

LUZERNE COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS AND REGISTRATIONS MEETING
MINUTES FEBRUARY 9, 2022
CALL TO ORDER 5:01 PM

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was an executive session on February 9, 2022 4:30-4:52 PM to discuss active litigation; no deliberations took place.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Audrey Serniak here, Patrick Castellani here, Denise Williams here

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS (4 minutes)

None

MINUTES

Motion to approval the minutes from January 27, 2022 made by Audrey Serniak 2nd Patrick Castellani, unanimous

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Paula Radick advised that it is the opinion that Section 8.02 of the Charter does not allow for holdovers of board members when their term expires.

BUREAU OF ELECTIONS REPORT

Poll Worker Letter-Mike Susek reported that the poll worker letter advising them that training is required and that training must be attended to receive the \$20 payment. Training cannot be required if a person is elected as Judge of Elections, Minority Inspector or Majority Inspector, however, training should be strongly encouraged for people holding those positions; experienced workers should be assigned to wards where there are new people who have not attended any training. Poll workers are overwhelmingly receptive to training; the administrative assistants are all aware that the \$20 payment is tied to attending training.

Status of the Special Election-Mike Susek advised that all the polling places for the special election have been confirmed except for Hazleton Ward 2 (Lackawanna College). He will reach out to the college and nearby local businesses regarding parking. The last day to file is February 14th; the state must get the ballot to us by March 6th.

Mail in Ballot Vendor Change-Fourth Orange Press was selected; they use ballot tracking- outgoing when received by the post office and when mailed by the post office; incoming-when received at the post office and when received at the Bureau; there is no public interface but the reports will be useful to the Bureau. The contract is circulating throughout Luzerne County's system; annual contract.

Application for Mail in/Absentee Ballots-About 53,000 letters went out on Monday; the state emailed people advising them their application had been mailed; voters can use the form, go online or apply in person. Regarding the court case, it effects the no excuses ballot and not the absentee ballots. The Department of State has advised that it is business as usual until the courts have made a decision.

Party Certification-Mike Susek followed the formula to determine the parties to be certified by the Board: Republican, Democrat, Libertarian and Green parties. He will be sending the certification to the state shortly.

Election Group Summary Report-Mike Susek is still following up on this.

SURE System-Department of State is updating the SURE system and is in the process of hiring a trainer. The Bureau is doing in house training. Regarding SURE ID's, the best practice is to

inactivate them when not in use and reactivate when they are needed. There are no more 'general' logins.

May Primary-the first date to circulate is February 15th (notified at the end of the meeting that this was stayed by the courts pending their review of the district maps.)

Nursing Homes-Mike Susek reported that the Bureau is reintroducing the practice of mailing out a letter to nursing homes/personal care facilities advising them on residents' voting procedures. This includes the need for an authorized designated agent form. This form does not have to be notarized. The letter went out to the 116th district first because of the special election.

BOARD OF ELECTIONS REPORT

Name Cumulation-The Board discussed doing away with the current name cumulation process.

The current process was deemed haphazard.

Denise Williams moved that 'going forward any write in candidate who desires name cumulation must file a cumulation petition with the court of common pleas following the statute.

2nd Patrick Castellani

Patrick Castellani yes, Audrey Serniak yes, Denise Williams yes; motion carries

Drop Boxes for the Special Election-adding boxes for the special election will cause confusion if they are not also put in place for the primary and general elections.

Denise Williams moved to have one box at the Hazleton Municipal Building and two at the Bureau of Election. 2nd Patrick Castellani

Audrey Serniak yes, Patrick Castellani yes, Denise Williams yes; motion carries.

Political Signs At Polling Places-Patrick Castellani is still researching and asks anyone with input to email him.

Instruction Video for Mail in Ballots-Denise Williams would like to have a video posted on the website giving instructions on filling out the mail in ballots. Instructions should be in English and Spanish. The state website has information on filling out the ballot. Anything we can do to educate the public is a plus.

Public Awareness-Prioritize public awareness; there should be Spanish versions available.

Website-Paula Radick advise that we talk to IT to see if we can have the capability to bring the website up in Spanish.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (4 minutes)

Walter Griffith-He arrived late. Would like to know the ruling on board member holdovers. The Election Group contract has not been posted online. What is the cost of the mail in ballot contract? Was it bid? Is it online? Are all of the campaign finance forms online?

Paula Radick advised that section 8.02 of the charter does not allow for holdovers.

Angela Gavlick-county procedures were followed in soliciting the mail in contract; it was not required to be bid but a bid process was used; Fourth Orange Press was selected at about \$105,000 annually; the mail in ballot printing is in the budget and the contract is lower than our previous one; Mike Suskek reminded everyone that the county will be reimbursed for special election expenses. The contract is still circulating. All campaign finance reports have been posted.

Jessica Morgan-regarding the application for mail in ballots, where did the 53,000 figure come from?

Mike Susek replied that it comes from the SURE system list of voters who requested to be put on the list to receive the application; there are about 200,000 voters in Luzerne county so about 25% requested the application.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Made by Denise Williams 2nd Patrick Casellani, unanimous

NEXT MEETING

February 23, 2022 at 5 PM ADJOURNED 6:18 PM

