

Board of Elections  
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Carroll County Board of Elections  
Board Minutes  
July 29, 2020

**Present:**

*Board*

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

*Staff*

Katherine Berry, Election Director, by phone  
Paula Troxell, Deputy Director  
Jay Gullo, Attorney, by phone

*Guests*

Barry Simms, WBAL  
Tom Culp, WBAL

**Call to Order & Welcome:**

Mr. Manahan, President, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

**Approval of Minutes:**

The Board approved the minutes from the July 15, 2020 meeting, on a motion from Mr. Foster, seconded by Mr. Tegeler. The motion carried unanimously.

**Attorney Report:**

None

**Staff Report:**

Ms. Berry reported that the State Board of Elections is holding weekly conference calls with the Election Directors. Her report today reflects information that is being received by SBE.

Ms. Berry reported that Carroll County has 124,746 active voters and 6,377 inactive voters. The office is receiving approximately 250 applications per day which include new, address change, party change, duplicate information.

Regarding vote by mail, the total number of voters who have applied for absentee ballots already is around 2,600. A normal Presidential General Election is around 6,000 ballots. At this time, SBE expects to send by-mail ballot applications to all registered voters in mid-to-late August. A sample of the application has not been shared with the local boards of elections yet. There will not be a data entry center supported by SBE, so LBE staff will be expected to do all data entry. All applications will be sent with a pre-paid postage envelope for easy return and this will be a 50/50 cost split between the State and the County.

Ms. Berry discussed the warehouse supplies that have been ordered and are being delivered in preparation for in-person voting and canvassing of ballots. Face Shields for the election judges and hand sanitizer has been delivered. Mr. Manahan asked if there is a sufficient amount of personal protective equipment for all election judges. Ms. Berry stated that 670 face shields have been ordered, so it will be sufficient. Ms. Berry further stated that supply preparations and cart packing cannot be done until approval of the amount of polling places/early voting centers. Ms. O'Callaghan asked if vote by mail ballots would not be counted as being reported in the news. Ms. Berry said that would not happen and that all voted ballots would be counted.

Ms. Berry reported that the State Board had a lengthy discussion at their recent State Board Meeting regarding the option for Carroll County to have a third early voting center. It is expected that they will vote on this option at their August 5, 2020 meeting after the Attorney General's office has time to review the regulations that need to be altered for this to happen. If it is approved, the LBE can decide on the location at their August 19, 2020 board meeting.

Ms. Berry discussed at length the facts regarding election judges. She stated that with the Board's approval to reduce the amount of electronic pollbooks and ballot issuance stations, the total amount of judges needed from 668 to 586. 263 of the current election judges have agreed to participate in the General Election. Some of them have said yes with reservation because of the unknown factors of COVID. 134 of the current election judges have quit because of COVID or another reason. Many of them are Chief Judges and Provisional/SDR judges. The remaining number of judges that were hired for the Primary Election have not responded or are in the "maybe" category, so we can assume that they are not or may not be interested in participating as an election judge. DBM has sent a notice to all state employees to volunteer to be election judges. Participation will mean they receive 16 hours of paid administrative leave. This notice went out to all employees on July 28. An article in the Carroll County Times on Monday, July 27 also identified the need for election judges and provided our recruitment link so that people could sign up to participate. The article was on the Carroll County Times website on Friday, July 24. We have had 30 people sign up to be a new election judge since July 22. Around 50 additional people have signed up to be election judges in Carroll County through the State's website. Mr. Manahan asked if it would be possible to put a link on our website about recruitment of election judges and to post an opening in the Carroll County Times. Ms. Berry stated she could look into it as an option, but to also consider that funding may be limited for this type of advertising.

Ms. Berry stated that we will be allowed to have approximately 1 person per 50 square feet attend an in-person training or hold virtual election judge training. Some judge positions will require in-person training. A plan will be in place to limit the amount of staff exposed to the in-person training and we are awaiting instructions from the State on how to handle people checking temperatures or asking the wellness questions before they attend a training. Most election judges had been trained prior to the Primary Election, BUT most are not returning for the General Election AND will need to have guidance and training on how to properly use all the PPE materials in the polling places.

