



APPROVED MINUTES

BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS REGULAR MEETING – SEPTEMBER 12, 2019

The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections met in Regular Session on Thursday, September 12, 2019, at 10:00 a.m., in Assembly Hall of the The Government Center Building, 141 Pryor Street, SW, Atlanta, Georgia 30303.

Presiding: Ms. Mary Carole Cooney, Chairperson

Other Board Members Present: Mr. Mark Wingate, Vice-Chairperson
Ms. Vernetta K. Nuriddin
Dr. Kathleen Ruth

Board Member(s) Absent: Mr. Aaron V. Johnson

Staff Attending: Mr. Richard Barron, Director; Mr. Ralph Jones, Registration Chief; Mr. Blake Evans, Elections Chief; Ms. Brenda McCloud, Administrative Manager; Ms. Sharon Benjamin, Deputy Elections Chief; Mr. Johnny Harris, Elections Officer; Mrs. Pamela Coman, Registration Manager; Ms. Breana Jenkins, Administrative Coordinator I; Mr. David Lowman, County Attorney; Ms. Jessica Corbitt, PIO & Director of External Affairs

Guests Attending: Foris Webb, III (City of Atlanta), George Balbona, Leslie Wolte, Patty Nathan, Saira Draper (DPG), Sally FitzGerald (League of Women Voters), Cassie Harris, Milia Akkouris, Katrina Griessman

#1– APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

#2– COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RESPONSE

George Balbona referenced a previous **BRE** meeting with regards to the Secretary of State's My Voter Page failing to update voter status during the 2018 General Election. Also, **Mr. Balbona** welcomed the Board's newest member, **Dr. Kathleen Ruth**

OLD BUSINESS

#3– APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting – August 8, 2019
- Special Meeting – August 23, 2019

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Regular Meeting on August 8, 2019 and Special Meeting from August 23, 2019. 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 AUGUST 2019

- Early Voting (EV) began August 26, 2019
- Five EV Locations:
 - **C.T Martin Natatorium & Recreation Center**
 - **East Point Library**
 - **Fairburn Library**
 - **Government Center**
 - **South Fulton Service Center**
- Poll Worker Training is ongoing
- 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
- August 25 L&A Testing will begin for the November General Election
- An overlap between the Special Runoff Election in October and the start of early voting for the November General and Special Election
 - Early Voting for the November General and Special election begins October 15, 2019
 - The Special Election Runoff is October 15, 2019
 - One Early Voting Location and Election Day Poll will be impacted, **Wolf Creek Library**
- Total voter registration applications received in 2019: **215,0670**
- **50,028** voter registration applications received in August including NCOA's, confirmation letters
- As of September 1st, **830,334** (737,800 active and 92,534 inactive) registered voters reside in Fulton County
- Preparing for National Voter Registration Day on September 24, 2019
- VEO Team actively attending events around the County

Ms. Nuriddin inquired about L&A testing for the current election

Mr. Barron informed **BRE** that testing began on August 15, 2019

Dr. Ruth inquired if the number of incoming supplemental staff would be sufficient for the department's needs

Mr. Barron informed the **BRE** that with the incoming additional staff **DRE** would be adequately staffed

Mr. Wingate mentioned a complaint received regarding the Commission District 6 race being two pages on the ballot

Mr. Barron informed the **BRE** that the department had not heard this complaint. However, it is possible for the ballot to be two pages with the number of candidates and screen magnification. **Mr. Barron** noted that you are unable to cast a ballot without viewing the entire ballot

Chairperson Cooney asked about the Felon numbers on the Monthly Operations Report

Mr. Jones responded that the number indicates the number of felons identified that have been mailed letters but have not been removed, that number is zero

Chairperson Cooney inquired about out of County transfers

Mr. Jones informed the **BRE** that there are several reasons for removal from the voter roll in Georgia:

- Felons
- Voter request to be removed
- Transfers out of County
- Moved out of State
- Vital Records
- Duplication
- Mental Incompetency
- Error
- Inactive to Deletion
- Not Verified Deletion

#5- UPDATE ON SEPTEMBER 17TH SPECIAL ELECTIONS

- **Board of Commissioners (BOC), District 6**
- **Atlanta Public Schools (APS) Board of Education (BOE), District 2**
- L&A Testing is complete for the upcoming elections
- Testing of optical scanners are ongoing before the upcoming elections
- Total Polling Locations: 59 Total Precincts: 133
- ExpressPoll Saturday will occur this coming Saturday, September 14th
- Fairburn Library had a plumbing issue that delayed EV operations for a few hours for day one of early voting
- Coordinating with Fulton County Police to deliver Election Results to the Election Preparation Center on Election Night
- Commission District 6 polls close at 7 p.m. and City of Atlanta, BOE District 2 polls close at 8 p.m.
- There will be an overlap between the Special Runoff Election in October and the start of early voting for the November General / Special Municipal Election
 - Early Voting for the November General /Special Municipal election begins October 15, 2019
 - The Special Runoff Election is October 15, 2019
 - One Early Voting Location and Election Day Poll will be impacted, **Wolf Creek Library**

