

# City of Richmond



JOYCE KING SMITH  
SECRETARY

CHERLYN STARLET STEVENS  
CHAIRWOMAN

JOHN N. AMBROSE  
VICE-CHAIR

## Electoral Board

Meeting Minutes  
February 1st, 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, Katherin Cardozo-Robledo, Executive Assistant to the Electoral Board, and Tyler Lincks, Representative of Print Elect.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

Member of the public Phyllis Riina, had a comment on the November 8, 2022 Election Day e-pollbook problems. They have stated that multiple precincts experienced problems using the new e-pollbooks when checking in voters and found inconsistencies between e-pollbook data and paper poll-book data. Phyllis states that this situation contributed to some incomplete SOR reporting. With this said, Phyllis requests that additional steps need to be taken to ensure this situation does not occur in any future election. Additional steps such as the general registrar to obtain a written report from ES&S on their full investigation of the problem, for election officers and the call center staff to receive and give clear and consistent instructions, for the SOR form to be revised to include lines for each e-pollbook and paper poll-book counts, and lastly for there to be more than one copy of paper poll-books to be included in precinct pouches for precincts that have higher voter turnout on Election Day.

### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

There were no copies of minutes for approval. However, Vice-Chair Ambrose mentions that there seems to be a broken link on the office of elections website for the minutes of October 20th, 2021.

### **DISCUSSION REGARDING ELECTORAL BOARD ELECTIONS**

Registrar Balmer starts the discussion by mentioning how the first electoral board meeting of every year, that by law should always take place in February, the Electoral Board must vote on the alignment regarding who will be serving as the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. That being said, the electoral board needs to decide the new alignment of positions. By law the Chair and Secretary must be of opposing parties. With this, John N. Ambrose has nominated Starlet Stevens to be Chair, and Joyce Smith has seconded this nomination. All were in favor, and the motion passes for C. Starlet Stevens to be the Chairwoman to the electoral board. Due to C. Starlet Stevens becoming the new Chairwoman, that means that the Secretary must be Joyce Smith and John N. Ambrose as Vice-Chair. All were in favor of these nominations and the **motion passes** for the new Chairwoman, Vice-Chair, and Secretary.



## **DISCUSSION REGARDING CONDUCT OF THE ELECTORAL BOARD**

Chairwoman Stevens starts this discussion by mentioning how Registrar Balmer suggests that when the electoral board votes on something and decides to implement a certain policy, that it needs to be put into writing and have it in a notebook that will be available in Katherin's office (Assistant to the electoral board). The reason for this, is that if someone would like to question a particular topic, the electoral board will have in writing what a certain policy is in place for any kind of situation. Moreover, Chairwoman Stevens proceeds to state that the electoral board is not to cater to special interest groups, the electoral board is here to make sure the elections go according to law. The electoral board is over the election officers, the staff of Registrar Balmer is under his preview. The electoral board is not to interfere with any staff member, if one needs to do so, address it to Registrar Balmer. This being said, Chairwoman Stevens entertains a motion that the electoral board understands this chain of command that election officers answer to the board, and that the office staff answers to Registrar Balmer, besides Katherin Cardozo who is a member of the staff and the executive assistant to the electoral board. All were in favor, and the **motion passes**.

## **DISCUSSION REGARDING ELECTORAL BOARD POLICY DOCUMENTATION**

Chairwoman Stevens mentions how there are lots of questions towards new election officers. In this realm, Chairwoman Stevens wants to implement a policy to institute that the election officers names are to be presented to the Electoral Board, with their political affiliation being noted. Chairwoman Stevens states how there has been too many instances where someone from a political party comes in the office, and asks Caitlin, Election Officer Manager, to put a certain officer in a certain precinct. Because of this, Chairwoman Stevens wants to institute a policy that when names of election officers and new election officers (nomination package) are submitted by political parties, for that list to be turned in to the administrative assistant to the electoral board, Katherin Cardozo, and for this list to be directed to the electoral board, and not to a staff member of the office of elections. Secretary Smith makes a motion to approve Chairwoman Stevens policy proposal. Vice-Chair Ambrose seconds this motion. All were in favor, the **motion passes**. Chairwoman Stevens proceeds to make another policy proposal that any election officer that is to be considered as an assistant chief or chief, must work as an election officer for minimum 2 years, when practical, not including certain situations that will be brought attention to the electoral board. Secretary Smith makes a motion to approve Chairwoman Stevens policy. Vice-Chair Ambrose seconds this motion. All were in favor, **the motion passes**. In relation to this topic, Chairwoman Stevens believes that the electoral board should implement a policy that if election officer classes are offered only in-person, that it must be taken in-person with no exceptions being made. This includes Chief and Assistant Chief classes, paperwork classes, and voting machine classes. Vice-Chair Ambrose makes a motion to approve this mandatory training policy by Chairwoman Stevens. All were in favor, **the motion passes**.

