

Board of Elections
Office

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Carroll County Board of Elections
Board Minutes
May 6, 2020

Present:

Board

Griffith Manahan, President
Laura O’Callaghan, Vice-President
John Woodley, Secretary
Harvey Tegeler
Samuel Foster

Staff

Katherine Berry, Election Director
Paula Troxell, Deputy Director

Attorney

Jay Gullo

Confirmation of Oath

Heather DeWees, the Clerk of the Court for Carroll County, administered and recorded the oath of each member of the Board of Canvassers.

Call to Order & Welcome:

Mr. Manahan, President, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

The Board approved the open minutes from the meeting on March 16, 2020, on a motion from Mr. Woodley, seconded by Mr. Foster. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board approved the closed minutes from the meeting on February 19, 2020, on a motion from Mr. Woodley, seconded by Mr. Foster. The motion carried unanimously.

Attorney Report:

Mr. Gullo reported that SBE had one conference call for the attorneys and most of the discussion on that call was regarding the April 28th special election. Mr. Gullo stated that there will be a conference call next week.

Staff Report:

Announcements & Important Meetings

Ms. Berry reported that all staff have been teleworking since March 17th. This week staff began working in teams on a rotating schedule following all social distancing requirements. Starting next week, the staff's work area will be divided between the upstairs and the downstairs. The staff will be split with half working upstairs and half working downstairs. The staff will be required to wear a mask, gloves and must follow all social distancing requirements.

Ms. Berry stated that the county has closed all county buildings and that our building will remain closed until further notice.

SBE has held weekly conference calls with the Election Directors. Ms. Berry also held daily calls with the staff to keep them up to date.

Ms. Berry stated that the LBE Election Directors have been having conference calls to prepare for the primary election.

Ms. Berry reported that the State Board of Elections has been meeting bi-weekly.

Ms. Berry stated that an article was posted in the Carroll County Times in April regarding the vote by mail primary election. On May 1st Ms. Berry prepared a press release to provide further information to the voters for the vote by mail primary election.

Voter Registration

Ballots were mailed to Carroll County voters earlier than originally stated. Ms. Berry was notified at 7:30 p.m. the night before the ballots were to arrive at the postal service.

Ms. Berry stated that the voters are trying to drop off their ballots at the drop boxes. She has placed signs at the drop box locations informing voters that the drop boxes will not be available until May 21st. This notice has also been sent to the central committees to help with informing voters of the dates the drop boxes will be available.

Ms. Berry is going to the post office twice a day so that the ballots can be received by the office as soon as possible.

All calls coming into to the main telephone line are being forwarded to the State Board of Elections call center.

Ms. Berry reported that the voter registration and party change deadline is May 27th at 5:00 p.m.

Voters can change their party affiliation even after receiving a ballot by completing a voter registration application to change their party. Ms. Berry explained that their first ballot will be voided.

Voters can change their address after the ballots were mailed. Ms. Berry explained that by doing so, it voids the first ballot and sends a new ballot to the correct address.

Ms. Berry explained that the ballots that are returned from the post office because of an incorrect address will have a yellow sticker attached to the ballot that must be reviewed by the staff. If the yellow sticker shows a new address for the voter that is in the same “ballot style” region of the voter’s original mailed ballot, we will be forwarding that ballot on to the voter’s new address. Ballots that are returned with an address out of state or out of county will be processed after the election.

Absentee

Ms. Berry reported that all active and eligible pending voters were mailed a ballot from the State’s vendor, SeaChange.

Ms. Berry explained that voters who need to have the ballot sent to a different mailing address, have the ballot faxed to them or web delivered must complete an absentee ballot application. By completing the absentee application, it voids the first ballot that was mailed to them.

Ms. Berry reported that the office will begin mailing ballots to voters on May 26th.

Voters who make a mistake on their ballot such as marking too many ovals for an office, can request a replacement ballot. Ms. Berry stated that these ballots are being mailed from our office.

All staff will be trained in detail for how to manage and process the absentee ballots as they are returned to the office. There are very detailed instructions for staff to follow that include giving the voter credit for voting in MDVOTERS. Once credit is given to the voter, they can go on the State Board’s website to see that their ballot was received. After canvass, voters will see if their ballot was accepted or rejected.

Ms. Berry explained that to the extent practical, the office will be contacting voters if they have not signed the oath on the back of their envelope. The office will be following all guidelines

released by SBE to mitigate the oath problem. Ms. Berry further explained that voters requesting a web delivery ballot must include the oath inside the envelope, and these must be reviewed at canvass. The voter will then be contacted by telephone, email or a letter will be mailed alerting them of the problem.

Ms. Berry stated that ballots will be quarantined for 24 hours after delivery from the post office. Beginning next week, ballots will be received into MDVOTERS with quality assurance checks being completed before the ballots are locked and sealed in a ballot transfer bin. The bin will be labeled as to the date received in MDVOTERS. They will be stored in a secure location until canvass.