Chairperson Cooney inquired about CT Martin Natatorium Center being utilized as a polling location

Mr. Barron said yes, CT Martin Natatorium Center is open on Election Day for voters assigned to one of the two precincts in this polling location

NEW BUSINESS

#6- UPDATE ON AMENDED CONTRACTS

Mr. Evans mentioned the delay of contracts returning due to Amendment I being added to the contracts in August 2019; Amendments I, IGA contracts, and payment should be received by September 18th from all municipalities.

Chairperson Cooney asked if the **BRE** is required to take any action once amended contracts are received

Mr. Evans stated yes, the Amendments will require **BRE** action

#7- UPDATE ON NEW VOTING SYSTEM

Mr. Barron informed **BRE** that **SOS** disseminated the initial training schedule and **DRE** is scheduled for October 8 – 9, 2019. **Mr. Barron** is unable to attend training due to mandatory Budget Hearing for 2020 on the listed dates.

- 5 Personnel will attend training: Elections Division and Voter Education and Outreach staff
- **DRE** will receive Full allocation from RFP
- Demo equipment will arrive before mid-October
- Requesting more equipment to be adequately equipped for future elections

- o Training equipment still pending from vendor

Dr. Ruth inquired about **DRE** visiting Pilot Counties

Mr. Barron mentioned that the **SOS** posted a bulletin stating that visiting pilot counties is discouraged because there should not be any disturbances to Election Day operations. Pilot counties are encouraged to share experiences post-election

Dr. Ruth requested an update on the voter education and outreach plan

Mr. Barron mentioned the meetings with **DRE** and **External Affairs** to discuss Outreach plans, and he informed the **BRE** of the departure of **Ms. April Majors**, Public Affairs Manager, from Fulton County

Ms. Corbitt addressed the Board's inquiry on Voter Education and Outreach. **Ms. Corbitt** assured the **BRE** that voters will have an opportunity to gain accessible information on the new equipment through videos, live demonstrations, brochures, and social media. The plan is to get the information out to every voter

Mr. Barron mentioned that a possible challenge on Election Day for future elections will be ensuring that each voter retrieves their ballot and scans it into the scanning system. **Mr. Barron** believes additional staff will be required until voters become accustomed to the new system

Mr. Wingate requested a calendar of upcoming events to share with all Fulton County Voters.

Mr. Barron expressed **DRE** will have a series of events and this information will be easily accessible as soon as the new website is online. The scheduled date for new Fulton County Website is October 2019

#8- ABSENTEE BY MAIL OVERVIEW

Mr. Jones explained:

- A request to obtain a ballot is submitted by the voter
- The voter registration division has 2 days to make a decision whether to mail a ballot, or reject the request
- The ballot is mailed or a rejection letter is sent
- The ballot is then returned and once received, the Voter Registration Division has 2 additional days to determine whether or not the ballot will be counted or rejected

An absentee request must include the following:

- Name as registered
- Date of election
- Type of election
- Address as registered
- Signature
- Address where ballot is to be mailed
- Date of birth and phone number are not required, but preferred

To obtain an absentee request application:

- Website: www.fultonelections.com
- Call Absentee Division: (404) 612-7060
- In person: Downtown, North or South Annex

To send a completed absentee request application:

***Voter Registration prefers electronic submissions for tracking purposes**

- Email: elections.absentee@fultoncountyga.gov
- Fax: (404) 612-3697
- Mail: Fulton County Voter Registration, Attn: Absentee Ballot Division, 130 Peachtree Street SW, Suite 2186, Atlanta, GA 30303
- In person: Downtown, North or South Annex

Absentee Application Rejection:

- Address on the request does not match the voter registration application on file, unless disabled
- Application was not signed: Voter Registration will mail an application to complete with rejection letter
- Cannot be identified as a registered voter
- Registered in another county: Voter Registration will fax application to county registered
- Registration cancelled
- Party affiliation is not indicated: Voter Registration will mail an application to complete with rejection letter

Timeline:

- Request can be submitted 180 days prior to an election
- The deadline to send ballot requested is COB the Friday before an election

Mailing Deadline:

