

LUZERNE COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
AND REGISTRATIONS MEETING
MINUTES May 12, 2021

CALL TO ORDER 5:01 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Kathy Roth present, Richard Nardone present, Audrey Serniak present, Missy Thomas absent, Denise Williams present

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Romilda Crocamo reported the Board went into executive session from 5:05 PM until 5:28 PM to discuss potential litigation resulting from county council's resolution; there were no deliberations.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Additions to the agenda: discuss/vote on meeting date to certify the election and discuss/vote on returning to in person meetings

Motion to change/accept the agenda Audrey Serniak 2nd Rick Nardone, motion carries

PUBLIC COMMENT (4 minutes)

David Bond, Trucksville (Kingston Twp)-his financial filing wasn't received on time and he has been fined \$20. Bob Morgan advised the deadline was close of business Friday. Romilda Crocamo will check to see if it can be waived.

MINUTES

Motion to accept minutes April 28, 2021 by Kathy Roth 2nd Rick Nardone, motion carries

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Romilda Crocamo and Mike Butera reported working with the Department of State to complete Judicial Watch's request to purge of the voters registration lists within 90 days. The list is regularly purged on an individual basis if people do not vote in two consecutive federal elections, for death, etc. This will happen after the primary; notice will be sent to last known address and people can reregister. Last wholesale purge was around 2012.

The Office of Law is working with the Bureau on the primary and Board members can assist.

BUREAU OF ELECTIONS REPORT

Motion to change the drop box location from Pitttston City Hall to Pittston Library (to avoid the appearance of influence) made by Kathy Roth 2nd Audrey Serniak, motion carries

Motion to accept the Proclamation made by Rick Nardone 2nd Kathy Roth, motion carries

Bob Morgan reported that preparation for the primary is ongoing and the machines are ready and are being delivered to the polls. There was a glitch with a small number return envelopes made by the vendor; some are going to Mercer County. Mercer County has been contacted and any ballots received there will be date stamped and overnighted to Luzerne County at the vendor's cost. Voters can use the Luzerne County drop boxes or come to the Bureau for a new return envelope. The first batch was about 19,000 ballots and the glitch occurred in one of the subsequent smaller batches. There are about 22,600-22,800 total mail-in ballots going out.

BOARD OF ELECTIONS REPORT

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS AT THE START AND ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS AT THE END OF MEETINGS CONCERNING BOARD MATTERS (4 minutes)

Rick Nardone says that makes sense; Denise Williams said it allows a public interface and an opportunity to bring up matters that weren't foreseen.

Motion to accept by Kathy Roth 2nd Rick Nardone, Roll call: Rick Nardone yes, Kathy Roth yes, Audrey Serniak yes, Denise Williams yes; unanimous, motions carries

OVERVIEW OF THE BOARD ON THE WEBSITE

Romilda Crocarno said the current overview was written by a previous director (Marisa Crispell) when the new website was constructed. The Board can draft its own overview, have it reviewed by the Office of Law, and have it posted.

POLICY FOR WRITE-IN VOTES

Audrey Serniak explained that in the 2020 primary, the Board started by counting most of the write-ins but because of time constraints began to 'scatter' non-viable candidates. In the 2020 general, the Board 'scattered' non-viable candidates from start to finish. Mike Butera verified Audrey Serniak's account; feels we need to count where there are no candidates and can 'scatter' non-viable where there are candidates on the ballot. Denise Williams said it's scatter where you must and write-in where you can, there's a time crunch. Audrey Serniak said there needs to be at least 3 Board members present and that other support people need to be considered.

CURING MAIL-IN BALLOTS

Opportunity for curing mail-in ballots. Approximately 120 voters were given the chance to cure their 'naked' ballots in the November 2020 election per state guidance received the night before.

There are other ballots received that may or may not be able to be cured: no outer envelope, outer envelope not signed and/or dated, damaged in the mail,. There are not a great number of these. Bob Morgan was able to 'reconstruct' enough of one damaged ballot to send the voter a new ballot. Paula Radick stated that on election day at 7 AM, ballots with problems were set aside for later adjudication.

Audrey Serniak said the process for curing 'naked' ballots in November 2020 as for the Board members to compile a lists of the names, addresses and serial numbers, and then exchange and proof- read each other's lists. The Office of Law gave the lists to the Bureau to update the SURE system and the party representatives to contact the voters. The process was halted when it was deemed there was not enough time for a voter to be notified and get into line at the poll. The process isn't equitable because only 'naked' ballot voters who live in municipalities named at the beginning of the alphabet had an opportunity to cure.

Richard Nardone's main concern was the best use of the Bureau's time and resources. Denise Williams said under the law the Bureau can assist voters to cure and that she was concerned with the best interest of the voters. Pointed out that people are assisted throughout the entire process and therefore can be assisted with curing.

Bob Morgan advised that there aren't enough resources to cure some types of ballots. Paula Radick and Romilda Crocarno mentioned security issues in curing the ballots.

Kathy Roth said that since the process was not equal for everyone, we should not cure these ballots.

Audrey Serniak said she was torn because the curing process was inequitable but she would like to allow as many people as possible to vote. While not suggesting that the primary election isn't important, and since the ballots are already being prepared for canvassing, perhaps a process for curing some of the ballots in other categories can be developed for the 2021 general election.

Motion: The Board of Elections will offer an opportunity for citizens to cure their mail in ballots on Election Day to the extent possible as determined by a majority of the Board present.

Motion made by Denise Williams 2nd Audrey Serniak; Roll call Kathy Roth no, Audrey Serniak yes, Rick Nardone yes, Denise Williams yes; 3 yes, 1 no, motion carries.

SCHEDULE FOR BOARD MEMBERS

Three members need to be present 7 AM-8PM on Election Day, more if possible. In addition at least 3 members need to be present to count write-ins and adjudicate ballots in the days following. Rick Nardone will keep track of the schedule.

DISCUSSION OF IN PERSON MEETINGS

Audrey Serniak said she has no problem with in-person meetings but really wants a hybrid option. Hybrid was determined to be Board members and anyone else present at a meeting location with a call-in option available for the public. More information is needed.

MEETING TO CERTIFY-To-be-determined; deadline to certify is June 7, 2021

PUBLIC COMMENT (4 minutes)

Claudia Glennan, Salem Twp-The local campaign finance reports are not posted yet. Bob Morgan advised that part of the project will be done after the primary. Claudia Glennan offered to assist if allowed.

NEXT MEETING

A Special meeting will be scheduled to discuss/vote on certifying the election.

Next regular meeting will be June 16, 2021 at 5 PM

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn Rick Nardone 2nd Kathy Roth, motion carries

ADJOURNED 7:32 PM