

PROCEEDINGS

BOARD OF ELECTION FOR WASHINGTON COUNTY, MD December 14, 1999

Present: Richard L. Coss, President
Charles Mobley, Jr., Republican Member
Marianne Schneider, Democratic Member
Dorothy M. Waters, Republican Alternate
James Sprecher, Democratic Alternate
Dorothy M. Kaetzel, Election Director II
Sharon C. Mackereth, Democrat Election Registrar

Richard Coss called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM. Roger Schlossberg, Attorney, and Kaye E. Robucci, Election Deputy Director I, were absent.

MINUTES: Marianne Schneider motioned and Charles Mobley seconded that the minutes of the November 9, 1999 meeting be approved as submitted. All were in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE: Dorothy informed the board that she sent letters to Senator Mikulski, Senator Sarbanes, Senator Munson, Congressman Bartlett, Linda Lamone, and Mayor Bruchey, informing them that we were successful in finding an adequate replacement for the Army Reserve Center. We will be using Christ Lutheran Church at 216 N. Cleveland Avenue in Hagerstown. Dorothy surveyed the other counties and none of them have had any problems with having to move out of their armories.

A letter was sent to Delegate Robert A. McKee, with copies to the balance of the delegation, regarding the request for election judges lists. Dorothy also sent a copy to each chairman of the central committees.

Dorothy stated that a letter was sent to Clyde I. Gaylor on the accessibility survey of the Old Downsville School, informing him that the survey revealed a few minor changes need to be done before the election in March of 2000. Dorothy thanked him for allowing us to use the building for our meeting in October on polling place accessibility. Also, a letter was sent to Norman Naylor, Horst Fencing Company, informing him of the outcome of the survey done on the building used for District 24. Dorothy requested that they repair a threshold at the entrance into the polling place. A suggestion was made that a piece of plywood laid there would suffice.

Dorothy informed the board that she sent a memo to Annajean McKnight regarding liability insurance for polling places. A list of polling places, contact persons and phone numbers was included. Insurance would have to be effective March 2 – 10, 2000 and November 2 – 10, 2000.

The board was given a copy of a letter, from Montgomery County, announcing the appointment of Richard G. Goehler as the Board's new Election Director, replacing Carol Evans who has retired.

Minutes from the State Board meeting in October, Ocean City, were discussed. Dorothy called attention to two items listed under Proposed Regulations. The first item, Absentee Ballot applications can be posted on the Internet, and can be downloaded, printed off and completed. These would be acceptable. The second item, a request for keeping voter registration or candidacy information confidential, for protection of an individual, should be automatically granted when requested by the State. This item should be adopted into our confidentially guidelines.

Minutes from the Biennial meeting were discussed.

Minutes from the November, State Board meeting were looked at, with attention to the power outage during the Baltimore Election. Also, reference to the declination forms from the MVA. All declinations generated by MVA branch offices will be shredded on site. Declinations will no longer be picked up or mailed to county election boards. MVA was cautioned about keeping all signed forms separate from those to be shredded. Also, Judy Arnold, Assistant Attorney General, was been appointed as a replacement for Kathleen Hoke Dacheille.

Copies of the Regulations for Subtitle 12, Recounts, was distributed.

Roger Schlossberg, Board Attorney, joined the meeting at 2:15 PM.

Evaluation results sheet from the Biennial Meeting was discussed.

The Policy for Public Communications was discussed, and it was agreed by the board that it should be adopted as our policy. We should keep track of all calls – problems and their solutions, during any election. Roger Schlossberg offered to check to see if every actual call, no matter how trivial, needs to be tracked. He will report on this at the January, 2000 meeting.

Dorothy gave Richard Coss his copy of the evaluations of the office employees. It was agreed that the Board should be allowed to view the copies of evaluations after they are completed. The Board is satisfied with the way our Director keeps our office informed with her use of annual leave or compensatory time. This was reviewed without comment. But, if it were to become a problem, it should be brought in front of the Board.

OLD BUSINESS: Roger Schlossberg, Board Attorney, commented that the memo from Judy Arnold, regarding candidates being a Challenger or Watcher, was just an agreement with what Kathleen Hoke Dacheille previously pointed out in her advice on this matter. This is not an actual formal opinion, signed by Attorney General J. Joseph Curran, Jr. When it becomes a formal opinion we will then consider it a legal act. We differ with her. This alone will not change our opinion on a candidate being a Challenger or Watcher. We feel that a candidate should not be allowed to be present in the polling place during all hours of voting.

