

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

July 8, 2019

BOARD MEMBERS: Thomas J. Mahoney, Chair
Malinda Hodge, Vice Chair
Marianne Heimes
Antwan Lang
Debbie Rauers

STAFF: Russell Bridges
Lynn Trabue
Robert Carney

GUESTS Shirley Wright, from The League of Women Voters
Several guests from the Pooler, GA, area

CALL TO ORDER The meeting was called to order at 3:30 P.M. by **Tom Mahoney** who then pronounced the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CHAIR ADDRESS **Mr. Mahoney** noted that there is a lengthy Agenda. He stated that the Public Comment speakers should limit their comment time to two minutes and refrain from repeating others. He further asked that they not interrupt the business portion of the meeting. The discussions and deliberations are for the elected Board Members. Questions not addressed during the content of the Board's considerations should be asked at the office.

Motion by Mr. Lang, seconded by Ms. Hodge to remove "Citizens Advisory Committee" and "Chamber of Commerce" from the Agenda. There was no discussion. The question was called and **ALL APPROVED.**

MINUTES **June 2019 Meeting**
Ms. Rauers commented that an item in the Minutes for the past two months is a discussion as to how Minutes are to be handled. She asked why this matter is not included on the current Agenda.
Mr. Mahoney indicated his understanding that this would be handled during the Board Retreat. He stated that the Agenda for the next meeting would be handled after this meeting.
Motion by Mr. Lang, seconded by Ms. Heimes that the June 2019 Minutes be approved. **ALL APPROVED.**

TREASURER'S REPORT **June 2019**
Motion by Mr. Lang, seconded by Ms. Heimes, that the June 2019 Treasurers Report be accepted as information. There was no discussion. **ALL APPROVED.**

OLD BUSINESS **2019-2020 Operating Budget**
Russell stated that the County Commission has adopted the 2019-2020 Budget. None of the requested funding was reinstated. He plans to request a written record from the Commission stating some of the items discussed, including that necessary expenses would be covered as they come due.
Russell handed out a copy of the adopted Budget. The handout should also address **Ms. Heimes** request for a better explanation of the object codes.
Ms. Rauers referred to item number seven in the 2019-2020 Budget Submission, and asked for the names of those with whom he talked.
Russell shared that the Finance Director is Amy Davis, and the Executive Team of Budget Analysts includes Melba Sharp. These are the two people referred to in item number seven. The Executive Team also comprises Linda Kramer, Michael Cagler, Lee Smith, and Carol Smalls (from Human Resources).
Ms. Rauers asked that **Russell** attempt to obtain a copy of the Minutes covering this County Commission meeting.

2019 Realignment of the Pooler Precincts.

Mr. Mahoney stated that the Pooler City Attorney requested his presentation be removed from their Agenda because he was unable to attend their last meeting. He had questions, and has some procedural concerns. As a result, a request will be made to the County Commission for their approval of the study related to additional precincts in Pooler.

Ms. Rauers expressed interest in the City Attorney's concerns.

Mr. Mahoney mentioned a Statute under Georgia Law that pertains to Counties of over 250,000 residents. It is stated that when county population exceeds the 250,000 range, the role of the Superintendent of Elections will be followed by the County Authority. **Mr. Mahoney** advises that this direction should ensure that proper procedures are met.

Mr. Lang asked about opinions from the Attorney General about this matter.

Mr. Mahoney indicated that Attorney General's opinion exists, and we should ask how it relates to our study of additional precincts in Pooler".

Russell shared that the Board's Charter makes this elected Board the Superintendent of Elections. The Statute points to the Superintendent of Elections.

Mr. Lang requested that **Russell** e-mail a copy of the Statute to the Board Members.

Russell clarified that this does not affect the establishment of new polling places. It only affects the placement of precinct boundaries. He further projected a goal to have this in place prior to the Presidential Preference Primary.

Mr. Lang asked about the advisability of informing the public of this delay since they are anticipating the availability of additional polls.

Legislation HB 316 – New Voting System

Russell shared that the selection for the new voting system will soon be announced. The date for the Presidential Preference Primary has been set for March 24, 2020. Once the selection is announced, training will be offered to the public by the State and by the vendor.

Mr. Lang asked for news from the judges regarding paper ballot utilization.

Mr. Mahoney indicated that, to his knowledge, the lawsuit continues, and the plaintiffs are pushing for paper ballots in this November's election.

Russell said that he has been contacted by the State to prepare a related statement to the court.

Mr. Mahoney suggested that the matter of pending litigation be taken up in Executive Session.

