



MINUTES

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
Special Session, September 19, 2023
17718 Virginia Avenue
Hagerstown, MD 21740
240-313-2050

Present:

Board:

Tammy Downin, President
Kandace Carpenter, Vice President
Donna Brightman, Board Secretary
Nancy Armstrong, Assistant Secretary
Claudia Martin, Member

Staff:

Barry Jackson, Election Director II
Teresa Morningstar, Deputy Director II
Sarah Hall, Election Program Specialist I

Absent: N/A

Guest:

Brian Kane
Kaye Robucci
Felisa Wallech
Brooke Grossman, Maryland State Delegate,
District 2B

President Tammy Downin called the special meeting to order at 3:01 pm at the Washington County Election Center, 17718 Virginia Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740. There was a quorum present.

Correspondence:

Emailed to the Board: Early Voting Center Determination for the 2024 Election Cycle

Opening Remarks:

Tammy Downin thanked the public for their active input regarding Early Voting Center sites. She stated that our focus needs to be on providing early voting access to registered voters. Tammy Downin then presented her agenda for the Special Meeting, as follows:

Washington County Board of Elections staff and current Board Members have spent months involved in the gathering process for site selection. The current Board

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
Special Session, September 19, 2023
Page 2

Members have been involved since being sworn into office in June and actually all members have attended at least one meeting prior to being sworn in.

- Per Election Law 10-301.1 the division of duties identifies duties as:
 - Identify and recommend to the local board members locations for that county's Early Voting Centers – Election Director/Staff
 - Approve Early Voting Centers in that county – Local Board of Elections Board Members
- There will be no participation by guests. All participation by Public Comment (in-person and written) has closed.
- Regular rules of Parliamentary Procedure will be adhered to as appropriate.
- The Board members will consider and select Early Voting Centers on a non-partisan basis in the best interest of the citizens of Washington County.
- I want to clarify that the Board's intention is for the Election Office to remain as primary location for Early Voting.

Early Voting Legislation

- In 2007, the Maryland General Assembly approved a constitutional amendment that, upon approval by the voters of Maryland, would give the General Assembly the authority to enact legislation authorizing voting before election day. See [Chapter 513 \(Senate Bill 1\)](#) of the 2007 Legislative Session. The proposed constitutional amendment was on the ballot in the 2008 General Election. See [Question 1](#) for the language of the ballot question. The voters of Maryland [approved this constitutional amendment](#), and the Constitution of Maryland was amended to reflect this change.
- In 2009, legislation was enacted that established the requirements for early voting and required early voting starting with the 2010 elections. See [Chapter 445 \(House Bill 1179\)](#) of the 2009 Legislative Session.
- In 2013, legislation was enacted that expanded the number of Early Voting Centers and the number of days. See [chapter 157](#) and [chapter 158](#) (Senate Bill 279 and House Bill 224) of the 2013 legislative session.
- In 2016, legislation was enacted that expanded the number of Early Voting Centers. See [Chapter 7](#) (House Bill 204) and [Chapter 288](#) (House Bill 1008) of the 2016 Legislative Session.
- In 2019, legislation was enacted that expanded the number of Early Voting Centers. See [Chapter 539](#) (House Bill 237) of the 2019 Legislative Session.

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Special Session, September 19, 2023

Page 3

- In 2021, legislation was enacted that expanded the hours of early voting for all elections. See [Chapter 659](#) and [Chapter 660](#) ([Senate Bill 596](#) and [House Bill 206](#)) of the 2021 Legislative Session.
- In 2021, legislation was enacted that expanded the number of early voting centers. See [Chapter 43](#) ([House Bill 745](#)) of the 2021 Legislative Session.

Our Vision

The people in Washington County, as citizens in a democracy, will have the protection of their fundamental rights – the right to vote and have that vote counted.

Our Mission

To comply with the statutory obligations in the administration of elections and voter registration and to conduct elections in Washington County that will protect the fundamental rights of citizens in a democracy.

