



APPROVED MINUTES

BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS SPECIAL MEETING – April 23, 2020

The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections met in Special Session on Wednesday, April 23, 2020 at 10:00AM.

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 Johnson

Staff Attending: Mr. Richard Barron, Director; Mr. Ralph Jones, Registration Chief; Mr. Blake Evans, Elections Chief; Ms. Sharon Benjamin, Deputy Elections Chief; Ms. Brenda McCloud, Administrative Manager; Mrs. Pamela Coman, Registration Manager; Ms. Nadine E. Williams, Elections Equipment Manager; Ms. Cheryl Ringer, County Attorney; David Lowman, County Attorney; Mr. Rico Dollar, Senior Graphics Designer & Moderator; Mr. James Reese, Production Manager; Mr. Darryl Carver, Division Manager; Regina Waller, Senior Public Affairs Officer; Department of External Affairs

Guests Attending: Commissioner Joe Carn (District 6), Foris Webb, III (City of Atlanta Municipal Clerk), Linda Pritchett, Penn Payne, David Ross (Democratic Party of GA), Ben Russell, Venita Epps, Aileen Nakamura, Reginald McClendon (City of Atlanta)

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 approve the agenda as amended. The motion was made by Mr. Wingate, seconded by Ms. Nuriddin and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

#2– COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RESPONSE

Aileen Nakamura expressed condolences on the loss of a member of the **DRE's** team. **Ms. Nakamura** commended **Mr. Barron** and staff regarding their efforts during this pandemic to process absentee by mail requests.

Ben Russell informed the Board of his efforts to get inactive voters to update their records. **Mr. Russell** expressed concerns for the inability to contact the Voter Registration Division.

Venita Epps requested details on absentee by mail process and ballot drop box locations during this upcoming election

Linda Pritchett urged voter education regarding the Absentee application mailer. **Ms. Pritchett** requested information to be disseminated to the public via the website to reduce the confusion surrounding the postponement of the **PPP** and General Primary Election.

Foris Webb, III advised the Board that voting precincts within the City of Atlanta will be available for Early Voting and Election Day. **Mr. Webb** informed the Board that the City of Atlanta's Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms is currently operating under a Shelter in Place Order. Subsequently, all City of Atlanta facilities will remain closed until further notice but the decision to allow voting was considered emergency accommodations.

Ms. Nuriddin requested to move to Item # 6 until Ralph Jones was able to join the meeting for Item # 3. The Board agreed.

#6- APPROVAL OF BRE UPDATED CALENDAR

Chairperson Cooney asked **Mr. Evans** if the Division foresees any conflicts with certifying the Election on the second Friday after Election Day

Mr. Evans stated no.

Secretary Bodison requested the Board to consider combining the Regular meeting in November and the Certification meeting

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the amended Board Meeting schedule, striking November 13th and combining the Regular Meeting and Certification of the General Election on November 12th. The motion was made by Ms. Nuriddin, seconded by Mr. Johnson and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

#4- UPDATE ON BALLOT BY MAIL APPLICATIONS AND BALLOTS MAILED TO VOTERS

Mr. Barron updated the Board on Absentee By Mail:

- Mail Opened **51,688**
- Processed Paper Applications **10,116**
- Processed Electronic Applications **433**
- Paper **80,000**
- Electronic Email **20,000** (email listed on the application)
- Electronic Email **2,000** (secondary email)
- Faxed **1,000**
- Total Applications Approximately **113,000**
- **SOS's** contracted vendor began distributing ballots on April 21, 2020
- **DRE** will utilize drop boxes throughout the County
- **SEB Rules** mandate 24 hour surveillance on the drop boxes

Ms. Nuriddin inquired about the drop boxes, surveillance monitoring, and reporting on the Voter Registration Dashboard

Mr. Barron requested the dashboard from **Mr. R. Jones**, mentioned the quote on the drop boxes received and referenced the **SEB Rule** on monitoring: **RULE 183-1-14-0.6-.14 Secure Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes**

Mr. Wingate inquired about risks of a person attempting to intentionally damage ballots in the drop boxes

Mr. Evans stated that the drop boxes that were recommended do not appear to pose any concerns

