

City of Richmond



CHERLYN STARLET STEVENS
CHAIRWOMAN

JOHN N. AMBROSE
VICE-CHAIR

JOYCE KING SMITH
SECRETARY

Electoral Board

Meeting Minutes

April 12th, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Electoral Board was opened with Chairwoman Cherlyn S. Stevens presiding.

In attendance were Joyce Smith, Secretary, John N. Ambrose, Vice-Chair, Keith Balmer, General Registrar of Elections, Kelsey Zentmyer, Training Supervisor and Development Supervisor, Caitlin Shelton, Executive Assistant to the Registrar, Christian Javins, Assistant Manager of the Tech Center, Tyler Lincks, Representative of Print Elect, and Cynthia Johnson, Absentee Coordinator.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no public comment items.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

All electoral board members have gone over the minutes and are in accordance to approve them. Vice-Chair Ambrose makes a motion to approve all previous minutes. All were in favor, **the motion passes.**

VOTER TURNOUT AND OTHER DATA FROM THE MARCH SPECIAL ELECTION

Chairwoman Stevens turns this discussion over to Registrar Balmer. Registrar Balmer states that the total turnout for the Special Election that was on March 28th, was 4,009 voters out of 56,764 voters who were eligible to vote. Registrar Balmer states that this information means that the turnout for the special election was 7%.

DEMO FOR THE DS300

Before the demonstration of the DS-300, Registrar Balmer states that he and Christian Javins went up to Spotsylvania County several weeks ago to see the DS-300 in person. Registrar Balmer states that the DS-300 is a faster version of what we already have, which is the DS-200. It will be a big benefit to our voters because it processes ballots faster. It will be a big benefit to our election officers because it will prevent most ballots from getting jammed. Registrar Balmer mentions that he enjoys how fast the DS-300 prints the results tapes, which will allow our election officers to report our results faster.

The reason Registrar Balmer is showcasing this to the Electoral Board now is because the DS-300 will help immensely during the presidential election in 2024.

Tyler Lincks, account manager for Printelect, began the demonstration. Joining Mr. Lincks for the demonstration is Chris Andrews, Vice President of PrintElect, Gary Fox, account manager for Printelect, and Glen Stoudemire, Field Services Manager. Mr. Lincks begins the demonstration by stating that "the DS-300 is all the things that you like about the DS-200, but it is also an improvement of anything that may have caused you any consternation." Mr. Lincks mentions that there's a few enhancements that he wants to touch on and will show the device in action. There is a new and different key system and there's resist locks, which make it easier for you to put security seals on them, which provides a more secure lock system. The shape of the ballot box is a little bit different as well. It's smaller, especially at the top because it is more narrow. Mr. Lincks states that if you asked him to say what it is about the DS-200 that he would like to see improved, there are a few things which are now incorporated into the DS-300. One of them is the stability of the ballot box. This will help in the sense of storage. There is also an improvement in the stability of the design. The DS-300 uses the same type of key as the DS-200. It turns on the same if it's plugged in for power. Once the screen is lifted, it turns on automatically and it turns on faster. Mr. Lincks states that one of the big improvements, the most important, is that the

DS-300 has an improved processor. It's going to process the data faster and captures the ballot data more efficiently. This has several benefits. The startup is faster, and the scanning of the ballots is faster. Opening the polls and closing the polls will be a much faster process for our election officers. Mr. Lincks states that next year is going to be a super high volume election, and that the DS-300 is going to really improve several functions and several things that our poll workers do which will save a bunch of time. Voters and Officers of Election will see that the DS-300 scans the ballot a little faster and that the feel of the ballot path will be smoother, which will greatly decrease the chance that anything will obstruct the ballot. The ballot path now is just two rods, and the ballot just rides over those two rods. There's no cross pieces, there's nothing else a ballot could catch on to. This improvement helps the issue of ballot jams. The DS-300 also has an integrated handle on the back. This handle makes it a lot easier to roll and transport the machine as it's now more stable. There are new certification standards that have been promulgated by the federal Election Assistance Commission. As of November 15 of this year, any new systems that are brought in for certification will only be tested against the 2.0 standards, not against the 1.0 standards. With that in mind, Mr. Lincks states that the DS-300 has already designed their actual hardware differences that are a part of those 2.0 requirements. And that the DS-300 is ready, it just needs a software upgrade in order to move to a 2.0 compliant version. But all of the hardware components have been put in place, and are already in place on this device. Moreover, Registrar Balmer states that 96 units is the amount of machines the Office of Elections will be purchasing. Registrar Balmer also stated that he has already spoke with Jerry Richardson, Deputy Director, and with his liaison with the City of Richmond's budget department and that the Office of Elections will have the required funds to purchase the 96 units for the approximate cost of \$650,000. Mr. Lincks responded by saying that the office can execute an agreement prior to July 1, 2023. PrintElect could begin a delivery process towards the end of the first week of July, and get them delivered, get them accepted and be ready well in advance of when programming takes place in September. With all the information given to the Electoral Board regarding the new DS-300, Vice-Chair Ambrose makes a motion to purchase 96 units of the new DS-300 as soon as possible under the city's fiscal rules. The motion is seconded by Secretary Smith. All members of the Electoral Board are in favor, **the motion passes.**