Board Retreat

Mr. Mahoney said that he and **Russell** have discussed putting together a Board Retreat. The county has been informed of the need for a Parliamentarian. The current effort is to find a Facilitator and a venue. Suggested locations include the Botanical Gardens (Bamboo Farm) and the Coastal Georgia Center (c/o Ed Hood). A suggested Facilitator was Charles McMillan.

NEW BUSINESS

November 5, 2019 Municipal and County Election

Russell stated there are six cities in the election cycle this year. They are Garden City, Pooler, Pt. Wentworth, Savannah, Tybee Island, and Vernonburg. The County is planning to run a SPLOST and possibly a Freeport. The goal is to have the poll staffing in place by the first of August.

Lynn offered that there is still a need for about 50 additional Poll Workers.

Ms. Rauers asked if the polling facilities have been reviewed for suitability as voting polls. She specifically mentioned the Garden City Rec Center, the Guard House Community Center at Tybee Island, Ely Whitney, and Savannah High School.

Ms. Heimes mentioned the poor working conditions at the Garden City Rec Center, but a more suitable facility has not been located.

Russell indicated that efforts are currently ongoing to locate a facility to which this poll can be relocated.

Ms. Rauers asked for a detailed report on polling place searches by next month's meeting.

Motion by Marianne Heimes, seconded by Malinda Hodge for Staff to locate an acceptable facility to replace the Garden City Precinct poll location.

Russell advised that the change would have to be made quickly.

There was no further discussion.

Mr. Mahoney called for the question. **ALL APPROVED.**

Ms. Rauers was asked about other polling facilities that she thought were of questionable suitability. She added The Lighthouse on Highway 80, and The Fellowship of Love to the list she previously mentioned.

Continued discussion offered observations, concerns, and suggestions.

Mr. Mahoney stated that an effective move toward solving all of these problems would be a comprehensive review of all of the polling places, and growing the staff to a sufficient number to handle the work. There also needs to be an active, on-going effort to increase the number of available poll workers. He also suggested evaluating possibilities for poll consolidation.

Motion by Marianne Heimes, seconded by Debbie Rauers that Staff develop a report prior to the next election that states which precincts are problematic, some of which have already been identified, and report on all of the precincts as far as the voters per each precinct. The report should list available alternatives.

There being no discussion, **Mr. Mahoney called for the question. ALL APPROVED.**

New Polls at Savannah State and at Georgia Southern University/Armstrong Campuses

Antwan Lang provided a handout sharing his suggestions for making voting easier for students at these campuses. His idea would assign each campus as a precinct with a precinct number, placing a poll on campus for each school. Only properly registered students would be assigned to these polls. They would have to be residents of the two addresses for Savannah State or the Georgia Southern University/Armstrong address. **Mr. Lang** proposes that these polling places be available for the 2020 election cycle. He requests Staff to research and evaluate the possibilities for this project.

Motion by Antwan Lang, for Staff to research and return a recommendation by the September meeting related to adding voting polls to Savannah State University and Georgia Southern University/Armstrong.

Ms. Rauers complimented **Mr. Lang** for his presentation. She suggested that this concept might be used as a model for the State of Georgia. She recommended bringing in Don Waters (a resident of Savannah, GA and the Regent for the State of Georgia) as a consultant on this project. **Ms. Rauers** further suggested including the new Presidents for Savannah State University and Georgia Southern University.

Ms. Heimes voiced her dissatisfaction with **Mr. Lang** pursuing this project and its publication without first gaining consent from the Board.

Ms. Rauers mentioned similar instances from the past where Board Members followed their individual ideas before bringing them before the Board. She suggested a discussion of this matter during the upcoming retreat in an effort to develop a mutually agreed-upon policy for Board Members to work together.

Mr. Mahoney reiterated his prior suggestion of working toward a reduction in the actual number of polls, rather than adding more of them, especially in light of the difficulty recruiting Poll Workers. He shared his thoughts of a critical need to add polls at Pooler, but expressed doubt about adding polls at Savannah State and Armstrong.

Ms. Rauers expressed her opinion that researching the potential for this project could place the Board in a better position to view the whole picture and make informed decisions.

Antwan Lang, when asked to do so, **restated his Motion** to instruct Staff to collect data on the possibility and/or needs, or lack thereof, to create a precinct to have Savannah State University and Georgia Southern/Armstrong Campus become their own precinct and to place a poll on each campus, for students only. **The Motion was seconded by Debbie Rauers.**

There was no further discussion.

Mr. Mahoney called for the vote. ALL APPROVED.

