

**THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS OF CHATHAM COUNTY
MINUTES**

February 11, 2019

BOARD MEMBERS: Malinda Hodge – Vice Chair (Arrived at 3:40 PM)
Marianne Heimes
Antwan Lang – via telephone connection
Debbie Rauers

STAFF: Russell Bridges
Lynn Trabue
Robert Carney
Billy Wooten

GUESTS Jeannie Alday, Director, Internal Audit, Chatham County
Lorraine Ardiaz, Treasurer, R.U.F.F.
Tia Brightwell, Past Member, Board of Elections
Linda Cramer, Assistant County Manager
Richard Ellison, President, R.U.F.F.
Carl Murray
Lis Overton
Carry Smith

CALL TO ORDER **Marianne Heimes** called the meeting to order at 3:35 PM, sitting in for **Vice Chair Malinda Hodge**.
Ms. Heimes then pronounced an Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Lang, by consensus, was included in the meeting via telephone.

The meeting was turned over to **Vice Chair Malinda Hodge** upon her arrival. She then confirmed that **Mr. Lang** was conversing via telephone connection, and two-way conversation was good.

Ms. Hodge suggested moving the Chair Selection Process item (Under Old Business) to the forefront of the Agenda.

Ms. Rauers suggested that since representatives from the Chatham County Finance Department are present, the discussion on Poll Worker Pay should also be moved closer to the top of the Agenda.

Ms. Hodge requested that the Chair Selection Process take precedence over Poll Worker Pay because there may be time constraints for **Mr. Lang**.

Ms. Rauers suggested moving the GEOA and Budget items farther down in the Agenda.

Motion by Debbie Rauers, seconded by Antwan Lang that the Agenda be changed so that the Chair Selection Process and Poll Worker Pay section be put before the Minutes and the Treasurer's Report. **ALL APPROVED.**

OLD BUSINESS

Chair Selection Process

A discussion was initiated to schedule **Mr. Lang's** participation in future Board functions (including interviews for Board Chair), and how the appropriate notice and necessary information for his involvement can be achieved. It was agreed that proper and adequate notice could be given.

Ms. Rauers reminded that in the event a suitable Chair cannot be selected from those candidates who have submitted their resumes, the position would be re-advertised. A Chair is to be selected by the end of March 2019. She further suggested that the Board Members refrain from any activity that would lend itself to pre-picking or showing favoritism toward any of the candidates.

Ms. Hodge posted the question about utilizing a predetermined set of questions during the interviews.

Ms. Heimes suggested using four uniform questions asked to each candidate, then allowing each Board Member to ask questions of their own.

Ms. Hodge asked if the interviews should be conducted in Executive Session or in public session and the discussion led to a consensus for conducting the interviews in Executive Session.

Mr. Lang asked about criminal background checks.

Ms. Rauers suggested that applicants are frequently asked to sign affidavits stating that they are not

felons.

Motion by Debbie Rauers, seconded by Antwan Lang to subject the candidates to a criminal background check. **ALL APPROVED.**

Russell suggested setting a target date to vote on the next Chair, perhaps February 25, 2018. This would be a special meeting called to review the interviews and make selections. He stated that he could begin advertising and getting the ball rolling.

A discussion ensued about the time and length of interviews. The suggestion was made to begin with morning interviews of three candidates set at one-hour intervals. Related information would be forwarded to **Mr. Lang** enabling his effective participation.

Poll Worker Pay

Russell shared that when migrating from bearer checks to accounts payable, a small, pilot pay system under accounts payable was run in 2017. In 2018, full implementation was started. The May 2018 General Primary, the July 24th election, and then the December election showed significant progress. The effort was to pay as many people as possible in the polls on Election Day. For various reasons, some workers were not paid in the polls. Using “named” checks, required allowing time for processing. This was accomplished by producing a payroll request, sending it through the County’s Payroll Department by Friday before the election, and then the checks would be available on Monday to be distributed on Tuesday (Election Day). Any changes that occurred after Friday would require some checks to be issued a few days after the Election.

Ms. Cramer summarized the process changes from using bearer checks to payroll checks, and emphasized the problems associated with handling additions and/or changes at the last minute. She recognized the positive changes and improvements accomplished in the last couple of elections. Handling the post-election payroll has been difficult because of the complexities involved with gathering necessary information on a timely basis. Additionally, at some point the threshold is reached by many of the poll workers where consideration must be given for income tax withholding.