Mr. Wingate asked about the name of the company providing the drop boxes

Mr. Evans stated American Security Cabinets

Chairperson Cooney requested a picture of the drop boxes

Mr. Evans will provide this information to the Board

Mr. Barron provided an overview of the procedures regarding the use of drop boxes

Chairperson Cooney stated that having inactive status does not prevent voters from casting a ballot

Dr. Ruth inquired about the monitoring of drop boxes

Mr. Jones informed the Board that the cameras are not monitored, but the surveillance takes pictures every ten seconds

Dr. Ruth requested the procedural process for removing ballots from the drop boxes

Mr. Jones stated:

- Two personnel assigned to pick up ballots
- Ballots will be counted & labeled by location
- Chain of custody form will be completed
- Upon arrival to the office; the VR staff will complete another chain of custody form
- Ballots will be stored until Election Day

Mr. Johnson inquired about absentee applications received and how long before voters can review their ballot status

Mr. Jones informed the **BRE** that the **DRE** is working closely with IT to provide voters with a receipt; unfortunately, this effort is ongoing.

Mr. Barron mentioned by May 1st all voters that have returned their absentee applications will be able to view their ballot status on SOS's website: <https://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do>

Mr. Johnson asked about the new Voter Registration deadline

Mr. Jones informed the Board that the deadline for the June 9th Election is May 11, 2020.

Mr. Johnson inquired about literature to provide to voters regarding the absentee by mail process

Mr. Barron mentioned the **DRE** was finalizing a one-page FAQ for the June 9th Election and this information will be available on the website

Mr. Jones added that **External Affairs** suggested the **DRE** complete a video illustrating the current absentee by mail process.

Ms. Nuriddin asked about the vendor's process for mailing ballots and notifying the voter. She also expressed concerns of the vendor's ability to handle mailing a large amount of ballots.

Mr. Jones expressed that according to **SOS**, the selected vendor is capable of completing the task

Mr. Johnson referenced an article he read about ballots being delivered without postage

Mr. Barron informed the Board that if ballots are mailed without postage, U.S.P.S will bill the County on postage due after the election

Chairperson Cooney asked if the decision had been made regarding the quantity of drop boxes that will be distributed

Mr. Jones answered not conclusively; the **DRE** is finalizing their surveys of the county facilities with surveillance

Mr. Barron informed the **BRE** that the **DRE** anticipates ordering 12-16 drop boxes and hopes to utilize these boxes for more than one election

#3- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE LATE MS. BEVERLY A. WALKER

Mr. R. Jones expressed fond and loving memories of the Late **Ms. Beverly A. Walker**. Ms. Walker was a dedicated employee who retired officially in 2012, after working 27 years in various departments. After retirement, in 2013, Ms. Walker returned to Registration and Elections as a temporary employee and worked with the team until her passing. Ms. Beverly will truly be missed.

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

Mr. Barron referenced the submitted proposal for EV for the June 9th Election

Dates & Times:

- May 18 – June 5
- Monday – Friday
- 9 AM – 4:30 PM
- Saturday, May 30, 9 AM – 4:30 PM

Locations:

- Alpharetta Library
- C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center
- Sandy Springs Library
- South Annex

Mr. Barron explained that the decision to reduce the robust **EV** program is due to the Global Pandemic and **SOS's** decision to mail every active registered voter In Georgia an absentee application. **Mr. Barron** informed the Board that the response to the mailers has exceeded the turnout for the 2016 General Primary of 13.75%. **Mr. Barron** expressed his personal responsibility for the health and safety of poll workers and staff. There are also still renovations that prevent the use of Northside, Buckhead, and Ponce De Leon Libraries.

Dr. Ruth inquired about the efforts of locating an **EV** location in Buckhead, with the understanding that certain locations are unavailable

Mr. Barron explained that on Election Day there are Buckhead locations available; however not for **EV**. **Mr. Barron** informed the Board of the **IT** Department's recommendation to not use Chastain Park Gym (City of Atlanta's facility) due to cybersecurity concerns.