- Municipal Election: 22 days prior
- Countywide/Special Election: 45 days prior
- Runoff Election: as soon as possible

To Return Absentee Ballot:

- Mail: Fulton County Voter Registration, Attn: Absentee Ballot Division, 130 Peachtree Street SW, Suite 2186, Atlanta, GA 30303
- Must be received by close of polls on Election Day (downtown, North or South Annex)
- Ballot must be signed

Absentee Ballot Rejection:

- Ballot envelope (Oath of Elector) not signed
- Signature does not match the signature on file (**No Rejection, Ballot becomes a provisional ballot**)
- Ballot late
- Ballot dropped off at poll and it should have been delivered to one of the VR offices

Ms. Nuriddin expressed a previous request made to **Mr. Barron** to inform **Mr. Jones** to present the Voter Registration rejected Absentee Application for examination

Mr. Jones mentioned the documents are available for review

Chairperson Cooney inquired about previous issues concerning the mailing system regarding Absentee By Mail

Mr. Jones explained that each mailing issue varies; however, most concerns involve the mailing system and the ability to track ballots

Mr. Wingate asked about the tracking system **DRE** discussed months ago

Mr. Jones mentioned Pitney Bowes has given **DRE** the ability to track the outgoing mail

Mr. Wingate inquired about the details of the tracking system that Pitney Bowes have implemented

Mr. Barron explained the tracking system is similar to a UPS tracking system; however, **DRE** can provide the **BRE** with more information

Mr. Jones expressed **DRE** is still working with Pitney Bowes to further assist Fulton County voters

Ms. Nuriddin requested an explanation of why a previous request was not fulfilled

Mr. Barron informed **Ms. Nuriddin** those documents can be viewed in the office

Chairperson Cooney inquired about rejected Absentee Ballots due to signature match and Exact Match

Mr. Jones declared that most of their rejections are for late return or no signature; however, VRD's staff makes every effort to contact the voter to ensure their ballot is cast. Furthermore, due to HB 316, Exact Match is no longer mandated

#9- FINANCE, SOUNDINGS REQUEST

Mr. Barron informed the **BRE** of efforts by **DRE** to adequately staff the department, purchase extra equipment, other necessities for the new voting equipment and for the 2020 Elections Cycle. **Mr. Barron** informed the **BRE** of the surveys completed regarding staff, and found that the **DRE** has the smallest staff of all the metro counties; however, the largest number of registered voters. Currently DRE's staff ratio per registered voter is the lowest of all the metro counties and several like size counties throughout the United States.

- Fulton County: One Fulltime staff per 39, 501 voters
- Cobb County: One Fulltime staff per 21,072 voters
- Gwinnett County: One Fulltime staff per 22,976 voters
- DeKalb County: One Fulltime staff per 35,175 voters
- Hillsborough, FL: One Fulltime staff per 20,511 voters

Mr. Barron listed a few items from his Soundings request being presented to the County Manager, Finance Department, and the Board of Commissioners

- 10-15 Personnel (Permanent & Long-term Supplemental Staff)
- Forklift
- Secure Carriers for the new voting system
- Central Scanner
- Precinct Paper Scanners
- Poll Books
- Mobile Voting

Chairperson Cooney expressed the Board's willingness to assist **DRE**

#10- EARLY VOTING DISCUSSION FOR NOVEMBER 2019 GENERAL/SPECIAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION

- Alpharetta Branch Library
- College Park Historical Bldg.
- East Point Library
- East Roswell Branch Library
- Fairburn Library
- Milton Library
- Park Place at Newton
- Roswell City Hall

➤ South Fulton Service Center

➤ Wolf Creek Library

CT Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center will not be utilized as an early voting location during the General/ Special Election as there are no elections in the City of Atlanta or close proximity to this facility

Chairperson Cooney reminded the Board of the Special Called Meeting on August 23, 2019 to address the concerns of the citizens regarding early voting locations for the September 17th Special Election

Mr. Wingate asked about the early voting schedule for the Special Runoff Election held on October 15th

Mr. Barron informed **BRE** that early voting for the Runoff election will be held at the same five locations, from October 7th- 11th at 8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

- **C.T Martin Natatorium & Recreation Center**
- **East Point Library**
- **Fairburn Library**
- **Government Center**
- **South Fulton Service Center**

Ms. Nuriddin expressed gratitude to **Sharon Benjamin** and **DRE** staff for successfully coordinating and opening two additional early voting locations on short notice.

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. Dr. Ruth seconded the motion.** Collectively, the Board agreed to adjourn at 11:29 a.m.

The meeting adjourned.

Prepared by,

Mariska Bodison, Board Secretary