Roger Schlossberg informed the Board that, although we have always allowed the Substitute Board Members to participate, apart from actually voting, we now have something legal stating that they do have that right. This is a legal opinion of the Office of the Attorney General.

Dorothy informed the Board that she got in touch with Frostburg about reserving a room for counting Absentee Ballots in the 2000 elections. We would be required to pay a rental fee of \$67.50 a day, that is half price, and the room can not be made secure. It was agreed that we should reserve the conference room back the hall (room #209).

Linda Lamone has instructed us that our Polling Place Accessibility surveys should be completed before the Primary Election. Norman Bassett, Human Resources, agreed to do all polling places other than schools. Dorothy asked the Board Members to help in surveying the other polling places, but requested substitute members to volunteer to help instead of having to pay them. They both agreed to help. She has copies of the survey forms ready. Richard Coss stated that he feels the County Commissioners should be responsible for completing the surveys. But, Rod Shoop has asked us not to depend on Norman doing all the surveys but only helping with some of them. Dorothy and Kaye have separated the schools in three groups, for convenience of travel. Marianne Schneider agreed to do group number three, and Dot Waters said she would help. Richard Coss is taking group number two. Jim Mobley is going to do group number one. Jim Sprecher agreed to help with the surveys. A copy of the survey done by Norman on District 15, Big Pool Community Hall was distributed, as an example of a completed form. The Board Members should call ahead to let the schools know when they will be there for the surveys.

Norman's opinion of Big Pool is that we have to find another place for voting since ramp there does not meet specs. Dorothy said she read in the newspaper that Hancock High School is going to be building on in the fall, and this may be a problem for the General Election. She will give Jeff Harr, Board of Education, a call.

The procedures for the Temporary Certificate were discussed at this time. Roger Schlossberg, as Board Attorney, agreed with these procedures and stated that we need to adopt these procedures as board policy. There is concern, that in allowing a person to complete a VRA and then voting could result in abuse by the general public. The voter does have to sign the affirmation of residency, stating that they are registered to vote and do live in Washington County. We should ask for something showing identification, to verify a local address (driving license or a piece of mail received at that address). We should get some kind of validation to confirm their claim. Then the Board should convene and discuss it, to decide if they should be denied. The Board has the right to refuse them the right to vote. If someone would push for the right to vote and then we find they are not registered then we should push for prosecution. It was then put to the Board for a vote. Jim Mobley first motioned and Marianne Schneider seconded. All were in favor. It was passed.

NEW BUSINESS: Dorothy presented to the Board two registrations in question. One was canceled for a criminal conviction but later it was determined that it was only a conspiracy charge and not a felony. Roger Schlossberg suggested that a letter should be sent to the voter stating that he was canceled in error.

The second registration indicated that this person was a citizen, but we received a call from the Clerk of Court with information that he was in fact not a citizen. The person was notified for jury duty and at that time they were told that he was not a citizen. Roger Schlossberg recommended that we get copies of all documentation that shows that he is not a citizen and that this should be tabled until the January, 2000 meeting. The Board agreed to wait for documentation and not just hearsay.

Dorothy informed the Board that the new voter registration system is in place, but not up to par. Some of the necessary options that should have been ready are not. It needs a lot of work by their programmers. Voter Notification Cards can be generated for new registrants but not for those who have made changes (addresses, party, name, etc.). We are having problems with getting answers to some important questions. It is a lot of work, considering the approaching elections.

Dorothy reported on the Directors Meeting she and Kaye, attended December 2nd. Currently there are some criminal convictions notices that the courts will send to the State Board. A duplicate check will be done, against the State Data Base, and a letter will be sent to the voter. Our office will receive a list of these voters and they will be removed.

The National Federation for the Blind has notified the State that they do not like the tactile overlay to be used by the blind in elections. There will be a mock election December 18th to test the overlay, in Baltimore at their office.

Dorothy reported that she was told to include money in her budget for maintenance on the new registration software system. The amount given was – \$7000.00 each year, she will have to budget one half in the fiscal year 2001. There is a 3-year warranty on the hardware. The Board thought that this was an exorbitant amount. Jim Mobley suggested that we should go on record and make a formal protest to these charges. A suggestion was made to send Linda Lamone a letter stating our feeling in this matter, considering the problems we have had with it. Roger Schlossberg was asked to do the letter. He agreed to draft something regarding our concerns.

The Christmas Party will be held Monday, December 20, 1999 at 6:30 PM at the Fireside Restaurant.

Next meeting January 11, 2000.

Marianne Schneider made a motion to adjourn at 4:00 PM; Dot Waters seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon C. Mackereth
Election Registrar