Regarding ballot production, in the past, Carroll County has had 2 ballot styles for the Presidential General Election; however, the State Board of Elections has decided that there will be one ballot style per precinct. This means Carroll County will have 36 ballot styles at early voting. Precincts that are consolidated, such as Fairhaven to Sykesville Middle, the election judges will be responsible for making sure they are given the correct ballot style. This is an election judge training critical function. Also, if polling places run low on ballots, they cannot simply borrow ballots from a neighboring polling place because the ballots are different. Mr. Manahan clarified that Fairhaven and Sykesville Middle would be reported as separate election results and Ms. Berry stated that was correct. Ms. Berry also stated that the cost of ballots would increase because we have to plan for an 80% turnout in early September before all by-mail ballot applications are received and since it is not possible to determine how voters will decide to vote, it will be necessary to order at least for an 80% turnout. This also factors in the need to duplicate by-mail ballots, reissue ballots for voters who make mistakes and other issues that occur in a by-mail election.

Ms. Berry stated that most LBEs are consolidating precincts because of the growing concern regarding election judges and the training of the election judges. Based on the limitations of the election judges, there should be consideration of the consolidation of precincts. While there is no longer a deadline to consolidate precincts because of ballot creation, we cannot begin to recruit judges or pack supplies until after we know how many polling places we are to expect. Ms. Berry further informed the Board that since voters are being sent applications and will likely result in an increase to absentee ballots, there will be 8 days of early voting AND in-person voting on election day, it is possible to see a reduced number of voters who wait to vote in-person on election day. Mr. Manahan inquired as to the drop-dead date for having a decision regarding the consolidations. Ms. Berry stated that she would prefer to have a vote today so that the recommendation can get to the State Board in time for their meeting on August 5, 2020. The longer a decision takes, the more likely problems will occur because of limited time to notify voters, recruit and train judges and pack supplies in addition to processing the by-mail ballot applications.

Ms. Berry stated that Pleasant Valley, Winfield Fire Department, Manchester Activities Building (\$600 for election day), all Senior Centers in the county and the South Carroll Swim Club (\$700 for the day) have agreed to allow for election day polling places. She made the following recommendations:

- Northwest Middle and Taneytown Elementary – vote at Northwest Middle @6,980 total voters
- Francis Scott Key High, Runnymede and Pleasant Valley – vote at Pleasant Valley @7,491 total voters
- Mechanicsville Gym and Cafeteria – vote at Mechanicsville Gym @7,877 total voters
- Sykesville Middle, Liberty High, Oklahoma Road, Carrolltowne, Piney Ridge and Fairhaven – vote at South Carroll Senior Center @22,890 total voters
- Keep Carrolltowne open (@8,098 total voters)
- Manchester Valley, North Carroll Middle, Hampstead Elementary, Shiloh Middle and Spring Garden Elementary – vote at North Carroll Senior Center or Manchester Activities Building @22,500 total voters
  - Option: Manchester Valley and North Carroll Middle to Manchester Activities Building (@11,199 total voters) and Hampstead, Shiloh and Spring Garden to North Carroll Senior Center (@11,301 total voters)
- Cranberry Station, William Winchester, Friendship Valley, West Middle, Carroll Lutheran, Tech Center, Westminster Elementary, and Robert Moton Elementary – vote at Westminster Senior Center @27,080 total voters
  - Possible option: Move Friendship Valley, Tech Center and Robert Moton Elementary to Robert Moton Building Gym (@6,315 total voters) and Cranberry Station, William Winchester, West Middle, Carroll Lutheran and Westminster Elementary to Westminster Senior Center (@20,765 total voters)
- Winfield Elementary, Winfield Fire Department, Linton Springs, South Carroll Gym, South Carroll Fine Arts Lobby – vote at South Carroll Swim Club (they will charge \$700 for voting on election day) @16,092 total voters
- Elmer Wolfe Gym 1 and Gym 2 – vote in the Gym together @2,004 total voters
- New Windsor Community Room (@2,902 total voters), Parr’s Ridge (@8,081 total voters) and Sandymount (@6,505 total voters) would remain independent because of location.

