's Department of Information Technology (DIT). Ms. Stevens read the Certification of Closed Session according to [Section 2.2-3712](#) of the Code of Virginia, all members of the Board signed the certification indicating their unanimous response of yes.

November 2020 Proposed Election Arrangements

Letters were draft to polling places, which are facilities that host us on election day, to all election officers and canvassers outlining specific arrangements to those areas were presented to the Board for approval. Letters approved.

Deliveries to the precincts will be arranged by appointment only. We have contracted the deliveries to Business Interiors & Moving Services, a minority business listed with the City of Richmond's Procurement Department. The cost will balance out the difference in what it would be to lease trucks and staff time, also using this service will allow the staff to focus on training and other aspects of

election day preparations.

Most of the training will be instructed by webinar with the exception of the New Election Officer trainings which will be in person because some parts are hands-on. New Officer's training class size has been reduced from 90 students to 60 and conducted in the large training room then have three break out classes of 20 students per class.

Canvass will be by appointment only. Johanna McKee will supervise that process.

Recruitment is going well. We have over 400 citizens apply to become election officers and this is before we sent our recruitment petition to the public. There could be a number of reasons for the influx of volunteers such as the type of election, the sanction of election day as a holiday, more people working from home or out of work due to Covid-19.

Ms. Showalter may have found the mechanism she will want to use in the future but since the city's Department of Information Technology (DIT) has to approve the use of it we won't be able to implement it for this election. This election the officers will send in their sign-ups by email and those that can't will telephone in.

Three stations will be available for supply returns manned with one staff member to a Board member, each Chief Officer will check in at one of the three station as they arrive per the directive of Mr. Nachman.

The special newsletter was drafted to notify all citizens of new information such as our new office location and the change of polling place locations. It will also inform the voters of key dates of this election, satellite voting centers, it will also list the changes in law regarding acceptable forms of identification. Additionally an absentee ballot application will be enclosed.

The General Assembly is allowing satellite in-person absentee voting locations and City Council has authorized the in-person absentee voting satellite locations. Satellite locations will be in the office of the General Registrar, Hickory Hill Community Center and City Hall. In-person absentee voting will start September 18, 2020 in the Registrar's office. Voting will start at Hickory Hill and City Hall, October 24th through October 31, 2020. Ms. Showalter presented a spreadsheet which showed as far back as 2010 to explain why two satellites will open a month later, showing that historically approximately 78% of the voters vote a week and a half before the election. The spreadsheet showed statistics assuming 30% of the total turnout for the November General Elections is what we see in-person voting before election day the number would get rounded up to 37,000 voters over the entire 45 day period. If the assumption is that we are going to have 48% in-person voters before election day, that total will be 60,000 before election day in-person voting. Ms. Showalter is prepared for 90,000 by mail voters.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) scheduled road work in back in 2017 to improve the intersection by constructing a round-about during the month of December, however, the project was accelerated and happened to be in effect during the height of absentee voting. Ms. Showalter

recommend the Board allow her to draft a letter to VDOT concerning the matter. The Board approved the letter draft to VDOT and a copy to the Governor. The letter will include the suggestion to install the flashing light that indicate a pedestrian cross walk for safer pedestrian travel.

This time in 2016 we processed 500 to 600 absentee ballot applications, as of today, we have approved 13,000. To prepare for the increase we will hire additional absentee staff by September 15th to assist in the first mail out and also assist in the in-person absentee satellite. A high speed envelope sealer that can seal 13,000 envelopes in a day will be purchased. New color coded absentee ballot envelopes were printed to safeguard the correct ballot is inserted in the correct envelope because of the multiple ballot styles.

The ordinary procedure has been that mail is picked up from the post office multiple times per day, but with the change in counting late arrival ballots, we will not continue that procedure. A staff member will pick up mailed ballots in the morning around 11:00 AM so that those ballots can be processed to send to Central Absentee to be counted by the afternoon. Mr. Nachman reported that the Governor has proposed legislation concerning drop boxes at the satellite locations and at polling place locations. HB 5103 and HB5079 were referred.