POLL BOOK DISCUSSION

Registrar Balmer starts this agenda item by stating that there are two issues regarding the Express Polls that need to be discussed. Number one is the fact that for the November election, which is when the Express Polls made their debut, and the February Special Election, all of the voter credit did not upload. Only 50% voter credit was successfully updated from the poll books for the first two elections in which they were used. Out of 51,000 total voters who cast their ballots on Election Day in the November General Election, only 26,000 voters received voter credit from the poll books. Out of 17,000 total voters who cast their ballots on Election Day in the February Special Election, only 9,000 received voter credit from the poll books. To combat this issue, office staff is going into VERIS and assigning manual vote credit to those voters whom the poll books missed. In order to do this, office staff has to review the tickets from every voter checked into the poll book. This is a very labor-intensive project and it won't be complete until right before the June primary. For the March Special Election, the success rate was 25 out of 27 precincts. Registrar Balmer stated that just based on the previous large special election, it's getting better. Moreover, Registrar Balmer mentions that the second issue is that the voters who were sent an absentee ballot, some of those voters came up in the poll books as not being an absentee voter. This is an issue because our election officers will naturally assume that these voters can be checked in on the poll books and be given a ballot. Voters who were sent an absentee ballot should be flagged in the poll book. This will prevent anybody from voting twice in the election. Mr. Lincks responds to these issues by stating that he's advocating for a vigorous response from ES&S and that they're going to have to see this function more or less flawlessly for the June primary.

BALLOT ORDER FOR JUNE 20TH PRIMARY ELECTION

For this discussion, Registrar Balmer states that the ballot order for the upcoming special election is postponed due to the State Board of Elections decision to extend the filing deadline by 10 days. The deadline for candidates to file their paperwork is now April 23rd. Registrar Balmer mentions that because of this new deadline, he's unable to order the ballots until after April 23rd filing deadline. Registrar Balmer states that the office will revert back to using the Express Vote ballot marking devices for Early Voting. The only preprinted ballots that will be ordered will be used for curbside voting only. Registrar Balmer also mentions that this upcoming election will be the first election with the new redistricting lines. There are no Republican candidates who filed paperwork to run in any of the new legislative districts in the city of Richmond. Therefore the election in June will be a Democratic primary only. For the 14th Senate District race, it will be Lamont Bagby versus Katie Gooch. For the House of Delegates, only one person filed to run in the 77th district, Councilman Michael Jones. There will be no primary race for the 77th House seat and Mr. Jones will appear on the ballot in November. In the 78th only the incumbent Betsy Carr has filed paperwork. No other candidate qualified to run against her. Therefore there will be no primary race for the 78th House seat and Delegate Carr will appear on the ballot in November. For the 79th we do have a contest between Rae Cousins, Councilwoman Ann-Frances Lambert, and Richard Walker. As for the precincts that will be involved in this upcoming election, it will be every precinct in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th districts (except for 404 and 412), every precinct in the 5th district (except 509), every precinct in the 6th and 7th districts. And only 3 precincts in the 8th district (802, 806 (just the house), and 811) are participating. No precincts from the 9th District are participating in the June primary.

DATES AND TIMES FOR EARLY VOTING

By law, there has to be 45 days of early voting at the Office of Elections. As for the satellites, Registrar Balmer states that the data from the past elections, tell him that 90% of the people who vote at Hickory Hill are from the 8th and 9th district. If Hickory Hill was to open as a satellite for early voting, it will in essence be just for three precincts. Chairwoman Stevens responds to this by stating that her stance is to not have satellites because there is 45 days of early voting in this office and no Sunday voting. She states that she doesn't think it's money well spent, especially with the low turnout rate the election will have. With this, Vice Chair Ambrose makes a motion to not have any satellite in-person early voting locations. Chairwoman Stevens seconds, Secretary Smith opposed and **the motion passes**. For the topic of Sunday voting, Vice-Chair Ambrose makes a motion to not have Sunday voting during the in-person early voting period for the June primaries. Chairwoman Stevens seconds, Secretary Smith opposed and **the motion passes**. By law, there will be two Saturdays available for early voting that will be on June 10th and June 17th.