In support of this mission, we are committed to:

- Serving as an agent for the federal and state government to fulfill mandated programs;
- Providing easy access for voter registration;
- Conducting fair and honest elections with security and integrity maintained in the casting of ballots, canvassing of votes and reporting of election results;
- Encouraging citizen awareness of, and participation in, the election process;
- Utilizing community resources as a vehicle for publicity and voter education.

The Board is composed of five members each serving a term of four years. The members are appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the State Senate, from lists proposed by the County Central Committees of the two major political parties.

The Board of Elections is responsible for the planning and supervision of all County, State and Federal Elections held in Washington County, as well as the City of Hagerstown. Elections are administered using the Maryland Constitution, Registration and Election Laws of Maryland and Title 33 of the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR).

Summary of Selection Criteria:

- The State Administrator has confirmed **99,396** Registered Voters in Washington County. Election Law §10-301(b)(3) - A county with at least 50,000 registered voters but fewer than 100,000 registered voters shall have **two** Early Voting Centers established in the county. **Election Law 10-301.1.10 (i-ii)** does provide for the addition of one optional site. – i) First, the local board and the

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Special Session, September 19, 2023

Page 4

governing body of the county agree to establish an additional Early Voting Center; and ii) that, the State Board approves the establishment of the additional Early Voting Center.

- State Legislation requires a local board of elections to take into account certain factors when determining the location of an Early Voting Center; and generally relating to Early Voting Centers.
- **COMAR 33.17.02.02 Selecting Early Voting Centers – I. Alternate Early Voting Centers (1-3a)**
 - (1) A local board shall identify an alternate Early Voting Center for use if an approved voting center becomes unavailable.
 - (2) A local board shall give preference to the offices of the local board or a government facility when considering the location of an alternate Early Voting Center.
 - (3) A local board shall identify:
 - (a) One alternate Early Voting Center if the local board is required to establish one, two, or three Early Voting Centers.
- All five sites under consideration today meet all the requirements listed in COMAR 33.17.02.02.B
- Requirements and Considerations have been covered in previous meetings to include the Public Hearing session held on September 12, 2023.

Agenda Item: Selection of Early Voting Center Sites

I. Sites I and II

- A. Donna Brightman requested clarification on why this Board should vote on Early Voting Centers that were already approved by previous Boards. Barry Jackson responded that historically we have selected Early Voting Centers for each election cycle and we will continue to present recommendations each election cycle for the Board's consideration; demographics of the area and statutes governing the jurisdiction may change. After discussion, it was determined that the recommendations from the staff will continue to be considered every election cycle by the Board.
- B. Barry Jackson presented the recommendation that the Board consider Early Voting Center Sites I and II to be the Washington County Election Center and the Boonsboro American Legion, respectively. He presented the justifications for his recommendations.
- C. After some discussion, Tammy Downin asked for a motion to accept Barry Jackson's recommendation. Nancy Armstrong moved to accept the recommendation, and Kandace Carpenter seconded at 3:34 pm.

Discussion:

Kandace Carpenter opened the discussion by stating that an Early Voting Center would reach the most disenfranchised voters by being located in the western part of the county, Hancock. Hancock, she stated, has many voters that are unlikely to have

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Special Session, September 19, 2023

Page 5

reliable transportation to get to the Washington County Election Center, and may be unlikely to use the Mail-In Ballot.

Nancy Armstrong stated that statistically, the voters from Hancock have high voter turnout regardless of not having an Early Voting Center nearby. Boonsboro is more accessible than Fairplay, in her opinion. She advocated for the Boonsboro American Legion to be the second site.

Claudia Martin agreed that the Boonsboro American Legion could be the best current option for a second Early Voting Center site, but was concerned about abandoning the Hagerstown Library so soon.

