

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

August 12, 2019

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

STAFF: Russell Bridges
Lynn Trabue
Robert Carney

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

CHAIR ADDRESS **Mr. Mahoney** welcomed all of the guests and announced that all Board Members are present. He mentioned the sizeable Agenda, and asked that those guests who registered to speak during the Public Comment section of the meeting limit their remarks to two minutes and refrain from repeating what others have said. He reminded that participation in the meeting is for the elected Board Members, only. Questions should be asked outside of the meeting.

MINUTES **July 8, 2019**
Motion by Antwan Lang, seconded by Marianne Heimes to approve the July 8, 2019 Minutes. There were no questions, additions, or deletions to the Minutes. **ALL APPROVED.**

TREASURER’S REPORT **July 2019:**
Ms. Rauers asked if the Treasurer’s Report reflects employee time at work (regular and overtime), vacations, sick leave, and comp time that is recorded in a way prescribed by the County.
Motion by Malinda Hodge to accept the Treasurer’s Report.
Mr. Lang asked if there is a time stamp or other method for employees to clock in when they come to work, and if related records are kept as a County requirement.
Ms. Hodge stated that by default, there has to be a record kept, but generally, professional employees don’t clock in.
Russell advised that hourly employees clock in and clock out on a time sheet. Salaried employees do not.
Ms. Rauers asked about accounting for days off and other time away from the office.
Russell stated that he tracks his time. The County is moving to a time-accounting system with time clocks and other provisions, and the phases of this change are being implemented.
Antwan Lang seconded the motion by **Malinda Hodge**. **ALL APPROVED.**

OLD BUSINESS **Realignment of the Pooler Precincts**
Russell outlined the efforts to create two new Precincts in Pooler. This has been presented to this Board and to Pooler. The Pooler Attorney brought up a Consent Decree that was a housing issue. Primarily due to rapid population growth, coupled with a complex ballot, 2018 caught us a little short. The search for new polling places was enhanced. The initial target was to have the new Precincts in place by November 2019. **Russell** related that Pooler was not enamored with having two new polling places ready by the November election, and they were reluctant to make this a public pronouncement. The Attorney had presented red flags along the way. We sent a proposal to the County Commission that was heard and approved last week, requesting permission to proceed with investigations and implementation of the two new Precincts. The County directed the Board of Elections via a Voting Precinct Resolution to continue this and move toward implementation. The Staff Report included in today’s packet, outlines the document from R. Jonathan Hart (County Attorney) and Jennifer Davenport (Assistant County Attorney) confirming approval of the request of a resolution directing the Board of Elections, through the Election Superintendent, to investigate the need for additional voting precincts within the County, including the Cities of Pooler and Savannah.
Russell further stated that Commissioner Kicklighter had announced that Pooler had contacted him, advising that they did not want the new polling sites in place for November. This was due to concern for confusion to their voters. The plan is to proceed with implementation after the

November/December elections. There is currently a request into Godley School as a polling place for the northern precinct. **Russell** proposed development of a resolution to Pooler addressing some of their questions and establishing an implementation window.

Mr. Mahoney shared appreciation for working with the City of Pooler and Chatham County. He also informed of a Statute that, because Chatham County's population growth has grown to over 250,000 people, the Board is to initiate proposed changes with the County Commission. The Commission has authorized the Board to review and implement precinct needs. Pooler is requesting that progress toward the necessary changes be geared for the March 24, 2020 Presidential Primary.

Ms. Heimes confirmed that Pooler pays The Board of Elections for running their Elections, and that Early Voting is still being implemented for Pooler.

Mr. Lang asked if delay in the new precinct implementation in Pooler is at their elected officials' request, or is it in the best interest of their citizens.

Mr. Mahoney indicated that changing the implementation-time is being altered at the request of the City of Pooler. They are attempting to minimize confusion.

Mr. Lang itemized upcoming, time-consuming projects that will demand attention. These include the November election, a likely runoff in December, new voting equipment, and educating staff, poll workers, and the public on the use of the new machines. These items are in addition to establishing new polling places and communicating the voting place changes to the citizenry.

Russell stated that he would like to resolve the issues at hand, and get Pooler's blessing. He would then like the Board to set an implementation target date. Change communication could begin using signage in the affected polls. As soon as the runoff election in Pooler is completed, enhanced notification through television, newspapers, utility bills, and other methods could provide adequate coverage. The Board of Registrars will also handle a notification mailing.

Antwan, through **Russell**, shared that one new polling place has been confirmed for Pooler. There is another hopeful location, at this point. **Antwan** also quarried about contingency plans in the event that an announced voting location falls through at the last minute.

Russell stated that the Board of Election has the authority to make short-term changes in facilities after catastrophe. He further shared that when polling locations are changed, the Board of Elections sends out notification cards to the affected voters.

Ms. Rauers asked about written contracts with the voting locations, and if a calendar of voting events is provided to them.

Russell shared that agreement is in place for one location and a request is in for the other. These include information covering required provisions, access, and whether money is to be paid for the use of the facility

Ms. Hodge inquired about confirmation of the new polling place locations prior to the next meeting.

Russell stated that he is attempting to obtain the information, and once gained, the Board Members will be informed.

Mr. Lang voiced his desire to be on record as wishing to go ahead and activate the new polls.

Mr. Mahoney said that it is his preference to work with Pooler and honor their request.