Poll Worker Appreciation Luncheon

Mr. Lang offered an idea to show Poll Workers appreciation for their hard work and dedication. He suggested October 30th or November 2nd at the Southside Library. Their auditorium will hold about 185 people, and catering is allowed.

Ms. Rauers stated that she can secure the American Legion facility, in Thunderbolt, which holds 200 people, and they can cater the meal for \$12.00 per person (meat, salad, vegetable, desert, and tea). They want \$600.00. She also called the Civic Center. They are asking \$500.00 for the whole Civic Center.

Ms. Hodge interjected that we have 600 Poll Workers, and we would need to plan for 1,200 guests.

Ms. Rauers felt that there could be a good opportunity to pursue this in January, combining

expressions of appreciation with an introduction of the new voting machines.

Mr. Lang suggested discussing this further at the Board Retreat.

Mr. Lang also presented the idea of honoring **Ernestine J. Jones**, perhaps with a Distinguished Service Award, for her years of service on the Board.

Ms. Rauers mentioned other long-serving Board Members who are now deceased. They, too, deserve recognition for their years of service.

Mr. Mahoney presented a completed plaque to the Board Members, and **Mr.** he stated that the others are also available. Everyone was very pleased.

Federal Work Study Students

Mr. Lang offered his knowledge of student workers on a work-study program at Savannah State University. The students are paid by the program, itself, and they could be paid for their efforts by the Board of Elections, as well. They could be utilized in a variety of areas to gain work experience in the “real world” and enhance their resume.

Motion by Debbie Rauers, seconded by Ms. Hodge for Staff to develop recommendations concerning hiring Federal Work Study students.

Ms. Hodge suggested that Staff would need to learn the guidelines. They would also have to develop job descriptions and determine how the students would be utilized.

Mr. Mahoney voiced concern about the managerial responsibility on our small staff.

Russell requested contact information from both campuses so that he can make direct contact with the head of the Student Worker program.

There was no further discussion.

Mr. Mahoney called for the question. ALL APPROVED.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was a request for the office operating hours and phone number.

Mr. Mahoney stated that he would provide the address, office hours, and telephone number after the meeting.

The next speaker thanked **Russell** for his efforts toward correcting the problems in Pooler. There was a request for information related to any changes or improvements in the availability of voting polls in Pooler.

Russell shared that there would be no fewer voting locations than those that currently exist. The question was asked if additional locations would be available by March 2020. How many more poll workers would be required? Information was requested covering the feasibility of securing new workers by visiting local organizations.

Mr. Mahoney suggested that personal contact is the most effective way to secure new workers.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Antwan Lang, seconded by Marianne Heimes to go into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation and personnel.

There was dissention by **Ms. Rauers** regarding **Mr. Mahoney's** request for Staff to remain and Minutes to be taken during the Executive Session. **Ms. Rauers** was adamant about Staff remaining in the Executive Session, and she volunteered to take the Minutes.

Mr. Mahoney insisted that this matter would be discussed at the Staff Retreat.

Malinda Hodge suggested that discussion take place regarding the matter requiring Staff to be present, and then excuse them from the session.

Mr. Mahoney called for a vote on the Motion. The Motion carried, with one **NAY** vote by **Debbie Rauers**.

At 5:42 PM, **Mr. Mahoney** announced the Board in Executive Session.

RECONVENE MEETING

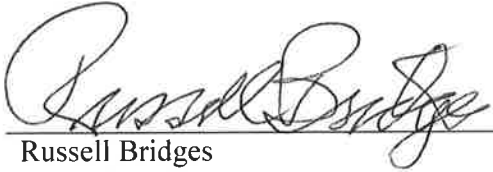
The regular Board Meeting was reconvened at 6:27 PM.

Mr. Mahoney confirmed that during the Executive Session, no votes were taken.

ADJOURNMENT:

By consensus, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM.

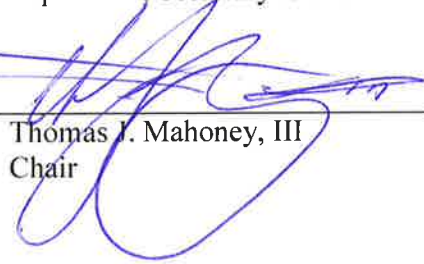
Respectfully Submitted:



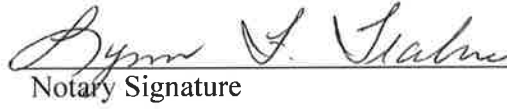
Russell Bridges
Supervisor, Secretary to the Board

8-12-2019

Date Approved



Thomas J. Mahoney, III
Chair



Notary Signature

8-13-2019

Date Notarized