Donna Brightman would like the Board's considerations for the Early Voting Centers to be equitable and in consideration of future decisions. The Washington County Election Center was her first choice and the Hagerstown Library, she stated, should be the second site. She stated that there has been tremendous growth to the downtown area and, in her opinion, a downtown site must be available, whether it's the Hagerstown Library or another location. She advocated for the Washington County Election Center and the Hagerstown Library to be the two Early Voting Center locations, with Hancock Town Hall, as a possible third location. She requested that a third location definitely be recommended to the County Commissioners.

Kandace Carpenter stated that public transportation for the historically disenfranchised from the downtown Hagerstown area was a possibility, and mentioned that statistically both the Boonsboro and Hancock locations are able to reach nearly the same percentage of unique voters.

Donna Brightman expressed concern about the traffic at the Boonsboro American Legion intersection. Claudia Martin and Kandace Carpenter both agreed but said that other locations will have the same traffic and safety issues.

The discussion was closed and Tammy Downin called for the vote at 4:08 pm. Kandace Carpenter and Nancy Armstrong voted aye. Claudia Martin and Donna Brightman voted nay. Tammy Downin voted nay. The motion to accept Barry Jackson's recommendation for the two Early Voting Centers to be the Washington County Election Center and the Boonsboro American Legion failed at 4:10 pm.

Barry Jackson presented a second recommendation for the two Early Voting Center locations.

Kandace Carpenter made a motion to accept Barry Jackson's second recommendation at 4:12 pm, that the Early Voting Centers be the Washington County Election Center and Hancock Town Hall. Claudia Martin seconded.

Barry Jackson listed the reasons for recommending Hancock Town Hall and the possible challenges for the location.

Kandace Carpenter stated that the town of Hancock has expressed a positive opinion toward an Early Voting Center.

Tammy Downin advocated for the Hagerstown Library to be included, along with the Washington County Election Center and Hancock Town Hall, as a third Early Voting Center.

Donna Brightman called the question at 4:21 pm to vote on Barry Jackson's recommendation for the Washington County Election Center and Hancock Town Hall to

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
Special Session, September 19, 2023
Page 6

be the two Early Voting Center sites. Kandace Carpenter and Nancy Armstrong voted aye. Donna Brightman and Claudia Martin voted nay. Tammy Downin voted aye and the motion passed at 4:25 pm.

II. Alternate Early Voting Center

- A. Nancy Armstrong made a motion to accept the Maugansville Ruritan Club as an alternate site, and Kandace Carpenter seconded. Tammy Downin called for a vote, and the motion unanimously passed at 4:27 pm.

III. Optional 3rd Site

- A. Tammy Downin called for a motion to consider an optional 3rd Early Voting Center. Kandace Carpenter moved to accept Boonsboro American Legion as the optional 3rd Early Voting Center. Claudia Martin seconded the motion. Kandace Carpenter, Nancy Armstrong and Claudia Martin voted aye. Donna Brightman abstained from the vote. The motion passed at 4:35 pm. The Boonsboro American Legion location will be recommended to the County Commissioners and the State Board of Elections as the optional 3rd Early Voting Center.

Members Remarks:

Donna Brightman expressed concern about the credibility of the Washington County Board of Elections going forward, and trust from the voters for this process. She is deeply concerned that we are sending a message that may cause future problems by eliminating the city location as an Early Voting Center site.

Kandace Carpenter asked if there is anything else we can request from the County Commissioners in order to provide vouchers for people to access the County Commuter more easily.

Distributed Information:

Board Packet

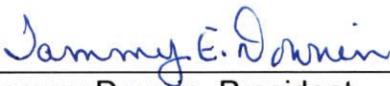
Adjournment:

Claudia Martin made a motion to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; Nancy Armstrong seconded, and the Board Meeting concluded at 4:36 pm.

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
Special Session, September 19, 2023
Page 7

Compiled by Sarah Hall
Election Program Specialist I

Respectfully Submitted,



Tammy Downin, President 11/14/23
Date



Donna Brightman, Secretary 11/14/23
Date