Ms. Rauers highlighted weak areas:

- There is not a dedicated person in the County to make certain that all of the payroll recipients have their paperwork squared away. Often, the contact person in the Payroll Department is often on vacation or for other reasons out of the office when we need her to be available. She indicated how disconcerting it is to realize that there is only one person qualified to handle these payroll problems.
- **Russell** handles many of the payroll problems from his computer. In the event his computer is down, there is no one on the county staff who can fix it because of their lack of knowledge regarding the various programs he uses. She suggested getting software that is specific to **Russell’s** computer in a more efficient way so that at least one other person can handle problems.

Ms. Rauers also shared that there were people who have dealt with counting Absentee Ballots who were not paid for two months after an election.

In summary, she suggested getting someone dedicated to the Board of Elections, and a program that is specific to our needs, because paying 600 people in one day is a daunting task. She said that promising to make post-election payments at an undetermined time would not work. Additionally, withholding money from people who have earned it will not work.

Ms. Cramer stated that the payroll is run every two weeks, and her department is glad to work with us in terms of any administrative support

Mr. Lang questioned the validity of paying the poll workers two weeks after the election.

Ms. Hodge indicated that the poll workers are accustomed to being paid on the day of election. In the process of transitioning from bearer checks to payroll checks, it was learned that the payroll check effort was not conducive to paying on the “day of”. We are facing the culture that resists accepting checks two weeks out from performing the services.

Mr. Lang suggested changing the culture via informing the poll workers while they are in training.

Ms. Hodge stated that any time such a large change is made the net result is a loss of poll workers.

Ms. Heimes said that Chatham County is the only county in the State of Georgia that pays its poll workers on the date of the election. She suggested that a plan be developed that would allow for everything is done before Election Day.

Mr. Murry added his opinion that an effort should be made to move away from paying poll workers on the day of the election. He asked for a clarification of the cut-off date for workers to have their information into the County in enable receiving their checks on Election Day.

Ms. Cramer indicated that a calendar would have to be worked out for each situation.

Russell explained the employment process by listing the various phases that have to be satisfied before the new employee is turned over to Human Resources for including in the payroll system. The phases included completing an application, entering their data into the computer system, filling out and processing a Form W-4, submitting a signed Consent Form for a Background Check, and supervisory approval for utilizing the new worker in the polls. Human Resources, once they include the data in their system, will provide a County Employee Number that is required for a check request. The Payroll person will have Friday and Monday to produce about 600 checks. We then have to hand sort these checks for distribution on Tuesday (Election Day). Even with the complexity of this process, the number of checks issued post-election is generally decreasing. This past November 597 checks were issued on Election Day, and only 19 required payment after the election.

Ms. Brightwell voiced her feelings of a lack of compassion toward Poll Workers' personal needs that could be met if prompt payment of earned money is paid immediately after completing their 13-hour shifts on Election Day.

Ms. Ardiaz asked why there couldn't be a "date certain" for supplying information to initiate a payroll that is on time and complete. This would put a sense of responsibility on the shoulders of the poll workers.

Ms. Alday expressed her understanding of the variances caused by individual situations. She had questions about payment for the Absentee Workers.

Russell stated that the Absentee Workers, for the large part, received their initial check covering their base rate. Because of the number of hours worked, they were paid overtime post-election. The delay for those people for November was lengthy. This was not a problem in December.

Following was a lengthy discussion about planning toward a date certain for post-election payments by identifying problems and roadblocks, then solving the problems as they came up. There were several questions regarding ways to secure all needed information on the poll workers on a timely basis. There were numerous problems voiced, all of which need to be solved.

Ms. Rauers asked what could be done to help provide a back-up check to the poll workers, or to dedicate one person to make certain that all details were handled on a timely basis. There were no immediate answers. She also asked how a poll worker could validate their personal data prior to an election to make certain they are properly included in the payroll system.

Ms. Hodge summed up the discussion by consideration of a calendar of deadline dates by which necessary information is in place, as well as a calendar showing County payroll dates. Additionally suggested was a formal request for administrative support.

