

LUZERNE COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

AND REGISTRATIONS MEETING

MINUTES MARCH 23, 2022

CALL TO ORDER 5:01

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Patrick Castellani yes, Alyssa Fusaro yes, Danny Schramm yes, Audrey Serniak yes, Denise Williams yes

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to accept Patrick Castellani 2nd Danny Schramm, unanimous

PUBLIC COMMENTS (4 minutes)

Maryann Valez, Duryea-Asking for expanded time to receive and count ballots, ensure every resident has the right to vote, and more funding for elections and pollworker training; Luzerne County has blemishes but we must work together.

Denise Williams Responded that the Board doesn't have constituents but work for the residents; changing the time to mail and count ballots is up to the legislature. The the post office has to deliver them.

Alyssa Fusaro said that with an absentee ballot you can go to your polling place and take bake your ballot and vote by machine.

Maryann Nicolino, Kingston-Agrees with Maryann Valez; she is Judge of Elections at Larksville Ward 3; the drop boxes are important; they help the pollworkers by making it less chaotic and reducing the work at the polls.

Theodore John Fitzgerald, Wilkes Barre-Agrees with Maryann Valez about a lot of things; both sides don't believe in the integrity of the elections; more chance of ballot harvesting and fraud with drop boxes; maybe should have a drop box at each house; it is easy to get to the polls these days and people need to adjust their priorities; voting lists need to be scrubbed more often.

John Ferdinand, Luzerne County-We have seen cheating; people can get to the casino with no problem; drop boxes and mail-in ballots are a recipe to cheat; we need a fair fight in elections.

Joe Malinkosky, Kingston-Opposed to mail-in ballots and drop boxes; has served in the military and so wants to know if that was the only time military ballots were trashed; oversaw Iraqi in person elections where people were happy to risk death to vote; mail-in voting should only be for the ill, extreme circumstances, etc; one person, one signature, one valid ID, one paper ballot, vote.

Cindy Malkemes, Dallas-Not aware of any cheating though there are accusations of cheating; not right to lump all elderly into one category saying they'd be able to go to the casino; blue collar workers either

get paid or vote; take everyone into consideration; offensive to come from a position of privilege; important to increase the boxes,

Walter Griffith-Case law says that drop boxes are legal per case law; absentee ballots can be returned in the drop boxes; absentee ballots go to the polls; do we have a plan for the ballot retrieval that the state has reviewed; security is paramount with video retained for sixty days; need our own cameras so that the boxes can be monitored; people have to know whether they should do absentee or mail-in ballots.

Emails- there were 11 emails where people specifically requested they be read:

Seth Bellio-against drop boxes because of fraud and ballot harvesting opportunities; mail-ins lead to voter manipulation; boxes are not available with the same and equivalent hours

Lori Bellio-drop boxes are a direct violation of the election law

Carin Pientka-drop boxes are needed by the disabled and working people; don't make it harder

K. Strickland-in favor of mail-ins and drop boxes; we need more drop boxes

Joanna Martin-opposed to drop boxes; they are illegal Section 1306-D

Rev. Kathy Potera-opposed to drop boxes because they are open to the possibility of fraud

Elaine Madden Curry-commends drop boxes in Hazleton; necessary convenience

Tracey Fassett, Ross Twp-long-time voter opposed to drop boxes because they open up to fraud and are illegal

Bob Stevens-wants drop boxes; voting is important; do everything to make voting easy, and accessible as possible; support mail-in ballots; higher the rate of participation the better

Greg Griffin-oppose drop boxes due to possible fraud

Alyssa Fusaro-there were over 100 emails received; read late email from

Jessica Morgan-attested to ballot harvesting at Penn Place on 10/29/2022 3-3:30PM; reported it and needs a response

Jay Notartomaso, Luzerne County-Need to make access easy; allegations of fraud are hearsay;

drop boxes were challenged and found to be legal; drop boxes and mail-ins help rural and working people; elections have been deemed secure

Tara Priest-Rhodes, Swoyersville, requested her email be read-we need a transparent process; remove needless barriers; do not eliminate drop boxes; we need more evening hours; freedom to choose the hour to vote

MINUTES

Motion to approve the minutes of March 9, 2022 made by Patrick Castellani 2nd Alyssa Fusaro, unanimous

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Paula Radick reported that the DA's Office is investigating incidents from the 2021 primary and general elections and will issue a report in the coming weeks.