Mr. Wingate asked is part of the issue for the minimum number of locations due to lack of staff

Mr. Barron explained no, staff is available; however, it is very difficult to ask personnel to risk their lives in this manner. **Mr. Barron** feared personnel contracting the Coronavirus while working; ~~although~~, although protective gear will be available.

Mr. Wingate warned that the ballot was long for the upcoming election

Mr. Barron confirmed the ballot was lengthy. **Mr. Barron** also mentioned requesting guidance from the **SOS** with regard to checking voter's temperatures before entering the poll and a few other concerns. No response from **SOS** to report at this time.

Mr. Johnson asked did the **DRE** get guidance from the Public Health Department regarding the amount of staff and social distancing

Mr. Barron answered that there is guidance with regards to the **PPE** but not regarding the amount of people in a location; but, a request will be rendered at the conclusion of this meeting

Ms. Nuriddin asked can you use multiple rooms in one location, such as C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center

Mr. Barron responded that the **DRE** can review the option presented by **Ms. Nuriddin**

Dr. Ruth requested face shields for poll workers

Mr. Evans informed the Board that face shields were ordered

Ms. Nuriddin inquired about procedures for voting In-person after a voter has requested an absentee ballot

Mr. Barron noted that the procedures have not changed; however, it is on a larger scale.

Procedure:

- Poll workers/ Early Voting Staff will contact Voter Registration Division
- Absentee ballot request will be cancelled, with a reason
- Absentee ballot will be spoiled, if available
- Voter will sign an Affidavit, attesting to the cancellation of the requested absentee ballot

Mr. Barron recommended that voters who requested an absentee by mail should use that method to cast their ballot instead of showing up to the polls.

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the recommendation of the Director and staff for EV locations for June 9, 2020 Election. The motion was made by Ms. Nuriddin, seconded by Mr. Wingate and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

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

Mr. Barron explained due to another postponement in the Election, the contract is the same as the previous Amendment; the only change is the date of the election.

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the amended Amendment No. 1 of the Intergovernmental Agreement for the City of Atlanta. The motion was made by Mr. Wingate, seconded by Dr. Ruth and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

#8- APPROVAL OF PRECINCT PROPOSALS: 01/20, 05/20, 06/20, 07/20, 08/20, 10/20, 11/20, 12/20, 13/20, 14/20, 15/20

Mr. Evans explained the precinct proposals. All polling locations are American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant and all impacted voters will be notified 30 days prior to the next scheduled election.

Mr. Evans explained proposals 1/20; 5/20 - 8/20 were Senior Living Facilities that are unsure whether they can be a polling location in the near future due COVID-19 concerns:

01/20 04K proposed move to **West Hunter Street Baptist Church** from **Abernathy Towers**.

05/20 07M proposed move to **Cathedral of St. Philip** from **Brighton Gardens Buckhead**.

06/20 08G proposed move to **Cathedral of St. Philip** from **Cathedral Towers**.

07/20 09A proposed move to **Northwest Library at Scott's Crossing** from **Marietta Road High Rise**

08/20 11P proposed move to **William Walker Recreation Center** from **Ashbury Harris Epworth Towers**

Mr. Evans explained proposals 10/20 - 15/20 (emergency temporary polling location changes) were due to conflicts at Fulton County Schools, now that the election has been postponed. Renovations are scheduled to begin in June 2020:

10/20 JC09 proposed move to **Taylor Road Middle School** due to renovations at **Chattahoochee High School**

11/20 JC11 proposed move to **Johns Creek High School** due to renovations at **State Bridge Crossing Elementary**

12/20 SS16 proposed move to **Cogburn Woods Elementary School** due to renovations at **Hopewell Middle School**

13/20 RW22A proposed move to **Hillside Elementary School** due to renovations at **Centennial High School**

14/20 SS26 proposed move to **Woodland Elementary School** due to renovations at **North Springs High School**

15/20 EP01A/B proposed move to **Feldwood Elementary School** due to renovations at **C.H. Gullatt Elementary**

School

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve all proposals as listed was made by Mr. Wingate, seconded by Ms. Nuriddin 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 11:39 a.m.

The meeting adjourned.

Prepared by,

Mariska Bodison, Board Secretary