Russell stated that he would meet with Ms. Alday and Ms. Cramer in an effort to extract useful calendar information that would allow deadline targets to have essential data secured by the time it is needed. He indicated that the only solution he thought would allow for paying everyone at the same time would be to change the pay dates to a later time.

Mr. Wooten added that that proper communication to the poll workers may go a long way toward solving the problems, and a good place to begin the communication is in the training classes.

Mr. Lang suggested utilizing direct deposit. The discussion regarding his comment indicated that although direct deposit may provide some solutions, it would not solve them all, and in fact, may create new difficulties. In time, this payment method may be more feasible than it is currently.

Mr. Wooten detailed the problems of handling last minute assignment changes of poll workers and the extra efforts required to keep the polls properly staffed. He emphasized the need for communicating the pay system and the possible methods of handling the unexpected.

Russell indicated that he would meet with Ms. Alday and Ms. Cramer before the next meeting to work up a calendar and other enhancement ideas to allow for a date certain to provide a satisfactory disbursement of the payroll. The information regarding payroll and possible variances will be communicated to the poll workers during their training. He indicated two possible solutions: Delay the pay date or use a second pay date to catch up unanticipated changes.

Ms. Hodge formally thanked Ms. Cramer and Ms. Alday for their input, care, and endurance.

MINUTES

January 2019 – Regular Board Meeting

Ms. Rauers stated that she voted "No" on the vote for **Malinda Hodge** as Vice Chair. The words "ALL APPROVED" were struck and replaced with one dissenting vote by **Debbie Rauers** based upon the last Vice Chair having been Democrat.

Ms. Heimes asked about the verbiage, near the bottom of Page 3, showing “**Russell’s** was not functioning properly”. It was determined that this should be changed to “**Russell’s** computer was not working properly”.

Motion by Marianne Heimes, seconded by Debbie Rauers that the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of January 2019 be accepted with the above shown changes. **ALL APPROVED.**

Ms. Rauers mentioned discussions in prior meetings about looking into software, including Easy Vote and Microsoft products to help with setting up polls. She indicated that if **Russell’s** computer is not working properly and he is not available, there is no way to get into the programming he has developed to fix the situation. She emphasized the need to search for workable alternatives.

TREASURER’S REPORT **December 2018**

Russell reviewed the Treasurer’s Report and Budget that there is nothing outstanding or noteworthy on the report for this period.

Ms. Rauers asked when employee evaluations are to be made.

Russell shared that the reports are due after the first of July because it runs July 1st through June 30th.

Mr. Lang asked about the feasibility of providing meals to the poll workers.

Russell offered that if actual money were provided, there would be no way to make sure they were properly used. If food is provided, then there is a problem with meeting the dietary needs of so many people. There is a logistical problem with providing meals in so many diverse locations. This project, if provided commercially, could be a problem related to campaign contributions.

Motion by Marianne Heimes, seconded by Antwan Lang that the Treasurers Report for February 2019 be accepted as information. **ALL APPROVED**

Motion by Marianne Heimes, seconded by Ms. Rauers that staff put together a report to be presented in the March meeting to pursue inviting the Board and Poll Managers to a meeting where they can provide input of ideas and suggestions to make things better. **ALL APPROVED.**

Ms. Rauers suggested a meeting with the representatives from Easy Vote and for the producers of the new voting machines under consideration for use in Georgia. This meeting would include the Poll Managers and Assistant Managers.

Ms. Heimes asked if we could meet with Easy Vote at the GEOA meeting.

Motion by Marianne Heimes, seconded by Debbie Rauers that we attempt to set up a meeting with Easy Vote in March, during the GEOA Convention. **ALL APPROVED.**

CORRESPONDENCE

Russell circulated copies of the U.S. District Court case that was served a couple of weeks ago. This case has been circulated to the County Attorney’s office for review. **Russell** stated that he has not taken any action on this matter, but it must be addressed in the next few days. The District Court has requested about 44 items of information for the case against the State of Georgia, filed back in November, and most of the items requested are Registrar specific. It will be necessary for us to decline the items that do not pertain to us. We have until February 27th to file our response.

Also circulated is a legal opinion from Mr. John Hart, County Attorney, in response to Mr. Ellison’s request.

