

LUZERNE COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
AND REGISTRATIONS MEETING
MINUTES AUGUST 25, 2021

CALL TO ORDER 5:01 PM

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Denise Williams announced that an executive session was held on August 23, 2021 from 11-11:50 AM to discuss litigation. No deliberations of voting took place.

PLEDGE OF ALLIGENCE

ROLL CALL

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve by Audrey Serniak 2nd Rick Nardone unanimous

PUBLIC COMMENTS (4 minutes)

Walter Griffith-Contracting with the Election Group is redundant and unnecessarily spending money. The Bureau and the Board are in the process of implementing the Inquiry Committee's recommendations. No time given to discuss this; the administration is imposing its will on the Bureau and Board.

Linda Houk-Concerned that the hiring of a consultant was never brought up; the Election Inquiry Committee's recommendations were accepted and are being implemented; no need to pay a consultant. Is the Board in agreement with this?

Harry Haas-A lot of time was spent by the Inquiry Committee because of the past three difficult elections. Hiring a consultant is money spent unnecessarily. This group has partisan leanings. Feels focus during past three elections was on the mail in voting and not on traditional balloting.

Hilary Palencar, Larksville-There is a feeling of mistrust. Pollworkers did not process her paper ballot properly. Feels that money shouldn't be spent to atone for the ballot header mistake.

Jessica Morgan, Dalla read her letter that had been forwarded to the Board-
After doing some research on Jennifer Morrell and The Election Group, I strongly oppose Luzerne County spending 70K to hire them. Unlike the claim that they are non-partisan, they are actually a left-winged group who most recently tried to destroy the Arizona Election audit. In an article in The Gateway Pundit, Jim Holt exposes Morrell as being one of Arizona State's corrupt Secretary of State's observers who tried to destroy the Cyber Security Group involved in the audit.

Morrell and The Election Group were involved in Georgia's 2020 election and declared Georgia's election safe and secure. This alone give as a glimpse of Morrell's political leanings and integrity. According to the Tennessee Star, "Voters of Fulton County urged the county commissioners not to approve a contract with this group who is tied to Mark Zuckerberg and the Center for Civic Design." A quick search of this left-winged group shows Jennifer Morrell listed on the advisory committee along with former Pennsylvania Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar. Not surprisingly, Morrell wrote a letter to the PA House of Representatives State Government Committee stating "some good examples of statewide election rules and procedures include Arizona, Colorado, Michigan and Pennsylvania."

Jennifer Morrell and The Election Group were in the middle of the Democrats' 2020 election plan. This group was involved before the election, during the election and now after the election. If Luzerne County hires Morrell and this group, we better guard our ballots and ay goodbye to fair elections.

MINUTES

Motion to approve minutes from August 11, 2021 2nd Kathy Roth unanimous

BOARD AGENDA ITEM-Introduction of Consultant by Administration

Romilda Corcamo is hiring The Election Group to assist the Bureau in holding the election. She sees it as a springboard not a lockbox; they will be there to assist the understaffed Bureau before, during and after the election. The Board will also be able to avail themselves of the services.

Rick Nardone was concerned as to their role and the responsibility for the election. And that much of the work had already been done by the Inquiry Committee, the Board and Bureau. He would have liked more time to discuss this.

Romilda advised that the consultants would not be directing Bureau employees or handling machinery. They would be there to offer advice to get better, more efficient results and more information to the public. The responsibility for the election resides with the Board, the Bureau, and ultimately herself as acting manager.

Denise Williams thanked Romilda for her commitment to the process and pointed out that the Board and Bureau had new people and that there was a steep learning curve so the culsultant was warranted. Her concerns were 1. if there was written agreement from the Department of State that this group could be used, 2. she wanted to hear from Dave Parsnik, Bob Morgan and Eymn Harvey to be sure they were all in.

Romilda said Department of State's requirements are met and we should all work together.

Bob Morgan said that he is open to assistance and new ideas and wants a smooth process.

Eryn Harvey said they are open to new ideas and to bringing in someone with experience; hopes it will renew voter confidence.

Kathy Roth asked if any other consulting groups were looked at.

Romilda said when she searched for a company experienced in holding elections, she discovered that there weren't many doing this work; The Election Group was recommended by Wendy Underhill who the state senate GOP requested to give testimony during recent hearings.

Rick Nardone said he supports bringing in subject matter experts but wished there was a choice of making a decision collectively.

Denise Williams stated that when interviewed she would be a non-partisan chair in service to the citizens of the county. She will not allow partisanship on her watch and will make decisions based on the facts and law. She feels the consultant is warranted to provide a a culture of continued improvement.

On the question of whether or not the Board needs to vote on the hiring of The Election Group, Vito DeLuca said the Board can vote on it but the Charter has not been interpreted as to whether this will prevent the hiring. He would have to discuss this with the manager.

Rick Nardone motioned that the Board commit to cooperate with the consultant hired by the county manager to extent we believe the consult offers improvement to the process of Luzerne County elections. 2nd Audrey Serniak Roll Call: Rick Nardone yes, Kathy Roth yes, Audrey Serniak yes, Denise Williams yes; motion carries

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Mike Butera reporte that there is no update to the DA's investigation into complaints; the investigation is ongoing.