BUREAU OF ELECTIONS REPORT

Wright Twp Ballot Question-Jack Dean reported that this would raise \$250,000-\$260,000 and\ would support the volunteer fire department in obtaining equipment

Motion to approve Denise Williams 2nd Alyssa Fusaro, unanimous

Special Election Polling Places-There will be 33 polling places; Alyssa Fusaro asked about parking at Hazleton Ward 2, Mike Susek said the Bureau is still discussing this with Hazleton

Motion to approve the polling places Audrey Serniak 2nd Patrick Castellani; 3 yes 2 no, motion passes

Special Election Status of Mail-in Ballots-Mike Susek advised that the first batch of ballots were mailed on Friday and are being received by the voters; the Bureau continues to process requests as they come in; drop boxes have been deployed; the Penn Place boxes will be opened

Monday-Friday 9AM-4:30PM and on Election Day until 8 PM, Hazleton City Hall is opened

Monday-Friday 8:30AM-4PM and will be pulled on Monday 5/4/2022; absentee ballots can be placed in the drop boxes

Special Election Poll Worker Training-Training has begun; using paper poll books for the Special Election; about 100 people have signed up with a target of 180 workers; will clarify if absentee ballots go back to the polling place

Audrey Serniak said the absentee ballot procedure was changed

Special Election Bilingual Assistance-the question if a pol worker is bilingual has been added to the website questionnaire and they are asking at training

Special Election Logic and Accuracy Testing-It was completed and the machines are working correctly; Mike Susek will submit the results to the State on the Board's behalf

Special Election Drop Boxes-Teams will be sent out to collect the ballots;

Special Election Precanvassing-The process has been streamlined; ballots will be segregated for review; on election day the memory cards and tapes will be removed from the machines, placed in the judges' bags and the bags will be brought to a central location and escorted to Penn Place; Mr. Susek will check on the signage on the drop boxes.

Denise Williams asked how we checked peoples' credentials for their entering prec canvassing; credentials are issued using the same procedure as for poll watchers and media is not allowed;

After discussion Denise Williams motioned that going forward entrance to the precanvassing room would require a certificate which would follow the poll watchers certification procedure

2nd Alyssa Fusaro; unanimous

The Election Group Report-is there a date for the proposal for the report? Mike Susek advised that he is still communicating with them

Primary Election-The Bureau is implementing the reapportionment plan, the work is being audited; in Butler Twp parts of the 8th to 8 & 9th districts is at street level; the 116th state house district have not been completed due to the special election;; the calendar for nominating petitions has been extended and the state has been providing updated unofficial ballots; voters will be notified of any district changes by mail

Poll Watchers Certification-Can the Board receive a list of the poll watchers? Mike Susek will check with the solicitor to see if that can be provided

Special Election, Temporary Workers and SURE Access-Our temporary workers are other county employees; they may have read-only access to the SURE system depending on how they are assisting at the Bureau; lists of those with access can be provided if it is public information

BOARD OF ELECTIONS REPORT

Requests for Poll Changes-Freeland Borough-Matthew Crone speaking for Freeland requests the polling place go back to the Event Center because the current place is no longer suitable.

Motion made by Denise Williams that as long as the Freeland Event Center is deemed appropriate for accessibility by the Bureau, the Board approves of the change to the Freeland Event Center. 2nd Patrick Castellani, unanimous

Requests for Poll Changes-Avoca Borough-Request sent in by Kelly O'Brien, secretary for Avoca Borough, to relocate one ward from a shared space at Queen of Apostles of wards 2 & 3 due to voter confusion; Board discussed and decided a better reason than people not knowing

which line to get into was needed to change a polling place.

Selection of the Vice-Chair-Alyssa Fusaro nominated Patrick Castellani 2nd Audrey Serniak

Audrey Serniak yes, Patrick Castellani yes, Alyssa Fusaro yes, Danny Schramm yes,

Denise Williams yes; unanimous Patrick Castellani is now Vice-Chair

Proposed Pittston Charter Amendments-Motion to approve four charter amendments made by Denise Williams 2nd Danny Schramm, unanimous

Motion to approve the four plain language explanations made by Denise Williams

2nd Danny Schramm, unanimous

Polling Place Letter and Survey-Patrick Castellani reported that the letter and survey are ready to go out and a meeting with the party chairs will be set up

Poll Worker Qualifications-Denise Williams asked for a review of poll workers because some may be elected officials or government employees and they are prohibited from serving as poll

workers; suggested a question be added to the poll worker application.