Registrar Balmer comments that he envisions for the general public, election officers, and the electoral board to have a easy access to new policies that are voted on in the board meetings. With this, Registrar Balmer wants to develop a "Policy Manual" in the electoral board tab located on the office of elections website, for new policies to be more easily accessible online to the public.

## **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE POST-ELECTION REPORT**

For this discussion, Registrar Balmer mentions how when he was at the Department of Elections, the Commissioner would present to the State Board a "Post-Election Report" that is based on what happened during that prior November election. Registrar Balmer wants to adopt this post-election report however, in the midst of working on that report while also dealing with a special election, is not ready yet but will be in the very near future for the electoral board to review. This report will introduce charts and bar graphs that will break down voter turnout in a way that provides a history of the previous election in a visual perspective.



## **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CREATION OF THE PRECINCT CHIEF WORK GROUP**

Registrar Balmer starts this discussion by stating his creation of a "Precinct Chief Work group." The purpose of this work group, is to constantly look for ways to improve training with election officers and to improve the different things regarding what election officers have to do on Election Day. Registrar Balmer mentions that this work group has met for the first time several weeks ago, and those who are in this work group are the following: Debra Williams, Rina Hutchins, Robley Jones, Chris Allen, Robin Pratt, and John Gerner. These individuals are established Chiefs and will give insight to the General Registrar on methods to improve election officer training, specifically the Statement of Results. A few recommendations that these election officer chiefs have mentioned are suggestions on the SMART Box and bringing back paperwork class. The SMART box is something that is provided to election officers that includes all the documents needed for Election Day. For the SMART box, the Chief work group suggests to pack the stuff located in the SMART box in the order in the time-frame you deal with things on Election day. Election officer, Robin Pratt, has rearranged our SMART box to recreate that vision. The office of elections staff will review Chief Pratt's suggestions and implement them for all precinct SMART boxes. As for the paperwork classes, the Chief work group mentions that these classes should include scenarios and put officers in certain situations to know what to do and how to do it depending on a certain issue. This will add a more hands-on experience for the election officers. Registrar Balmer states that these two recommendations will play out for the upcoming special election and in the future.

## **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE UPDATE ON POLL BOOKS DURING EARLY VOTING**

Registrar Balmer states that when creating the agenda for this board meeting, he was concerned about if we are going to see the same issues regarding the experience on Election Day with the new poll books and if it will be seen again for the upcoming special election. With this in mind, Registrar Balmer mentions that he wants to use the early voting period as a test-run for the new electronic poll books to see if the same issues of certain voters, those who have recently updated their voter registration, will arise again with that voter being placed in the wrong precinct. Registrar Balmer states that as of right now, the poll books are performing as they should, and that he has not seen anything resembling the issues we had for the past November General Election. Vice-Chair Ambrose then proceeds to ask the question that if the office has tested the "MyFi" to make sure that the precincts will not have problems regarding syncing problems and the poll books. Registrar Balmer answers by saying that in election officer classes, the chiefs will be told to plan ahead of time in the case that this issue arises on Election Day. In relation to this discussion, Tyler Lincks, a representative from Print Elect, stated that he will work on putting together an action item for a test plan of specifics with the the "MyFi's" and also assist with putting together a step-by-step and fall-back lines for the election officers if they were to face certain issues on Election Day.

## **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE "I VOTED" STICKER CONTEST**

Registrar Balmer said he has been in contact with the Chief of Staff at Richmond City Public Schools about having an "I Voted" sticker contest. This contest will be for high school students to present their best "I Voted" sticker design. The submission period for this contest will be from March 1 - mid April and the Office of elections staff will vote on the top four submissions. Registrar Balmer also mentions that he is looking to see if a special ballot can be created from Print Elect so that we can use the DS-200 for the top 4 designs to be voted on by the students as a way to introduce them to the voting process. The winning sticker design will be used for the upcoming November election 2023 and future elections for the next 3 years. Tyler Lincks, representative from Print Elect, states that they are looking into the progression of this idea and that it is a work in progress.



