

MINUTES

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
Special Session, September 12, 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, Election Deputy Director II
Sarah Hall, Election Program Specialist I

Absent:

Guest:

List of Public Speakers Attached

President Tammy Downin called the special meeting to order at 7:02 pm at the Washington County Election Center, 17718 Virginia Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740. There was a quorum present.

Tammy Downin made opening remarks and stated the agenda for the meeting. She noted the requirements placed on the Board by Election Law and the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR). She presented the rules for the public comment portion of the meeting and thanked the public for their attendance.

Barry Jackson presented the data compiled by the Washington County Board of Elections office regarding the proposed Early Voting sites. He reiterated both the laws that the Board is bound by, and the suggested recommendations for an additional Early Voting site.

Tammy Downin introduced each speaker in the order they had signed in and they were each given 3 minutes to present their comments.

Special meeting to obtain public comment:

1. Curtis Surratt, chief judge and part-time at the Washington County Board of Elections. Curtis noted that the Election Center is an acceptable Early Voting

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- Center. He stated that the Hagerstown Library has limited parking and, in his opinion, Hancock has very low turnout/participation. Curtis would prefer 2 Early Voting Centers instead of 3 in an effort to be fiscally responsible. He suggested the Election Center and Boonsboro as Early Voting Centers.
2. Mike Farrell also agreed that the Election Center is a perfect location. He believes Hancock has a low trending turnout. Mike would prefer to have 3 locations for Early Voting.
 3. John McElroy agreed the Election Center is ideal. He stated that the Hagerstown Library has no parking and feels unsafe for campaigning.
 4. Matt Breeding wanted to remind everyone this is Early Voting and not Election Day and should be viewed as an additional convenience to voters and not essential. He stated that the Election Center was viewed as the ideal Early Voting Center to the taxpayers. He suggested that anyone who could vote at the Hagerstown Library, could also vote at the Election Center. Matt suggested that the Boonsboro area is underserved by Early Voting Centers. He also believes a 10 mile drive should not be a hinderance to most.
 5. Peggy Martin stated that the Election Center has a high rate of usage for Early Voting. She agreed with keeping the Election Center as an Early Voting site. She raised safety concerns for the Hagerstown Library location for the General Election because it gets dark earlier in the evening than for the Primary. Peggy also agreed that the turnout in Hancock is very low and would rather not have an Early Voting site there. Peggy asked the Board to differentiate between underserved communities and underserved population groups.
 6. Leslie Allen worked at the Hagerstown Library as an Election Judge and stated that lack of turnout and lack of access to the parking lot were troubling. She would like to see better accessibility if the Hagerstown Library is chosen as an Early Voting site again. She believes consolidating precincts vs. providing Early Voting Centers poses a challenge to voter turnout.
 7. Derek Harvey questioned the difference between the 2 or 3 sites and 5 or 10 mile requirements. He believes the Election Center was funded to be an Early Voting Center and would strongly recommend using it, because not using it could bring consequences. The Hagerstown Library, in his opinion, has plenty of public transportation and walking accessibility, but poor parking. He would like to see the concentration of the Board to be on maximizing participation. He asked the Board to concentrate on maximizing turnout in rural communities that are outside of the City of Hagerstown.
 8. Patrick Leone would like to know the statistical difference between the people who would travel 5 miles vs 10 miles to vote. He stated that, he believes the population being reached by each of the 2 Early Voting Center options, is statistically not different. Whereas, the 3 Early Voting Center options had a much wider range of difference between the number of voters reached. Patrick suggested that maybe 2 Early Voting Center sites is all that is needed to reach the most voters.
 9. Ethan Lowen stated that the Election Center is the highest traffic area, in his opinion, and the Hagerstown Library is just too close to the Election Center to be useful. He noted that the Hagerstown Library is walking accessible and the Election Center is on the County Commuters route. He believes the potential

- Early Voting Center locations further outside of Hagerstown would alleviate a far greater transportation burden for more voters.
10. Paul Pittman stated that he does not want the Hagerstown Library location to be abandoned just yet, especially for the walkers. He also believes that a Boonsboro location as a third site would reach the most voters.
 11. John Gundling believes that just 2 Early Voting Centers would reach the most voters. He disliked the Hagerstown Library location and would like to see commuter services expanded during Early Voting times.
 12. Denise Horner agreed that the Election Center is ideal and convenient for voters. She believes the proposed Boonsboro location is in a bad intersection. She felt the location is unsafe. Denise did not have a problem with the Hagerstown Library location and feels that walkers will not find the County Commuter option as a viable alternative to walking.
 13. Taj Smith stated that people of color are disproportionately affected by moving an Early Voting site outside of city limits. The City of Hagerstown, in her opinion, is the only location that can serve the largest underserved communities. She stated that the City of Hagerstown is the most densely populated area in Washington County. She noted that the Election Center is not within city limits and felt it should be considered as a county facility instead of city. She believes people living in poverty and homeless within city limits should be served by an Early Voting Center that is also within city limits.
 14. William Kessler does not believe that 2 Early Voting Centers within a couple of miles of each other makes sense. The Hagerstown Library, to him, appears unsafe and was underused by the voters. He also agreed that the Election Center was purchased for the purpose of hosting an Early Voting Center.
 15. Seth Wilson expressed that many voters can walk or commute by bus to any downtown location but the voters further outside of the City of Hagerstown cannot as easily commute to an Early Voting Center. He agreed that the Election Center was purchased for the purpose of hosting an Early Voting Center, also. He questioned if some proposed Early Voting Center locations would be eliminated based solely on distance, if we are required to have 3 Early Voting Centers instead of 2. Seth wondered if voter turnout would be higher in the western parts of the county if there was an Early Voting Center located there.
 16. Angela Batista disagreed that parking is a problem for the Hagerstown Library. She stated that Washington County is nearly at the voter registration limit for requiring 3 locations and advocated for the decision to be made on a 3rd site now.
 17. Peter Perini encouraged the Board to select 3 Early Voting Centers and present them to the County Commissioners as 2 mandatory and 1 optional. Peter wanted to remind everyone that "the closest polling place to your house is the mailbox at the end of your driveway." He stated that there are more ways to vote than just Early Voting Centers in person. He would like to see voters utilize the Mail-In Ballot option.
 18. Beth Harvey supported the Election Center and Hancock as the 2 Early Voting Centers. She stated that transportation in the western parts of the county is a challenge. She would like to see equitable access to Early Voting for the rural parts of the county. She wanted to see the total number of voters that live within the 10 mile radius on the graphs, instead of percentages of voters.

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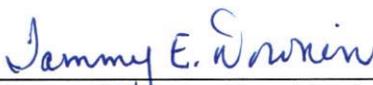
There being no other public comments, Tammy Downin thanked the public for their attendance and comments. She expressed that all comments will be considered and appreciated.

Donna Brightman encouraged the public in attendance to volunteer to be Election Judges.

Tammy Downin adjourned the meeting at 8:12pm.

Compiled by Sarah Hall
Election Program Specialist I

Respectfully Submitted,



Tammy Downin, President 11/14/23
Date



Donna Brightman, Secretary 11/14/23
Date