Motion made by Alyssa Fusaro to review names of poll workers to ensure they are not elected officials or government employees 2nd Patrick Castellani, unanimous

Motion made by Alyssa Fusaro to add a check box to the poll worker application stating you are not a government official or employee 2nd Denise Williams, unanimous

Primary Drop Boxes-Alyssa Fusaro first thanked everyone for their comments for and against;

Drop boxes are not continuously monitored and we are not in control of the video; ballot harvesting has happened; nowhere in the law are drop boxes mentioned; drop box fires would ruin the integrity of many votes; drop boxes are not available to all and many counties do not

use drop boxes; referenced a video of someone in Montgomery County depositing multiple ballots. Suggested the Ring Doorbells and each Board member be responsible for a box.

Denise Williams-Covid did not cause drop boxes; Act 77 was passed as a compromise to do away with straight-ticket voting; cannot ignore case law

Alyssa Fursaro-drop boxes are not secure; the emails were 60 against and 33 for drop boxes

Denise Williams-some emails contained misinformation, drop boxes are not illegal and we should follow the law; 5400 voters preferred to use the drop boxes which are under 24 hour video; mailed ballots can be lost in the mail or damaged; protect the rights of all voters

Audrey Serniak stated boxes are inside, not on the street; they are located in public places; security has been continually improved; DA investigates any complains thoroughly

Danny Schramm-harvesting ballots not dependent on drop boxes.

Denise Williams moved to place drop boxes at Wright Township Fire Department, Pittston Library, Hazleton Municipal Building, Pittston Library, two at Penn Place in the entrance and in the Bureau office, and at Misericordia University if available; and, going forward for future elections revotes are only necessary for changes in location. 2nd Audrey Serniak

Patrick Castellani no, Alyssa Fusaro no, Danny Schramm yes, Audrey Serniak yes,

Denise Williams yes, 3 yes, 2 no, motion carries

Special Election Curing-Alyssa Fusaro-there are numerous lawsuits against curing.

Denise Williams-if we are allowed by law, we should do it; allowed up\ to 8PM on election day

Denise Williams moved to cure 2nd Patrick Castellani

Alyssa Fusaro no, Danny Schramm yes, Audrey Serniak yes, Partick Castellani yes,

Denise Williams yes; 4 yes, 1 no, notion carries

Board Schedule for Special Election-Keep calendar open for Election Day April 5, 2022

We try to have a quorum in case anything comes up.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (4 minutes)

Theodore John Fitzgerald, Wilkes Barre-Agree that we all don't want to suppress the vote; we don't know that drop boxes are legal so that by using them we are suppressing the legal vote; voting at home can't be private and there's a bigger chance of voter intimidation and vote buying with mail-ins; suggested instruction on how to vote with UTube videos posted online and at the polling places to better educate the public.

Joe Malinkoski-Wife of Gov. Wolf illegally dropped off his ballot, if we can't trust the governor...

Maryann Valez-Utilize the law and what we have at our disposal; important that Board members all walk a fine line and check our political affiliations at the door.

Vivienne Kreidler-Licina, Nescopek-Regarding drop boxes:Act 12 1306D, they are not safe; if we could go out to shop and or dinner during Covid, we can get to the polls to vote

Walter Griffith-Thanked Peter from IT for his work on the meeting; in curing we're actually curing the outer envelope; under the impression that written candidates need to declare;

was mistaken about absentee ballots being sent to the voter's polling place, they are handled the same way as the mail-in ballots and stay at the Bureau; the Election Integrity People are doing poll watcher training

Denise Williams-if an envelope is opened and there is no privacy envelope, the ballot remains in the envelope which is taped shut; these are also cured; regarding write-in candidates, we no longer accumulate votes, they have to go to the courts to do that

Claudia Glennan, Salem Twp-Thanked everyone who spoke tonight, there were good points made; recommended "Vote for Us" by Joshua Douglas as a good resource. Will there be fraud? Yes, strive best and purest way to vote

Mark Rabo-Thanked the board for trying to usher in a new era with elections; all votes to be counted; in 2020 many people came from out of state and voted here; we need guidance from the DoS as to what defines a resident; mail-in ballots should all be absentee which are tracked by the SURE system; Concerned about the parking for Hazleton Wards 1 & 2; also concerned about Wards 5 & 6 voting machine security after the election

Mike Susek has reached out to Hazleton regarding the parking and hasn't heard back

Vivienne (Kreidler-Licina)-why was one candidate chosen over another for the 2022 Republican 116th primary?

Mark Rabo explained that the party chair, not the Board chose the candidate.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Danny Schramm 2nd Alyssa Fusaro, unanimous

NEXT MEETING

April 27, 2022 at 5 PM

ADJOURNED 8:59 PM

