



APPROVED MINUTES

BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS REGULAR MEETING – APRIL 9, 2020

The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections met in Regular Session on Thursday, April 9, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

VIRTUAL MEETING

Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

FGTV YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYH7E0jH6HxE-3KTRluH8SQ>

Presiding: Ms. Mary Carole Cooney, Chairperson

Other Board Members Present:

Mr. Mark Wingate, Vice Chairperson

Ms. Vernetta Keith Nuriddin

Dr. Kathleen Ruth

Mr. Aaron V. Johnson

Staff Attending: Mr. Richard Barron, Director; Mr. Ralph Jones, Registration Chief; Mr. Blake Evans, Elections Chief; Ms. Sharon Benjamin, Deputy Election Chief; Ms. Nadine Williams, Elections Equipment Manager; Mrs. Pamela Coman, Registration Manager; Ms. Brenda McCloud, Administrative Manager; Mrs. Cheryl Ringer, County Attorney; Mr. David Lowman, County Attorney; Mr. James Reese, Production Manager; Mr. Rico Dollar, Senior Graphics Designer

Guests Attending: Rhonda J. Martin (Coalition for Good Governance), Gayle Burnett

Chairperson Cooney announced that this teleconferenced meeting is authorized pursuant to O.C.G.A. §50-14-1(g) because of the State of Emergency declared by Governor Kemp which resulted in state and local Government closures due to COVID-19, and because means have been afforded for the public to have simultaneous access to this teleconference.

#1– APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to amend the agenda to omit Proposal #9/20 from item #9 of the Agenda.

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was made by Mr. Wingate, seconded by Mr. Johnson and carried by a unanimous vote of 4-0.

#2– COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RESPONSE

Rhonda Martin expressed concerns for certain components of the voting equipment, Election Officials, and poll workers due to the recent State of Emergency and Global Pandemic.

Gayle Burnett inquired about the backlog for absentee by mail and requested the **DRE** provide procedures for processing absentee by mail.

OLD BUSINESS

#3– APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting- March 12, 2020
- Special Called Meeting- March 18, 2020

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Regular Meeting and Special Meeting on March 12th and 18th, 2020. The motion was made by Mr. Wingate, seconded by Dr. Ruth and carried by a unanimous vote of 4-0.

#4– MONTHLY OPERATIONS REPORT FOR MARCH 2020:

- PPP & General Primary Elections delayed to June 9, 2020
- Conducted Early Voting from March 2-14, 2020
- Lost Polling Places due to the Global Pandemic
- Continue to receive carriers from Election Works
- Approval of two Mobile Voting buses
- VEO demonstrations were suspended on March 14, 2020
- A legal hold remains on the **DRE** voting units from the April 18, 2017 and June 20, 2017 6th Congressional Special Election and Runoff Special Election (**Relocated to offsite facility**)
- Total voter registration applications received in 2020: **76,899**
- **19,422** voter registration applications received in February
- As of April 1st, **812,169** (764,064 active and 48,105 inactive) registered voters reside in Fulton County
- Total New Applications in 2020 – **22,971**
- Total Applications processed in 2020 – **62,300**
- Felon Letters Mailed- **525**

Mr. Wingate inquired about the volume of Absentee by Mail applications received since the Secretary of State's Office sent their mass mailing

Mr. Barron informed the **BRE** of the Absentee By Mail applications received:

- Apps Received: 6,438
- Apps Rejected: 245
- Apps Processed: 6,193
- UOCAVA Processed: 50

Dr. Ruth inquired about the rejected applications and the reason(s) for rejections

Mr. Jones stated the two main reasons for rejection is the voter did not select a party or the voter's signature was omitted from the application

Dr. Ruth asked are voters contacted with regards to the rejection

Mr. Jones responded yes, via official mail

Ms. Nuriddin joined the meeting, delayed due to technical issues.

Mr. Johnson inquired about the efficiency of both emails being used for the department

Mr. Barron advised that both emails are monitored by staff

Mr. Johnson asked who chose the email that is on the **SECURE THE VOTE** application

Mr. Jones mentioned the Secretary of State chose the email.