## **NEW BUSINESS**

Caitlin Shelton, Election Officer Manager gave the Board an update on where the office is for staffing the special election on February 21. In addition, Caitlin has some new officers for the board to approve as well. Caitlin states that there has been 6 precincts where chiefs have resigned. To date, 5 of these positions have been filled but precinct 903 is still in need of a Chief. As for staffing of election officers, Caitlin states that she has received 35 returned acknowledgment forms, which is a form that chiefs fill out to state what election officers will be working this election. Moreover, Caitlin additionally states that she has 1 new election officer to be approved for precinct 414, Francis Moore. Secretary Smith made a motion to accept this new election officer to be placed in precinct 414. Vice-Chair Ambrose seconds this motion. All were in favor, **the motion passes**. Vice-Chair Ambrose mentions that he would like to have a list of election officers and their names and assigned precinct so that electoral board members can be aware of the names of which officers are working in which precincts.

Another topic for new business, are the upcoming dates in relation to the special election. February 19th, 2023 at 4pm, the electoral board will come into the office for the L&A testing. February 21, 2023 is the special election day, where the board will come in at 5am. February 22, 2023 at 9am is when Canvass will begin. For the topic of Canvass day, Registrar Balmer mentions that he prefers that the canvass happens without the chiefs involvement unless they have to be there, to have more control of the environment. Chairwoman Stevens states to make sure these officers are available that day for a call in case they are needed. Registrar Balmer stated that he will start this method and if an issue should arise, we will switch back to appointments.

Back to the discussion of upcoming dates, the deadline to receive mail-in absentee ballots is February 24, 2023. The provisional ballot meeting will start on Friday, February 24 at 12:00 p.m., if it is not completed that day, it will resume on Monday, February 27 at 9:00 a.m.

The last topic of discussion for new business is the turnout of early voting. Registrar Balmer states that so far, in-person is around 1,800, Hickory Hill Community Center that has just opened up as an early voting site, had over 60 voters on the first day. By mail, the turnout rate of ballots is over 3,400, with mail coming in daily.

## **CLOSED SESSION - PERSONAL MATTER REGARDING AN ELECTION OFFICER**

Secretary Smith read the motion to hold a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act to discuss personal matter as it relates to election officers. The Certification of Closed Meeting was read by Secretary Smith according to Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Code of Virginia, all members of the Board signed "yes" to the certification unanimously.

## **CLOSED SESSION - COMPENSATION OF THE PREVIOUS GENERAL REGISTRAR**

Secretary Smith read the motion to hold a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act to revisit the approval of severance and vacation pay for the previous General Registrar. The Certification of Closed Meeting was read by Secretary Smith according to Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Code of Virginia, all members of the Board signed "yes" to the certification unanimously. Chairwoman Stevens made a motion that former Registrar J. Kirk Showalter be compensated for 1,100 vacation hours accrued during her employment with the City of Richmond. Secretary Smith seconds the motion. All were in favor, **the motion passes**.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

Susan Hogge requests the Board to accept Sharon Green as new Election Officer. Registrar Balmer makes the suggestion to have this individual be accepted as an officer of election. All were in favor, and the individual has been accepted.

**ADJOURNMENT**

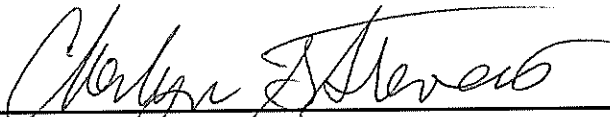
The meeting was adjourned by Chairwoman Cherlyn S. Stevens.

Meeting Minutes  
February 1st, 2023  
Page 5

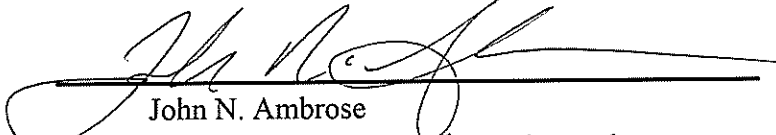
**NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting date will be February 19th, 2023 at 4pm, where the electoral board will come into the office for the L&A testing of voting machines that will be used for the Special Election.

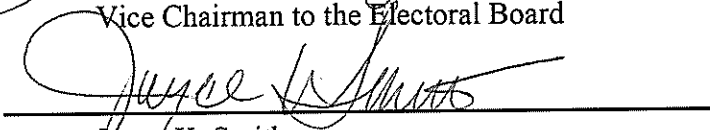
There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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