Ms. Berry reported that a candidate was upset because the ballots were mailed earlier than originally reported by the office. She explained that she was not notified until 7:30 p.m. the night before they were to be delivered to the postal service. Ms. Berry stated that the candidate wanted the name of the vendor. Ms. Berry was advised by SBE that it wasn't necessary to provide the information since it is the State's vendor.

IT/Warehouse

Ms. Berry reported that L&A has been completed. Ms. Jones and Mr. DeLima are also working in shifts.

Ms. Berry stated that the public demonstration will be live streamed on May 14th beginning at 9:30 a.m. The public demonstration that was to be held on May 6 at 9:30 a.m. had to be postponed because SBE had to make some changes to the reporting portion of the L&A process.

Ms. Berry reported that all supplies have been packed for the vote centers and preparations for the canvass are underway.

Canvass

Ms. Berry asked if the board wanted to organize as the Board of Canvassers today. Ms. O'Callaghan nominated Mr. Manahan as President and Mr. Woodley as Secretary. Mr. Tegeler seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Berry stated that Ms. Troxell will be assisting with the minutes. She explained that the minutes will be revised to accommodate the multi-day canvass.

A schedule will be posted on the office's website along with the links for people to watch the canvass and board decision sessions. Ms. Berry provided a tentative schedule of May is 21-23, 25-28 from 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. each day and then break until June 4th. The tentative schedule for June is as follows: June 4-6, 8-9, 11-12 with times to be determined.

Ms. Berry said that the County's Communications Department will be setting up cameras on the stage of the Robert Moton Gym. The office will use these cameras when Board decisions are being made.

The Board is required to meet to start canvass on May 21st at 9:00 a.m. and to end the canvass on the last day. Ms. Berry explained that the last canvass date cannot be determined at this time and will depend on the number of ballots received.

Ms. Berry told the Board that they are required to meet for Provisional Ballot Canvass at 10:00 a.m. on June 10th.

Ms. Berry explained to the Board that they need to decide what time they would like to meet each day of absentee canvass and if they would like to meet in person or by video conference for all canvasses. She stated that there is a significant amount of planning involved in video conferencing, so a decision needs to be made as soon as possible. The office will live stream all the board decisions and will show the ballots or envelopes for people to see what the board is making decisions on. Ms. Berry recommended that the Board meet each day of canvass at 4:00 p.m. After a brief discussion, the board agreed with Ms. Berry's recommendation to begin at 4:00 p.m. Mr. Manahan stated that the Board should arrive at 8:45 a.m. on May 21st to open the canvass.

Ms. Berry explained that there will be eight canvassing teams and they will also abide by all social distancing requirements and usage of personal protective equipment. Teams are made up of election judges and they will be compensated \$100 for each day worked. Ms. Berry, Ms. Jones, Mr. DeLima, and a temporary employee will be managing canvass. The duplication of the ballots will be done on the Ballot Marking Device (BMD).

Ballot Drop Boxes

Drop boxes will be delivered to the vote centers and the office on May 18th. Ms. Berry explained that the boxes are large and weigh 400 pounds. They will be unlocked and available to voters beginning on May 21st. They will be available 24/7 until 8:00 p.m. June 2.

The staff will be required to remove ballots from the boxes several times during the day as a team of election officials. Ms. Berry stated that she may need to request the Board's assistance

with the pickup of ballots since the office will be conducting canvass and receiving ballots into MDVOTERS.

The Sheriff's Department will assist the office with managing the drop boxes during the overnight hours of 7:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. at all locations.

Ms. Berry stated that a drop box will be placed at the front door at the Westminster Senior Center. There are cameras at this location and the drop box will be monitored by the 911 center. The South Carroll Swim Club will be required to leave their gate open and there is a concern of misuse of their property. Ms. Berry is working with the County IT Department to procure cameras around the drop box. The Sheriff's office is providing a deputy from 7:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. to monitor the property.

Ms. Berry stated that the drop boxes can hold up to 10,000 ballots.

Ms. Berry stated that there is a possibility that cameras will be attached to the drop boxes to provide additional security and management of the boxes. Ms. Berry reported that the drop boxes were well received by the voters in the three counties that had a special election.

Electioneers will be allowed to have signs and stand 100' away from the drop boxes from May 21st until June 2nd.

Polling Places & Election Judges

Ms. Berry stated that there will be two vote centers located at the Westminster Senior Center and South Carroll Swim Club. SBE's intent is to have these centers available for limited in person voting.

Ms. Berry stated that the Polling Place Evaluation Program will be required for the June 2nd election and the Board will need to discuss closer to the election how they want to manage this program. This may be revisited by SBE in a future meeting.

Per SBE's policy, staff are not permitted to be inside the center during voting hours. A meeting will be held in the parking lot before voting begins and the office will be available by conference call on a laptop and by walkie talkie. The staff will set up the polling place on June 1st and get all the electronic pollbooks networked appropriately before the election judges arrive on June 2nd. The election judges will be setting up the vote centers the night before. Mr. DeLima and Ms. Jones will setup the pollbooks and the networking prior to the judge's arrival. Ms. Bartholow has hired experienced chief judges to work at the vote centers.