Vito DeLuca said that since there is a conflict of interest with the Office of Law's representing the Board in the current litigation involving the DA race, Attorney Joseph Cosgrove was contacted and has agreed to represent the Board.

Motion to appoint Attorney Cosgrove of the Selingo Guagliardo law firm Denise Williams 2nd Rick Nardone Roll Call: Rick Nardone yes, Kathy Roth yes, Audrey Serniak yes, Denise Williams yes, motion carries

BUREAU OF ELECTIONS REPORT

Bob Morgan reviewed the chain of custody process for mail in ballot retrieval from drop boxes; this is the procedure used in the last election

Denise Williams said this was great work and wanted to know if people would be trained in the procedure and if election employees would be on every retrieval shift.

Eryn Harvey said that it was a simple process and that the Bureau is understaffed. Bob Morgan advised that people doing this had done this before.

Rick Nardone said he had no problem with using 2 sheriff's deputies; volunteers were used in other counties; it should always be two people.

Bob Morgan has researched the types of ballot drop boxes available; the Bureau need the type and number to order. The ones used at Penn Place are fine. He likes Printelect for their weight and sturdiness.

Denise Williams said that they should be located north south east and west; perhaps Pittston, Back Mountain, Hazleton and Mountain Tpo in additions to Penn Place.

Rick Nardone said locating the boxes geographically made sense.

Motion to order four Printelect mail box style ballot drop boxes by Rick Nardone 2nd Kathy Roth Roll Call: Kathy Roth yes, Audrey Serniak yes Rick Nardone yes, Denise Williams yes, motion carries.

Motion to approve chain of custody plan by Denise Williams 2nd Audrey Serniak, Roll Call: Audrey yes, Rick Nardone abstain (feels this is a operational decision), Kathy Roth yes, Denise Williams yes, 3 yes, 1 abstention, motion carries.

The Bureau received 5 bids for the mail in ballot printing and mailing contract. Bob Morgan recommends Election IQ because we have used them before with minimal problems. No vote is needed because this is operational.

Regarding the pollworker communication directive, the Bureau can us the Emergency Management system for outgoing text blasts. It's not available for incoming texts.

Regarding the poll worker training directive, the Bureau is working on having 2 types of training, one for workers with 1-5 years experience and one for workers with more than 5 years; smaller groups with more hands on training (most places use in person training rather than video) . Denise Williams suggested a better venue for training classes; the Bureau is planning on holding training from mid September thru the 3rd week of October.

Denise Williams suggested there be signage at drop box location advising who can drop off ballots and information regarding location and hours of drop boxes be advertised.

BOARD OF ELECTIONS REPORT

Regarding the District Attorney's term for the November 2021 ballot, a motion was made by Rick Nardone that the ballot should state 2 years 2nd Audrey Serniak Roll Call: Rick Nardone yes, Kathy Roth abstain (because of abstention on the prior vote regarding the DA race), Audrey Serniak yes, Denise Williams yes; 3 yes, 1 abstaining, motion carries.

No vote needed on the ballot drop boxes as this is operational.

Regarding mandatory poll work training, Denise Williams suggested it be required starting 2022 for new poll workers and once a year in person or online (if available) after that. Motion made that starting 2022 new poll workers must attend training and other poll workers once a year or they can't work by Denise Williams 2nd Kathy Roth, Roll Call: Rick Nardone yes, Kathy Roth yes, Audrey Serniak yes, Denise Williams yes, motion carries.

Consultant from The Election Group was unable to attend because of a scheduling conflict.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (4 minutes)

Walter Griffith-Disappointed in the vote to cooperate with the consultant, Board ducked the issue; Romilda Crocamo should have addressed that the mask mandate wasn't being adhered to; Eryn Harvey said that 2 people are legally required to collect the ballots but that is not in the law; there should be someone at every drop box to prevent ballot harvesting; regarding the election consultant-there is no oversight and the contract should have been put out forbid; changing the term of the DA from 4 years to 2 is against the Charter.

Tim McGinley-Thanked the Board for their voluntary service; thankful that we will be cooperative with the entire spectrum of those involved; there will be complaints but a lot of positive things happened; looks forward to a successful Fall election.

Sheila Saidman-Cp,,emds the manager and Board for the decision to hire a consultant; many people wanted Dominion to be replaced and that would have cost us millions not just \$70,000; GOP consultant recommended this group so it is non-partisan; would like to see some video training for voters.

Harry Haas-likes Sheila's statement but is disgusted by our votes.; he doesn't think the Board has read the law; the Board punted and should be ashamed of themselves; \$70,000 spent to give up responsibility to the manager; the Board should focus on a safe and secure election.

NEXT MEETING

September 8, 2021 at 5PM; hybrid; location Council Chamber in the Courthouse

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Audrey Serniak 2nd Kathy Roth, unanimous

ADJOURNED 7:40 PM