DATES AND TIMES FOR L&A TESTING AND PROVISIONAL BALLOT MEETING

Christian Javins, Assistant Manager of the Tech Center, starts this discussion by stating that they will be testing two DS-200 and a back-up for the Office of Elections location. With that, Christian requests that his team start testing the 26th of April, and have the electoral board come in the 4th of May at 9am. For the provisional ballot meeting, the board decided for it to be on June 23rd, 2023 at noon. Lastly, for the testing of the poll books, that date will be June 18th, 2023 at 2pm.

NEW TRAINERS FOR ELECTION OFFICER CLASSES

Kelsey Zentmyer, Training Supervisor and Development Supervisor, starts this topic of discussion by sharing that her and Registrar Balmer have discussed and decided to have a few of our election officers help teach some of the training classes. Kelsey states that these officers have so many ideas on how to train and how to do things better and more efficiently. This election for June, there will be election officers helping to teach the paperwork classes. The three new trainers will be Quay Bowie from Precinct 504, Stacy Harris from Precinct 812, and LaTonya Crockett from Precinct 307. They will each teach two classes of the paperwork class. In the future, Kelsey states that they will be adding a new online course which will be created in collaboration with Precinct 206 Chief Brooks Braun. Moreover, Registrar Balmer states that they will be establishing a new program called "train the trainer." The office will spend time training our new trainers so that they can have more insight on how to teach the paperwork classes and train other election officers. Registrar Balmer also mentions that not only will there be a return to more in-person classes, but that those classes will feature more hands-on training as well.

NEW BUSINESS

For new business, Secretary Smith uses this time to discuss possible improvements that can be added towards election officers and their return of paperwork the night of an Election. Secretary Smith reiterates that office staff should have proper knowledge of all checklists, what is needed and what is not needed, so that paperwork can be more accurate and smooth at the end of the night. Registrar Balmer turns this discussion over to Cynthia Johnson, Absentee Coordinator, to discuss what the office is doing to address this concern. Ms. Johnson states that the office is going to implement internal procedures which includes multiple checks-and-balances to ensure that paperwork that goes to the precinct is correct. Going forward, all paperwork that is packed in the chief's bag will be audited by multiple people. In addition, there will be a sign-off sheet on each of the blue smart boxes that will require two signatures, one from an office of elections staff and the other from the chief election officer. Registrar Balmer states that paperwork needs to go through multiple layers and eyes before it gets to packing in order to catch any clerical errors that will be corrected before it is handed over to a chief election officer.

Vice-Chair Ambrose brought up a topic of discussion under new business. He states that at the last public meeting in early March, the board went into closed session discussing some issues. Vice-Chair Ambrose mentions that he thought that the board left off saying that there was going to be some research done that would be brought back to the board regarding some election officers. Caitlin Shelton, Executive Assistant to the Registrar, answers Vice-Chair Ambrose's question by stating that the research was complete and that they went forward with paying the election officer for working on election day. Ms. Shelton states that the election officer in question was confused as to whether she was a poll worker or election officer. With this, Ms. Shelton moves on to state that there will be more training provided for the upcoming June primaries and that by that time, the election officer will have all the tools needed in order to do what is expected of her as an election officer. The last topic for new business will be from Registrar Balmer on the upcoming "I Voted" sticker contest. Registrar Balmer states that the contest went live on Monday, April 10th and that the way that this is going to work is that the office staff will select the top 4 finalists with the best designs. Print Elect, the vendor of our ballots, will help us with creating a special ballot for this mock election and the ballot will have the images of the top 4 designs. In addition, there will be DS-200's taken to the schools so that the students can experience the process of voting for their favorite design. The office will also create a special poll book to ensure that nobody votes more than once, which is a good educational tool to introduce the students to the importance of voting.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

There was no public comment of items that are not on the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chairwoman Cherlyn S. Stevens.

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NEXT MEETING DATE

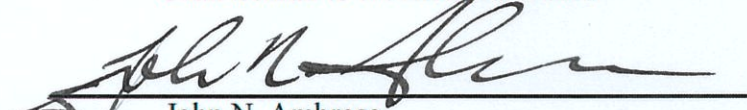
The next meeting date will be at 2pm on Wednesday May 10th, 2023. The meeting will take place at the Office of Elections in the 2nd floor conference room.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned



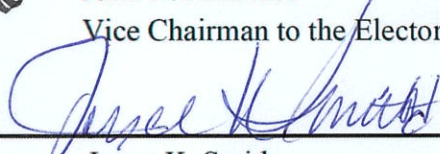
Cherlyn S. Stevens

Chairwoman to the Electoral Board



John N. Ambrose

Vice Chairman to the Electoral Board



Joyce K. Smith

Secretary to the Electoral Board