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Election Judge News

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Early Voting

New state law requires that counties with over 50,000 and up to 100,000 active registered voters have two Early Voting Centers.

Counties with over 100,000 and up to 200,000 active registered voters are required to have three Early Voting Centers.

Washington County currently is at 98,951 active registered voters, very close to the 100,000 threshold that would require three Early Voting Centers.

So under state law, Washington County is required to have two Early Voting Centers but could have one additional Early Voting Center with approval from the County Commissioners and the State Board of Elections (SBE).

The Board of Elections decided that, since we were so close to the 100,000 threshold, we should pursue three sites.

So the work began to identify potential locations that would best satisfy all the state's guidelines.

Our intent was always to ensure that, to the extent possible, voters throughout the county had an Early Voting site within several miles of their home.

SBE has guidelines that all Local Boards of Elections (LBE) are required to consider when selecting an Early Voting Center.

These guidelines are found in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), Title 33 State Board of Elections, Subtitle 17 Early Voting, Chapter 02 Early Voting Centers.

They are as follows:

- Accessibility of the early voting center to historically disenfranchised communities, including cultural groups, ethnic groups, and minority groups;
- Proximity of the early voting center to dense concentrations of voters such that:
 - If a county has one or two early voting centers, 50 percent of the registered voters in the county live within 10 miles of one of the proposed early voting centers; or
 - If a county has three or more early voting centers, 80 percent of the registered voters live within 5 miles of one of the early voting centers;
- Accessibility of the early voting center by public transportation;
- Ensuring equitable distribution of early voting centers throughout the county;

- Maximizing voter participation, including through the use of community centers and public gathering places as locations for early voting centers;
- Accommodate long lines of voters, including how voters waiting in line are protected against inclement weather; and
- Has parking facilities sufficient for early voting taking into consideration the normal business activities of the proposed early voting center.

Again, these are guidelines that the LBEs must consider when selecting an Early Voting Center, not requirements in and of themselves.

There are, however, requirements from the same chapter in COMAR that each Early Voting Center must meet, and they are:

- Allow the local board to install the required telecommunication needs;
- Are of sufficient size and layout to conduct early voting, including adequate access to electricity;
- Are accessible or can be made accessible for voters with disabilities;
- Can store voting equipment and supplies in a secure location during non-early voting hours;

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Election Judge News

Early Voting (cont.)

- Have sufficient and reliable heating and air-conditioning capabilities; and
- Can accommodate a no electioneering zone, exit polling, and electioneering outside of the no electioneering zone.

This is to explain why it is so difficult to find an Early Voting Center. All of these things must be considered.

We looked at more than a dozen facilities in Big Pool, Clear Spring, Fairplay, Boonsboro, Keedysville, Smithsburg, and Hagerstown.

Our number one Early Voting Center was always going to be the Election Center at 17718 Virginia Avenue, since it was built for that purpose.

In the end, the Board decided on the Washington County Free Library in downtown Hagerstown as the second site, and the Smithsburg Library as the third site.

While the Board would have preferred to be closer to South or West County, there just was no facility that was either viable or willing to have us.

The Board voted on the three sites at their October 12th meeting. During the meeting, the Republican Central Committee voiced its opposition to the downtown library site and asked that the vote be postponed until a "more suitable" site could be identified outside of Hagerstown.

President Marty Lumm responded that the Board had done its due diligence regarding selecting a 2nd and 3rd site, and deadlines to submit our selections to SBE required that the vote occur immediately.

Our next step was to get the County Commissioners' approval for the third site. State law requires that, to add a site above what is required, the "local governing body" (County Commissioners) and SBE have to approve it.

Between the October 12th Board meeting and the October 19th Commissioners meeting, the Republican Central Committee orchestrated a phone and email campaign urging the Commissioners not to approve the downtown library as an Early Voting site.

So when Deputy Director Barry Jackson presented the Smithsburg Library as the third Early Voting site to the Commissioners, they were ready to voice their opposition, in no uncertain terms, to the downtown library as the second site. You can see the discussion, beginning at 1:40:15 of the video on YouTube at youtube.com/watch?v=05-4iExxt2E.

In the end, the Commissioners rejected the Smithsburg Library as the third Early Voting Center, leaving only the Election Center and downtown library as the two Early Voting Centers for 2022.

We were disappointed that voters outside Hagerstown will not have a more convenient option for Early Voting, but when we are over 100,000 active voters before the 2024 Presidential Election, we will have more flexibility and more options to choose our Early Voting sites.



Fall foliage surrounding Washington Monument on South Mountain.

In Memoriam

We lost two more members of the election judge family since our last newsletter:

Andre DeTommaso was one of our technical judges who worked multiple polling places, including Rohrsersville. Andre and his wife, Michelle, also worked Early Voting for us. Andre was 53 at his passing.

Ling Louie suddenly passed away in his home on October 21st.

Ling worked as a voting judge for many years at Bester Elementary School and was a staple at the Scanning Unit both there and at many Early Voting sites.

Ling was also a veteran of the United States Marine Corps and a high school football, baseball, softball, and volleyball official.

The two things Ling loved to talk about most were high school sports and food!

Both Andre and Ling will be greatly missed.

Trivia Question

A Halloweeny trivia question this month: What popular board game was invented by two Baltimore brothers, Isaac and William Fuld?

Bonus Question

What year was Early Voting first implemented in Maryland, AND

Bonus Bonus Question

Can you name all five locations Washington County has used as Early Voting Centers?

Answers below: