

City of Richmond



JOHN N. AMBROSE
CHAIRMAN

CHERLYN STARLET
STEVENS VICE-CHAIR

JOYCE KING SMITH
SECRETARY

Electoral Board

Meeting Minutes

August 20th, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman John Ambrose called the meeting to order at 10:00am with Vice Chair Cherlyn Stevens and Secretary Joyce Smith in attendance.

OFFICE OF ELECTIONS STAFF ATTENDANCE

Keith Balmer - Registrar, Jerry Richardson - Deputy Director, Katherin Cardozo-Robledo - Executive Assistant, Vanessa Floyd - Election Operations Manager, Cynthia Johnson - Project Manager, TaShawna Johnson - Absentee Coordinator, Tina Crump - Voter Services Manager.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Vice-Chair Stevens makes a motion to approve the minutes from July 23rd and July 30th, 2024. Secretary Smith seconds, all were in favor and the motion passes to approve the previous meeting minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Sandra Antoine, representing the local NAACP, addressed the Electoral Board regarding Early Voting opportunities. She requested that the Board consider offering Early Voting on Sunday, October 27th, in support of the "Souls to the Polls" initiative. Ms. Antoine emphasized the significance of this event, which often enables seniors who attend church to vote early as a community.

Chairman Ambrose acknowledged Ms. Antoine's comments and stated that the request would be taken under consideration and discussed under New Business.

RISK LIMITING AUDIT

Chairman Ambrose opened the discussion by stating that the Office of Elections will be required by the State Board of Elections to conduct a Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA) for the upcoming November General Election. The audit is scheduled for November 21st and 22nd, 2024. He further noted that the Department of Elections (ELECT) has issued an advisory regarding an online webinar on Thursday, September 5th, from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM. The webinar will focus on the Arlo software, which will be utilized in the initial stages of the RLA. ELECT strongly recommends that all Electoral Board members and office staff attend this session.

Chairman Ambrose also clarified that, by law, the RLA will not focus on the presidential race but will likely cover the U.S. Senate race. However, the final decision regarding which races will be audited has not yet been made. There is a possibility that some local races may also be included in the audit.

ADA COMPLIANCE CONFIRMATION

Registrar Balmer introduced Cynthia Johnson, the office's subject matter expert on ADA compliance at polling precincts, to lead the discussion. Ms. Johnson explained that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) requires an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) checklist to ensure that all polling places comply with federal standards. As part of this process, her team conducts inspection audits by visiting each precinct to verify adherence to the DOJ's guidelines for accessibility.

Ms. Johnson highlighted that the checklist includes detailed images outlining the specific requirements for each precinct to be fully accessible to all voters.

From her findings, Ms. Johnson expressed concerns about our newest polling location, Metropolitan African American Baptist Church at Precinct 810. She and her team have taken photographs of the site and will forward their findings and recommendations to Christian Javins, manager of the Tech Center for necessary adjustments to bring the precinct into full compliance.

GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER

Chairman Ambrose opened the discussion by noting that the Governor recently issued an executive order related to elections. He then invited Registrar Balmer to explain the actions being taken locally in response to the order.

Registrar Balmer stated that he had reviewed Governor Youngkin's executive order and was pleased to see that all of the measures outlined align with existing practices within the Office of Elections to maintain election integrity.

Chairman Ambrose added that there appears to be a change in the frequency of updates to the "Non-Citizen Hopper," which is now being refreshed daily. Registrar Balmer clarified that these updates are managed by the Department of Elections (ELECT), which notifies the Office once the process is complete.

To provide further context, Chairman Ambrose explained that the Non-Citizen Hopper is a system used to review individuals who may have been added to the voter rolls through the DMV but failed to indicate their citizenship status. The system is designed to verify citizenship and remove individuals who are ineligible to vote.

Tina Crump, Voter Services Manager, then provided additional details on how this process is handled within the office.

Ms. Crump explained that once the file from the Non-Citizen Hopper is received by the office, her voter registration team generates a notification letter to the individual in question. The letter includes an explanation of the policy on the front and an affirmation form on the back. The individual has 14 days to respond by signing the affirmation, confirming their citizenship status.

Upon receiving the signed form, a member of Ms. Crump's team verifies the response. If the individual does not respond within the 14-day window, the system automatically cancels their registration, and the office sends a cancellation letter. At that point, the individual would need to re-register to vote.

Ms. Crump emphasized that this process is one of several safeguards in place to ensure that non-citizens are neither registered nor permitted to vote.