Mr. Wingate inquired about the mailing of the Absentee ballot, since the election has been delayed

Mr. Barron informed the **BRE** that **SOS** is using a third party vendor to send the ballot

Ms. Nuriddin asked are there any changes in the process due to Secretary of State's Office involvement

Mr. Jones stated the following:

- Absentee Ballot mail out date is April 21, 2020
- Data entry of application being processed
- After April 21st the input data entry date will be the current date
- **SOS's** third party vendor will mail a ballot to the requester
- The voter will send their ballot to **DRE** to process

Ms. Nuriddin inquired about ballot proofing and voters receiving the incorrect ballot

Mr. Jones informed the **BRE** that if a voter is concerned about the ballot they receive, to contact the Voter Registration Division to get clarity

Ms. Nuriddin asked if this change is due to Coronavirus

Mr. Barron responded by crediting **SOS** with making an effort to reduce costs to counties and using a reputable vendor with Ballot By Mail experience

Ms. Nuriddin requested **Mr. Barron** to discuss the methods that voters can utilize to return their applications

Mr. Barron advised that applications can be mailed, faxed, emailed or hand delivered to one of the voter registration offices

Ms. Nuriddin requested the number of absentee applications that have been processed

Mr. Barron reiterated the numbers previously mentioned before **Ms. Nuriddin** entered the meeting

Ms. Nuriddin inquired about the assurances of this procedure regarding data entry processing and mailing of the ballots

Mr. Jones answered yes, **SOS** will provide a report

Chairperson Cooney inquired about staffing needs for processing of Absentee By Mail

Mr. Jones stated that staffing needs have been met and the County Manager and the Executive Team has offered employees that are unable to telework throughout the county to assist

NEW BUSINESS

#5- UPDATE ON DRE OPERATIONS DURING PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Mr. Barron informed the Board of the efforts the Department is making to complete all duties and follow all CDC guidelines:

- 75% of the Department is Teleworking
- Weekly Meeting with all staff
- Completing training material for poll workers
- County Manager will provide staff, if needed
- Staff will go into the office intermittently to return completed work and replenish workload
- EPC staff is working normal schedules with limited staff

Mr. Barron mentioned furnishing the **BRE** with a report that Ms. Ficklin provides with the absentee by mail metrics

#6- UPDATE ON PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY AND GENERAL PRIMARY ELECTIONS

Mr. Barron updated the Board on **SOS's** decision to postpone the Election again, from May 19th to June 9th. **Mr. Barron** mentioned limited information was received due to the meetings occurring simultaneously.

- Early Voting May 18- June 5

#7- APPROVAL OF EARLY VOTING LOCATIONS FOR THE PPP AND GENERAL PRIMARY ELECTIONS

Due to the recent postponement of the election by SOS during this meeting, Mr. Barron requested to have a Special Called Meeting in a couple of weeks to review his original recommendations

Mr. Barron stated that his original recommendation was to suggest minimal locations due to the pandemic, as well as the shortage of hand sanitizer and PPE

Mr. Wingate requested **Mr. Barron** make every effort to finalize the **EV** plan to provide this information to candidates

Mr. Barron mentioned the health and safety of poll workers and staff is crucial at this time. **Mr. Barron** referenced the **DRE** having personal experience with the COVID-19 and his unwillingness to put staff at risk, especially if the department does not have all needed supplies

Mr. Johnson agreed with waiting a couple weeks to get more information. However, he urged the Department to be timely in obtaining the information.

Ms. Nuriddin stated her willingness to wait two weeks to reevaluate the **DRE's** recommendation to include C.T. Martin Natatorium and Aquatic Center

Dr. Ruth agreed with the delay and requested a plan with regards to social distancing

Mr. Barron informed the **BRE** of the plan to have line monitors and parking assistants. The Department will also decrease equipment allocations and decrease the number of voters and personnel allowed in all polling locations for Early Voting and Election Day.

Chairperson Cooney advised for the need to rely on **External Affairs** to disseminate the information discussed in this meeting and upcoming meetings to the voters.

Chairperson Cooney requested the Board's consensus to hold a **BRE** Special Meeting on April 23, 2020 to discuss more information. The consensus of those present was to meet on April 23.

#8- APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT NO. 1 OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT FOR THE CITY OF ATLANTA

Chairperson Cooney inquired about the contract for the City of Atlanta Election in conjunction with the PPP and General Primary

Attorney Ringer stated that the IGA will need to be modified due to **SOS's** decision to postpone the election

#9- APPROVAL OF PRECINCT PROPOSALS: 1/20, 5/20, 6/20, 7/20, 8/20

Mr. Evans informed the **Board** of the proposal changes of Senior Living Facilities and **COVID-19** concerns. **Mr. Evans** deferred to Legal to address the emergency status of the proposals.

Mr. Johnson interjected to delay this approval due to the election being postponed.

Attorney Ringer advised that the proposals would be considered emergency changes. However, the Department should advertise in the Legal Organ as soon as possible.

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to HOLD Agenda item #9 until the next meeting. The motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Dr. Ruth and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board did not convene into executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other items requiring the Board's action, **Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to adjourn. Mr. Wingate moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion.** Collectively, the Board agreed to adjourn at 11:08 a.m.

The meeting adjourned.

Prepared by,

Mariska Bodison, Board Secretary