



BOARD OF ELECTIONS MINUTES

Thursday, September 21, 2023 at 1:00 P.M.

Willowbank Office Building

420 Holmes Street, Room 146

Bellefonte, PA 16823

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I. CALL TO ORDER

The public meeting of the Centre County Board of Elections was convened at 1:00 PM by Chair of the Board Vicki Fong.

In attendance were Board Members Vicki Fong, Chris Exarchos, Chris Fowler, Administrator John Franek Jr., Director of Elections Beth Lechman, Solicitor Betsy Dupuis and Executive Office Supervisor Erin Good.

Guests present included Michelle Schellberg, Jen Delantonio, Greg Stewart and Brandy Reiter.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments received from the public.

IV. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

V. MINUTES

The Board will consider approving the minutes from the August 1, 2023, Board of Elections meeting.

Action: On a motion by Chris Exarchos, seconded by Vicki Fong, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes from August 1, 2023, meeting.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review the findings of the Ballot Box Collection locations

Chris Fowler stated he received the data from Beth Lechman and county employees and figured out the drive time for every registered voter in Centre County to the nearest drop box and their polling precinct. His findings were there were slightly longer drive times in rural areas to drop boxes and precincts which was as expected, with slightly shorter drive times in more urbanized areas.

Chris Fowler's data concluded there are over 80,000 out of 100,000 individuals in Centre County who have access to a drop box location in less than a ten-minute drive from their residence. Currently there are about 375 individuals who have to drive 45 minutes or more to the nearest drop box in Centre County. Chris Fowler configured which drop box if eliminated would most increase the drive time for individuals. The Centre Hall drop box if eliminated would have the largest effect, Philipsburg would be the second and Patton

Township would be the third. Chris also looked at adding drop boxes and where the addition of a drop box would be most beneficial. Marion Township, Harris Township and Liberty Township Buildings would have the most overall impact at around 3 percent change in drive time.

Chris Exarchos stated if return postage envelopes were offered on mail in ballots, it would eliminate where the drop boxes are located. If a return postage ballot was included, essentially every post office would be a drop box. Chris Exarchos stated this recommendation should be brought to the Board of Commissioners attention. Administrator John Franek Jr. stated the Election Office currently has a grant that would cover the postage costs if the Board of Commissioners would enact on this for future elections.

Solicitor Betsy Dupuis stated it might be useful for the Board of Elections to look at the data of how many deposits are made at each ballot box location.

Chris Exarchos stated the rational solution should be to include pre-paid return envelopes, which will ensure every postal office or mailbox would become a drop box.

Vicki Fong reiterated the importance of drop boxes and voters' trust in the mail system since postage can often be delayed. Chris Exarchos stated he is not recommending eliminating the ballot boxes, but he is suggesting adding the return postage envelope as another option for voters.

Action: On a motion by Chris Exarchos, seconded by Chris Fowler, the Board voted unanimously to recommend county staff to make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to provide the funding for return first class postage for mail in ballots and expedite it as soon as practical.

Michelle Schellberg of Half Moon Township gave public comment on ballot boxes being distributed equally.

Beth Lechman stated it may be too late to include prepaid postage envelopes for the November election due to the printing companies needing the orders by a certain date.

Greg Stewart of Ferguson Township gave public comment on not making changes this close to the Election for ballot layouts being sent out.

Jen Delantonio of Rush Township made public comment on video surveillance cameras of ballot boxes.

B. Consider approval of the 2023 Municipal Election ballot quantities to be ordered

Beth Lechman distributed the ballot quantity recommendations to the Board to review and approve. Beth stated they are required to order to the nearest 50 percent of voters for ballot quantities per Precinct and the Election Office will be following the recommended practice of years past for ordering ballots.

Action: On a motion by Chris Exarchos, seconded by Chris Fowler, the Board voted unanimously to approve the ballot quantities.

C. Consider approval of the 2023 Municipal Election ballot layout

Beth Lechman distributed sample ballots to the Board to review and approve.

Michelle Schellberg of Half Moon Township gave public comment on provisional ballots.

Action: On a motion by Chris Exarchos, seconded by Chris Fowler, the Board voted unanimously to approve the ballot layout.

D. Review and approve the vote by mail packet for the 2023 Municipal Election

Beth Lechman distributed the vote by mail packets to the Board to review and approve. Beth stated there will be a reminder to the printing company to include the barcodes to be added to the upper left-hand corner of the return envelopes. The barcode is used for internal processing of the ballots.

Action: On a motion by Chris Exarchos, seconded by Chris Fowler, the Board voted unanimously to approve the vote by mail packet.

E. Review of the Transportation of Elections Voting Equipment RFP results

Beth Lechman passed out the proposed contract for the transportation of election voting equipment RFP to the Board. Beth stated the only company that bid on the RFP was Advanced Shipping Technologies Inc, who has experience in transporting school PSAT testing. The County will have one county employee to accompany each vendor's employee, a chain of custody form will need to be completed and a tablet will be provided to the vendor to take a timestamped photo of the equipment being dropped off at each Precinct.

Beth Lechman stated the contract total price may be lower than what was originally bid, due to the County supplying one employee and the vendor supplying one employee to each truck instead of the vendor supplying two employees for each truck. Beth is currently in contract negotiations with the vendor.

Action: On a motion by Chris Fowler, seconded by Chris Exarchos, the Board voted unanimously to recommend that Centre County proceed with a contract for the Transportation of Elections Voting Equipment.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Notification of appeal by Linda Sheckler of the Board's denial of her Petition to Strike Off Names of Registered Electors.

Solicitor Betsy Dupuis stated that on August 1st the Board of Elections conducted a hearing on a petition filed to strike off names of registered electors by Linda Sheckler. The Board denied the requested relief. Ms. Sheckler has appealed the matter to Centre County Court. The county has filed preliminary objections. All of those voters are currently listed on SURE as inactive.

B. Solicitor Betsy Dupuis gave an update on the petition of Richard Rogers which was denied by the Court of Common Pleas. Richard Rogers has not appealed this decision and he will not appear on the ballot for the Fall Election.

VIII. ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

- o The next scheduled Board of Elections meeting is Thursday, October 5, 2023, at 1:00 PM at the Willowbank Building Room 146.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION REPORT

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X. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS

XI. ADJOURN

On a motion by Chris Exarchos seconded by Chris Fowler, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 2:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Erin Good
Executive Office Supervisor