Ms. Berry stated that the judges will be required to wear a mask, face shield and gloves. Plexiglass screens will also be provided to setup at as many tables as we have supplies. Hand sanitizer and a mask will be available for voters.

Ms. Berry said that 55 people will be allowed in the vote centers. She is planning on three check-in stations, two scanning units, and four Ballot Marking Devices (BMD). There will be five greeters to help with line management. Election judges will be required to use the disinfectant wipes to keep the booths and tables clean. Pens and privacy sleeves will not be reused by voters. The privacy sleeves and pens will be collected at the exit. Ms. Berry reported that vendor approved wipes will be used for the voting equipment.

Ms. Berry asked the Board if they thought that the office should rent tents and chairs to have outside to assist with line management if there are long wait times. All voters standing in line must maintain the 6-foot distancing requirement. Stanchions can also be rented to assist with the 6-foot requirement. Ms. Troxell explained that a social distancing separator could be rented for the hallway at the Westminster Senior Center to help with the 6-foot social distancing requirement. Mr. Tegeler made a motion not to rent tents for either vote center; Ms. O'Callaghan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Tegeler made a motion to rent the social distancing separator for the Westminster Senior Center; Mr. Woodley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Berry reported that Challengers & Watchers will be allowed in the vote centers so there will not be live streaming inside of the room.

Election judges who attended training prior to the Governor's Proclamation will be paid \$30.00 for attending training. Ms. Berry stated that judges working on June 2nd will be compensated an additional \$50. There are a few election judges that will need to attend training in order to work on June 2nd. These trainings will occur within two weeks.

Ms. Berry has requested assistance from the Sheriff's office and the Health Department to manage the possible lines at the vote centers. The Sheriff's office is going to assist, if needed. Ms. Berry is reaching out to the Health Department because other LBE offices are receiving assistance from their Health Departments to ensure that voters will follow the social distancing requirement. Mr. Woodley asked if voters would be provided with a mask. Ms. Berry said that 1,500 masks have been received to deploy to the vote centers for the voters. A discussion occurred about how to handle voters who refuse to wear a mask. Mr. Gullo asked if SBE will have a plan on how to handle a voter that refuses to wear a mask. Ms. Berry stated that at this time a policy has not been provided. Mr. Gullo stated that the Board could make a policy to state that a voter must wear a mask in order to enter the vote center. Ms. O'Callaghan suggested that a sign be posted at the end of the line stating that a voter must wear a mask to enter the vote center. Ms. O'Callaghan made a motion that a sign be created that states "You will not be

allowed to enter the polling place without a mask and if you do not have one, one will be provided for you”; seconded by Mr. Woodley. The motion passed unanimously.

Person/Budget

Ms. Berry reported that the vacant permanent position has not been filled because the State required the office to postpone the interviews. Her priority after the election will be to fill this position. LBE offices are exempt from the State’s hiring freeze.

Ms. Berry reported that Ivy Storey has been hired as a County contractual employee. The County would only allow the office to hire one contractual employee even though the budget was approved to hire two. Ms. Storey has served as an election judge.

Ms. Berry stated that because of the County hiring freeze and not being allowed to hire a second contractual employee, County HR is providing two staff members from Personnel services to assist the office for the primary election.

The FY21 budget was approved with exception of the request for a permanent position. The County will continuously revisit the budget as social situations change.

Board Members Political Activities:

Mr. Tegeler donated \$45.00 to the Trump campaign and \$25.00 to the Andy Harris campaign.

Unfinished Business:

None

New Business:

None

Scheduling of Next Meeting:

The next board meeting will be determined at a later date.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Ms. O’Callaghan; seconded by Mr. Foster to adjourn the meeting at 12:57 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Closed Meeting Held on March 16, 2020:

Mr. Woodley requested a motion to close the meeting at 9:52 a.m. under General Provisions Article §3-305(b)(10), which exceptions permit closing a meeting to discuss public security, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to the public or to public security, including: (i) the deployment of fire and police services and staff; and (ii) the development and implementation of emergency plans. The Board closed the meeting to discuss a security plan for polling places. Mr. Tegeler made a motion to convene in closed session; seconded by Mr. Foster. The motion carried unanimously.

Present:

Board:

Griffith Manahan, President, by telephone
Laura O’Callaghan, Vice-President, by telephone
John Woodley, Secretary
Harvey Tegeler
Samuel Foster

Staff:

Katherine Berry, Election Director
Paula H. Troxell, Deputy Director

Attorney

Jay Gullo

Guest

County Commissioner Stephen Wantz
Captain David Stem, Carroll County Sheriff’s Office

Topic(s) of Discussion:

A discussion was held regarding a security plan for polling places. No motions or actions were taken.