There have been five or six Open Records Requests in the past two weeks. Most are soliciting forensic type information related to the last November election. Each request has been acknowledged and a response has been provided. The items in the requests that are not available or are not available subject to Open Records have been so noted. The other items have received our response. Cost estimates to several of these have been submitted where needed. These are very time consuming matters requiring a response within 72 hours.

Mr. Ellison asked about training for a new voting system, once it is selected, being demonstrated to the voters in Chatham County.

Mr. Lang suggested that as soon as word is out revealing the new voting equipment to be used in Georgia, we should quickly establish contact with the vendor and get demonstration equipment into

our area to begin educating the public.

NEW BUSINESS

GEOA

Russell indicated that hotel confirmation has been distributed. He still needs to book us with the Conference. He needs to know everyone who is planning to attend. He will go ahead and book the reservations

2019-2020 Operating Budget

Russell shared that he distributed a Staff Report on the Budget that has to be presented this week. He said that it is as it has been in the past. The key, variable components are the Poll Worker Pay, the Transportation Costs, and the Seasonal Employee Pay. This Budget will cover the November and December Election. This will roll into a Presidential Preference Primary in March of 2020, followed by a General Primary in May of 2020. This equates to four Countywide elections.

Ms. Rauers brought up the need for a minimum of three extra polling places.

Russell indicated that he could bump up the Budget to support three more polls.

Ms. Rauers suggested making certain that all of the machines in our inventory are working, certified, and used. She asked if the budget request is sufficient for heavy use of machines, three additional voting places, more personnel in the polling places, more people working in Absentee, possibly more transportation costs, and more Technicians.

Russell indicated he would bump up the budgetary needs to accommodate four new voting polls and these mentioned expense increases.

Ms. Heimes requested job descriptions for the three, seasonal, part-time positions.

Ms. Rauers asked if we had the updates for the Ethics software.

Russell shared that we do not yet have the updates but they are expected. He is also projecting the major elections to use up to 600 people. The runoff is targeted for about 500 people.

Ms. Rauers asked about efforts to add new polling places.

Russell stated that the search has been going on for over two years. Hopefully any changes that are made will take place soon. To make changes or additions by November, for example, they must be approved and in place by September. Studies have to be made of the population, redistricting, and other information reviews.

Russell, returning to the Budget and considering the inclusion of food for the poll worker discussion, suggested developing a pilot and draw from the existing funds. He stated that the Miscellaneous Item, 57.3000, could be utilized for funding this project as long as it is within his spending authority. This is a discretionary account. Any program developed must be uniform, across the board. Other items posing expense increases to cover additional workers and transportation were discussed. Lee Wright has indicated that this will be his last contract to handle transportation. **Russell** has been given thought to alternate transportation procedures.

Motion by Debbie Rauers, seconded by Marianne Heimes, to adopt the Budget with the requested modifications from the Board. It will be submitted into the County's Budget. The County will begin looking through the request next week. If changes need to be made, we can work within the framework submitted. **Russell** will reflect the suggested changes to the Budget then re-distribute copies of it. **ALL APPROVED.**

Develop Public Participation Policy.

Ms. Hodge suggested that this item be held over to the next meeting.

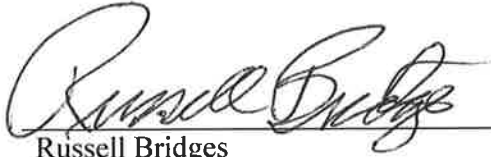
Ms. Ardiaz requested time for asking questions. She first offered suggestions for updating the web site. She requested information covering response time when queries are made via the web page. Her interests included information about salaries and responsibilities of the Board Members. She also wanted to know about the qualifications for the position of Chair, and who is responsible for the actual hiring the Chair. Her inquiry included information about duties, responsibilities, and salary of

the Manager of Elections. She indicated that after numerous, written requests for information, she stated having never received a response. All of the questions posed by Ms. Ardiaz received a response.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Debbie Rauers and consensus, the meeting was adjourned at 7:07 PM

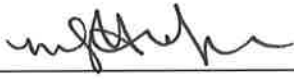
Respectfully Submitted:



Russell Bridges
Supervisor, Secretary to the Board

3/11/19

Date Approved



Acting Chair



Notary Signature

4-26-19

Date Notarized

