



BOARD OF ELECTIONS MINUTES

Thursday, September 10, 2020, 11:00 A.M.

Willowbank Office Building
420 Holmes Street, Room 146
Bellefonte, PA 16823

I. CALL TO ORDER

The public meeting of the Centre County Board of Elections was convened at 10:28 AM by Chair of the Board of Elections, Commissioner Steven Dershem.

In attendance were Commissioner Michael Pipe, Commissioner Mark Higgins, Commissioner Steven Dershem, Administrator Margaret Gray, Elections Coordinator Jodi Nedd, Voter Registration Latisha Stefanko and Executive Office Supervisor Natalie Smith.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments received from the public.

III. MINUTES

On A motion by Commissioner Pipe, seconded by Commissioner Higgins, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the Board of Elections Meeting held on Tuesday, September 8.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

V. OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Pipe introduced the Center for Tech and Civic Life – COVID 19 Response Grant Opportunity (<https://www.techandciviclife.org/our-work/election-officials/grants/>). In preparation of the application, he has been working with the Department of State to obtain a safe voting plan for submission. The Centre County application includes allocations for the following:

Absentee Ballot Assembly and Processing Equipment	\$296,881.50
Early Voting Sites and Ballot Drop-off Options	\$17,500.00
In-Person Voting at Polling Places on Election Day	\$129,400.00
Secure Ballot Drop boxes and related needs	\$76,606.00
Total	\$520,387.50

The Election Office is also working with Dusty Devinney of Facilities Management to determine County needs for polling locations and processing. Commissioner Pipe requested the Board's discussion and consideration of their approval for submission by Friday, September 11, 2020.

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Commissioner Dershem asked the Board for an update on the ballot drop boxes and requested Solicitor Betsy Dupuis' opinion on their use. Betsy noted the pending lawsuit that is awaiting Supreme Court decision. The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania is concerned that without a legislative change, the deadline to start canvassing will not be changed. She does not see that the Supreme Court will change that and presumes that the Court will resolve the poll watcher issue, the naked ballot question, and receipt of ballots via drop boxes and delivery.

Having reviewed Act 77, Commissioner Dershem does not see where it permits drop boxes and fears this may bring legal challenge. Betsy explained that the Act allows for the Election Boards to establish procedures for the return of ballots. If the Court agrees with that interpretation there is no issue with using the drop boxes.

If the Pennsylvania Supreme Court were to say that drop boxes are allowed, Commissioner Pipe asked Betsy if that would resolve the issue of any legal challenge. Depending on how the Supreme Court makes their decision, it could be reviewed by the Federal Court.

With current legal challenge and legislative review, Commissioner Dershem does not want to put the county in jeopardy or waste resources while the questions are still unresolved. Commissioner Pipe explained that there was a short window of time to order drop boxes. To have that option preserved, the order was approved and placed earlier this week. If the Supreme Court rules against drop boxes, Commissioner Pipe stated that the County will not use the drop boxes and they could be repurposed, sold or donated. This cost may be recoverable through grant funding.

On a motion by Commissioner Pipe, seconded by Commissioner Higgins, the Board voted unanimously to approve submission of the Centre County Safe Voting Plan.

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

VII. ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

Monday, October 19, 2020

Last day to REGISTER before the November election.

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

Last day to apply for a mail-in or civilian absentee ballot.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Commissioner Pipe, seconded by Commissioner Higgins, the Board voted unanimously to move into executive session at 10:57 AM.

Respectfully submitted:

Natalie Smith
Executive Office Supervisor