Mr. Manahan asked about space restrictions at Northwest Middle School and if the Taneytown voting location could be the Taneytown Senior Center. Ms. Berry stated that the room is small, and parking is very limited, so it is not preferred. An extension discussion occurred regarding the consolidation of precincts. Mr. Woodley asked WBAL if they could run precinct changes on the bottom of their television shows. Mr. Simms said he would have to ask for approval. Ms. O’Callaghan motioned to approve the consolidations and recommended one final review by Ms. Berry and Ms. Troxell. Mr. Tegeler seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Tegeler then motioned that Ms. Berry develop a marketing plan including mailing a post card to all registered voters, having an additional media plan to help with notifying voters of the polling place changes including posting the changes on the website and to include promoting voting at early voting and by-mail, and to post the consolidations on the LBE website. Ms. O’Callaghan seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Berry informed the Board that Captain Stem from the Sheriff's Department has reached out to see if a plan has been decided on for the general election. Ms. Berry stated she will keep him informed and work to implement a safety plan for election judges, drop boxes and voters as soon as final decisions are made. Sheriff's Department is waiting on decisions to be made by the LBE and SBE.

Ms. Berry further reminded the Board that social distancing guidelines will be followed for each location, so we will be providing each polling location with the maximum number of people allowed in a building at one time. Less voting booths will be set up to accommodate for this. There will be reduced amounts of judges at check-in and ballot issuance and pens will be issued to each voter to keep.

Ms. Berry stated that there is no additional CARES money available to cover general election expenses. There has not been any clarification yet regarding the Governor's statement about funding for the general election.

Interviews for the vacant position were held. Ms. Berry stated that the process of completing reference checks is being completed and a candidate may be hired by mid-August. Seven (7) candidates were to be interviewed. One cancelled before the interview and there was one (1) no-show. After the interview, one changed their mind about the job, so four (4) candidates are remaining. Once the reference checks have completed and a person is selected, they will be on six (6) months of probation.

One (1) or two (2) people will be hired through the State's staffing contract but will not be allowed to start until early-September as per the contract. This resource will only be available if there are viable candidates.

A county contractual position will be filled in the next 4 weeks. We received 3 applications for this position so far.

We continue to monitor the Commissioner's meetings for the charter government discussion to occur.

Ms. Berry stated that the human resources department continues to remind the LBEs that we should continue teleworking for as long as possible. It is simply not feasible for the office as we approach election day. The office has been altered to make it a safer environment to help everyone maintain social distancing requirements. Staff will be working many hours and there is a risk of illness with an increase in lack of rest. Human Resources has stated that any staff who have symptoms of COVID should stay home and will be encouraged to be tested. This makes it extremely risky to have a small staff working in an area together. Mr. Woodley asked what the contingency plan is if someone tests positive in the office. Ms. Berry stated that staff will be required to quarantine for 14-days. A discussion occurred.

Ms. Berry also mentioned that the drop boxes would be put into place 30 days prior to election day and that the ballots will need to be removed 2-3 times per day. The Board will be required to assist us with this task.

Ms. Berry also stated that she will be reaching out to the nursing and assisted living centers to ensure they are aware all registered voters will get an application for a by-mail ballot.

Mr. Simms stated that they are preparing to run a story about the challenges Carroll County is facing in the evening.

**Board Members Political Activities:**

Ms. O’Callaghan donated \$100 to the Carroll County Democratic Central Committee.

Mr. Tegeler donated \$50 to the Trump Campaign and \$50 to the Harris campaign.

**Unfinished Business:**

Ms. Berry will provide an analysis of the staff’s overtime for a vote by mail election as compared to an in-person election.

**New Business:**

None

**Scheduling of Next Meeting:**

The next board meeting will be held on Wednesday August 19, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Mr. Woodley; seconded by Mr. Tegeler to adjourn the meeting at 11:23 a.m. The motion passed unanimously.