UPDATE ON ELECTION OFFICERS

Vanessa Floyd, Election Operations Manager, began by providing a brief update on the status of election officers. She reported that her team is actively using the Integra system and that many officers are currently awaiting approval from the Electoral Board, pending the completion of their oath and training. Although she did not have a list of names for approval at this meeting, Ms. Floyd stated that she expects to present one at the next Electoral Board meeting in September.

Ms. Floyd also mentioned that a significant number of individuals are queued in Integra. Chairman Ambrose inquired about the number of officers currently in the queue. Ms. Floyd responded that there are approximately 300 individuals, with 10 to 25 new interest forms being submitted daily. Chairman Ambrose requested that a list of the 300+ officers be presented at the next board meeting for approval.

He then asked Ms. Floyd about the deadline for new individuals to submit their information into Integra in order to be appointed, trained, and assigned to precincts for the November 5th election. Additionally, he asked if the assignments for chiefs and assistant chiefs had already been made.

Ms. Floyd replied that the deadline for new election officer submissions would be the end of September, but she assured the board that anyone interested after that date would still be accommodated. She further noted that the assignments for chiefs and assistant chiefs across all precincts would be ready by the end of the week.

CALENDAR REMINDERS

Chairman Ambrose provided an overview of the key dates on the calendar for the upcoming month. He announced that the Electoral Board will hold a special meeting on Friday, August 23rd, at 10:00 AM. He also highlighted several important upcoming events:

A webinar hosted by ELECT on September 5th. The next Electoral Board meeting on September 17th at 10:00 AM. This will be a public meeting but will transition into a closed session. Following the closed session, Logic and Accuracy testing for Early Voting will take place. Early Voting will begin at the Laburnum office on September 20th. A Logic and Accuracy test for the Early Voting satellite locations is scheduled for September 27th. Early Voting at the satellite locations (City Hall and Hickory Hill Community Center) will start on October 7th.

STATUS PURCHASE OF NEW E-POLLBOOKS

Chairman Ambrose began by requesting an update from Registrar Keith Balmer on the status of the purchase of the 54 new poll books, which had been authorized at the last Electoral Board meeting.

Registrar Balmer provided context for those who were not present at the previous meeting, explaining that he sought the Board's approval to purchase 54 additional poll books for the upcoming November election. This request was made in anticipation of a potentially high voter turnout, ensuring that sufficient poll books are available to facilitate a smooth flow of traffic at all 72 precincts.

Mr. Balmer shared that the procurement process is currently underway, with the city's attorney's office in discussions with the vendor's legal team to finalize the contract. The total cost of the poll books is \$74,000, with an additional \$7,300 bringing the total to \$81,000. The additional funds will cover the purchase of printers for a system called "Ballot on Demand," which he hopes to have operational by September 20th, the start of early voting.

Mr. Balmer explained that the Ballot on Demand system is specifically for curbside voters. Historically, pre-printed ballots were ordered for curbside voting, requiring ballots to be prepared for each of the 72 precincts, often resulting in significant waste when ballots were unused. The new system will allow precinct-specific ballots to be printed on demand, significantly reducing waste and improving efficiency.

Lastly, Registrar Balmer expressed his hope that the contract for both the additional poll books and the Ballot on Demand system would be finalized within the next couple of weeks. He assured the Board that he would provide an update as soon as the process is complete.

NEW BUSINESS

The discussion on "Souls for the Polls" was revisited under new business. Registrar Balmer recommended holding early voting on Sunday, October 13th, as the Office of Elections staff will have time off the following Monday in observance of Indigenous People's Day.

However, Secretary Smith made a motion to offer early voting on Sunday, October 27th, from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM at all early voting locations: Laburnum, City Hall, and Hickory Hill Community Center. Vice-Chair Stevens seconded the motion, while Chairman Ambrose opposed. The motion passed, approving early voting on Sunday, October 27th.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

No members of the public signed up to address items not on the agenda.

CLOSED SESSION

The Board entered a closed session to discuss personnel matters regarding the Office of Elections.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman John N. Ambrose

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NEXT MEETING DATE

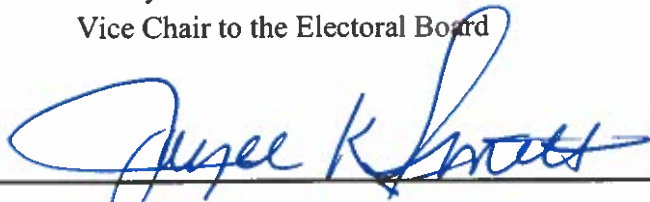
The next electoral board meeting date will take place on Tuesday, September 17th at 10:00am.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

John N. Ambrose
Chairman to the Electoral Board



Cherlyn S. Stevens
Vice Chair to the Electoral Board



Joyce K. Smith
Secretary to the Electoral Board