

LUZERNE COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
AND REGISTRATIONS MEETING MINUTES
January 12, 2022

CALL TO ORDER 5:02 PM

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Denise Williams reported that there was an executive session held on December 8, 2021 9:00- 9:20 AM to discuss Bureau personnel matters.

And on January 5, 2022 10:13-10:25 AM to discuss the election issue that was referred to the DA's office for investigation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Audrey Serniak here, Patrick Castellani here , Denise Williams here

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda made by Patrick Castellani 2nd Audrey Serniak, unanimous

PUBLIC COMMENTS (4 minutes)

Walter Griffith-Suggested that campaign finance reports should be accurate on face before they are accepted. He also asked the IT check to see if all participants in the Zoom meetings can be seen by the public.

Mark Rabo, Hazleton City-Concerned that out-of-state donors to campaigns are not registered with the state or county. Regarding the special election, he would like a thorough explanation, (including the Spanish-speaking community) of the process and timeline.

MINUTES

Motion to approve the 12/6/2022 minutes made by Audrey Serniak 2nd Patrick Castellani, unanimous

BUREAU OF ELECTIONS REPORT

Denise Williams welcomed the new director, Mike Susek, to the Bureau.

SURE system training-The state is short a trainer so the Bureau will follow-up on the formal training. Short term the veteran staff members are mentoring who have access. Access to the system has been cut back and they are looking into disabling access between elections for temporary workers. The system can only be accessed in the office and can be monitored.

The process of relocating the Licensing Bureau is ongoing.

The Bureau is in communication with ES&S regarding some voters not appearing in the poll books; tabled.

Directives 7 and 9-Regarding codifying basic procedures and a timeline, the Board would like a time frame for completing the project and progress reports. Regarding the website, it should be clear and user friendly. Denise Williams said she would like information on conducting a write-in campaign included. Mike Susek said they could look into hiring a consultant and advised Design for Democracy and Civic Plus (hosts our website) have resources available.

Campaign finance-The current process is to receive, post, retain and make available to the public. There is no tracking system. A simple system to track what has come in has been set up for committees filing and when they are due. There won't be any legacy tracking at this time; there are penalties for late filings (up to \$250). There needs to be an awareness that we are tightening this up.

Special Election for the 116th PA representative seat will be on April 5th. And the seat will also be on the primary ballot. Hazleton is the population center. Tentatively the filing deadline is 2/14/2022 with 3/6/2022 for the state to get the nominations to the county. The cost will be covered by the state. The Bureau is working on polling places, mail in ballots and reaching out to poll workers, arranging training, and will be meeting with Dominion. Voters can their registration at Vote.PA.Gov. They can come to the Bureau if they call ahead (Covid restrictions) or update by mail.

The process for municipalities to place races on the ballot needs to be formalized . Tweaking the current process to put it into writing. There's opportunities to go electronic processing to eliminate transcribing forms. Tabled for the moment.

Cybersecurity-The ballot tabulation is completely off-line and the SURE system can only be accessed at the Bureau office and that access is controlled. Staff is taking a cybersecurity course to raise awareness. There will be a statewide a Homeland Security call and a state conference.

The Bureau is getting quotes for mailing the paper applications for mail-in ballots to voters on the 'permanent mail-in voter list'.

BOARD OF ELECTIONS REPORT

Denise Williams thanked Rick Nardone and Kathy Roth for their service on the Board.

Survey letter sent to people who received a paper ballot but did not vote it-
Overview: Sent to 1382 out of 6226 with 106 responses (about 8%) responded; respnses came from all over Luzerne County and were split between absentee and mail-in ballots; 75 received them, 31 did not receive a ballot at all.
Ballots need to be mailed out earlier.

The letter on poll worker training and pay is still in progress; Mike Susek would like to get it out as soon as possible.
Denise Williams said there was a much better training response for the general election compared to the primary election.

Meeting dates-waiting for County Council to set-up their schedule; the Board's next meeting will be advertised.

The Election Group report status-Mike Susek will find out.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (4 minutes)

Walter Griffith-Thanked the Board for addressing matters that are important for the public. Ballots need to go out sooner; the survey was informative. Polling place

leases should address political signage which has caused problems at some places. Incomplete campaign finance reporting can lead to a loss of revenue.

Jessica Morgan, Dallas-What happens to the undeliverable ballots? (They are retained.) Said those voters should be removed from the rolls. (Wrong addresses are not usually enough to warrant removal.) Says there is a cavalier attitude towards access to the SURE system. Believes the VP for Dominion had access to the system. Over 900 ballots were received after election day and believes that mailing them on the 19th, a Friday was partly responsible for delayed ballots. (Denise Williams advised that the 19th was a Tuesday.) Administrative assistants in the Bureau didn't get the memo that it is illegal for one person to drop more than one ballot in the drop boxes. A woman tried to do this and the woman said she had been there all week.

Denise Williams said that the woman was instructed not to deposit multiple ballots and that there is nothing to prevent people from mailing multiple ballots. This is a matter for our legislature.

Steve Urban-Regarding the incident Jessica Morgan spoke about, perhaps it should be reviewed and forwarded. Regarding the drop boxes, he would like them to be opened and closed at the same time each day; wants equal access for all voters. Regarding the special election, if machines are sequestered are there plans to have equipment available for the primary? Mike Susek advised that the Bureau would be addressing this with Dominion and that additional equipment can be leased if needed.

Mark Rabo-If someone is dropping off a ballot for someone else, they must have the notarized form. The polling places for the special election need to be publicized earlier. Denise Williams advised that the affidavits do not have to be notarized, just signed. Mike Susek said the Bureau is working on the polling places and his intent is to keep them the same.

Richard Manta, Back Mountain-Why was the acting manager there on election night? Can people who's mail-in ballot was returned 'not delivered' vote? Can people come to the Bureau to change their registration? The last two elections did not go smoothly.

Denise Williams responded that members of the public, which includes the acting manager, are allowed to observe on election night. Voters who did not receive a ballot can vote provisionally.

Mike Susek said people can come into the Bureau, but, because of Covid restrictions, must call first. The Bureau will also mail forms if requested.

NEXT MEETING

Will be advertised

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Made by Patrick Castellani 2nd Audrey Serniak, unanimous

ADJOURNED 7:15 PM