Certification of Candidates

The Board certify candidates through the State Board of Elections Registration System (VERIS) and the Registrar is the agent in the process. The Richmond Electoral Board was not able to properly certify the candidates because in order to mark the candidates as certified in VERIS, the Registrar has to be able to certify their petition count as meeting their requirement. As it is the system is set to only allow the statutory count, 125 signatures for City Council, School Board and 500 signatures for Mayor. The Circuit Court reduced the amount of signatures to qualify for the ballot because of lawsuits. Per Ms. Showalter the system will not recognize the lower threshold, therefore, Ms. Showalter can't mark the petitions as qualified so the candidates can't be marked as certified. Ms. Showalter brought the problem to the attention of the Virginia Department of Elections in July. No resolution. The delay in resolving the matter has resulted in a delay in ballot printing as Mr. Tyler Links was invited to elaborate.

December 2020 Runoff

The registrar presented letters for approval that will announce a runoff or that there will not be a runoff. Board approved. Through the mail absentee voting outgoing, pre-processing and post election day processing procedures will remain the same. If there is a runoff, we will work through the December holidays. Ms. Showalter ask the Boards pre-approval to start pre-processing the Sunday before the election if there is a runoff. Joyce Smith moved authorizing pre-processing the Sunday before the election for a possible Mayoral runoff. Ms. Stevens seconded. All in favor. Motion stands.

Public Comment Period

Mr. Wheeler appealed to the Electoral Board concerning his disqualification from the Mayoral race in the City of Richmond. The bases of his appeal was the pandemic and that he was not properly informed by the Virginia Department of Elections of the laws, procedures and the exact amount required to be

qualified and ask the Board to reconsider and qualify him to the ballot. The Board ruled that Mr. Wheelers request to be qualified as a candidate for Mayor is denied because the court considered the pandemic and ruled that instead of 500 signatures to qualify it changed to 150 signatures to qualify and Mr. Wheeler did not meet the number of signatures required. The Board has to follow the law.

Ms. Showalter does not propose a training schedule and the canvas forms will remain the same and will be used in December.

Relocation and Grand Opening

The grand opening is scheduled for September 11th at 2:00 PM. Gov. Wilder and Senator Marsh will attend to name a few. There will be a press release and ribbon cutting.

Status of the Mayor's Firearms Ordinance

This ordinance prohibits use of firearms in city facilities or permitted city functions which may affect many of our polling places, hence, no fire arms in polling places.

Other Business

The Virginia Public Access Project (VPAP), summation of early voting and where it is in comparison to 2016 shows that Central Virginia has almost doubled.

Ms. Showalter shared the flash drive capacity of our voting equipment. The DS200 with 4g USB can handle about 9,600 voters, which is good for election day because non of our precincts have that many voters. For in-person absentee voters, we're not certain the amount so Ms. Showalter and Tyler Links of Election Systems and Software (ES&S), decided to purchase (14) 8g USB's.

Ms. Showalter and the Board discussed locations of the drop boxes that will be used to drop of marked ballots instead of the postal system. Ms. Showalter recommend the boxes should not be placed in locations that doesn't have 24 hour security.

Mr. Nachman started to acknowledge the letter he received from Ms. Sallie Freeman when it was brought to his attention that Ms. Freeman was in attendance. Ms. Freeman said that she felt disenfranchised during the June 2020 Primary because she was issued a Republican ballot, which she said she had not requested. Ms. Freeman reported it to the Voter Registration office and was told to return the unmarked ballot and she would be issued a Democratic ballot. The ballot was never received in the office. Ms. Freeman insist she did not request a Republican ballot. Ms. Showalter research the matter and found that on Ms. Freeman's absentee application, the box to receive a Republican ballot was checked. Mr. Nachman suggested that

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Mr. Nachman read a letter from Melissa Marian, member of the Richmond Democratic Committee. Ms. Showalter felt that this matter was of a personnel nature, Ms. Showalter request the matter to be discussed in closed session.

Upcoming dates to remember were discussed.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

James M. Nachman
Chairman to the Electoral Board

Joyce K. Smith
Vice Chairwoman to the Electoral Board

Cherlyn S. Stevens
Secretary to the Electoral Board