There was continued discussion about the crowd problems experienced in the Pooler election last year. Everyone seemed to be in favor of providing more machines in the polls. Prior agreement was to place additional machines in any poll deemed to have had problems. A spreadsheet was requested showing the number of machines assigned to each poll, so that when asked, a correct answer can be provided. It was mentioned that additional yellow cards would help alleviate the problem with long voting lines. Training Poll Workers in line management was also discussed.

New Voting System

Russell stated that on July 29, 2019, the Secretary of State announced that the new voting system would be purchased through Dominion Voting. Their equipment can produce human-readable ballots, by not voting from a barcode, but actually reading what is on the ballot. The voter will complete a Certificate and then proceed to a new Poll Book offering clear, larger graphics, as well as faster and more accurate identification scanning. It will provide live statistics relating to activity in the polls, and offer many other advantages. The actual voting station is a large touchscreen with clear resolution. It will be in a metal cart with rollers. Built-in privacy panels and a printer will be provided. There is also a scanning station where the voter will mark his/her choices, then "Print" the ballot. The voter will review the ballot, and will have three opportunities to make vote changes. When satisfied, the ballot will be placed in the scanner, which will read the ballot. If there are errors, the ballot will be rejected for correction, and then re-scanned. Once the voting process is completed,

the ballot will be securely placed in a locked box. There was also discussion about the privacy screens that are built into the equipment.

The State will perform risk audits periodically.

There were questions and comments related to the types of errors that could appear on a ballot that would cause the equipment to reject it. **Mr. Mahoney** voiced that experience would render those answers.

Other discussions included possible problems with transporting the new machines to the polls, frequency of ink-change requirements, and the amount of space taken up by the machines for both warehousing and for placement in the polling facilities.

Russell expects to have some of this new equipment available in the office by the end of August 2019. He indicated the State would pick up and dispose all of the old equipment. Six counties will be utilizing the new equipment as a pilot election in November.

Mr. Mahoney requested that the word be broadcast as much as possible that the new equipment will not be used in an election until the March 24th, 2020 election.

Mr. Lang brought out other questions for consideration: How many scanners does each poll get? What is the contingency plan for ordering more scanners? What is the contingency plan for replacing malfunctioning machines? How much money has the County put aside to purchase more equipment when needed?

Russell stated that the Budget included \$5 million available for contingencies.

Mr. Lang continued: How many Technicians are necessary to be able to provide a replacement machine in a polling place within a sufficient amount of time? He further suggested that a job description should be available for each position so that we know specific requirements. This information should be posted on our web site.

Ms. Rauers added that there are many “new” puzzle pieces. We can only identify many of them through experience and adequate evaluation. Hopefully we will learn from the six pilot elections in

November. There is a critical need for written reports from the Poll Managers, describing every concern so that existing and potential problems can be identified and solved.

Russell was asked how many Technicians are included in the budget, to which he replied that he budgets for eleven technicians in every election, and will be attempting to raise that number to twelve.

Ms. Heimes asked about the pending, unsettled lawsuit. If the Judge makes a ruling that requires using paper ballots in the November election, will the County fund the expense of the optical scanners? Are there scanners available for purchase (either new or used)?

Russell stated that optical scanners under our current system are extremely limited. The State only uses them for back-office operations. Anything used has to be certified to meet the requirements issued by the State of Georgia.

Mr. Lang asked if the Board could vote for the Applications for Poll Workers to be posted on line.

Mr. Mahoney asked **Mr. Lang** to remind him to put that matter on the Agenda for the September meeting.

Board Retreat

Mr. Mahoney introduced Charles McMillan, who has offered to provide assistance during the upcoming Board Retreat.

General Election on November 5, 2019

Russell stated that a head start allowed establishment of August 1, 2019 as the initial target for having everything in place for the November 5th Election. Plans also included the two new precincts in Pooler, although this is not likely to occur. The Board of Registrars is establishing a sixth early voting location in Pooler. They have sent us their equipment requirements. The demands of the six early voting locations will raise the number of machines required to 65, out of our inventory of 663. A good portion of the usage will be in the County, which has only two referendum questions. The city elections will be well prepared. Early voting begins the week of October 14th, and is the same date for Absentee Ballots. Approximately 600 people will be used in the election. The plan is to pay in the polls. Qualifying begins next week, from Monday through Friday. The municipalities are handling their own qualifying. Once completed, the information will be forwarded to us to begin the ballot building process.

The Ballot for all of Chatham County will offer a six-year Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax

(SPLOST) to begin at the end of the current SPLOST. There will also be a Freeport Referendum.

Mr. Lang asked if the 600 Poll Worker projection included consideration for the two new polls in Pooler.

Lynn shared that there are 531 Poll Workers currently scheduled, and Pooler had 18 assigned workers. She revealed that, as of now, each polls are fully staffed with a Manager and Assistant Managers. If someone drops out, he/she will be replaced. There is still a need for more Poll Workers, especially as we plan for future, larger elections.

Garden City Precinct (8-15)

Russell announced that the poll is being relocated from the Garden City Recreation Center to the First Baptist Church of Garden City, on Nelson Avenue. An agreement with the church has been reached. The need for this change is triggered by on-going problems within the Garden City Rec facility relating to conflicting utilization of the space while elections are in progress and excessive noise. The Church meets the requirements and the congregants are pleased with the move.

This change should be presented to the Board as an "Action Item" during the next Board Meeting.

Mr. Lang asked why changing the Garden City polling facility differs from adding two new polls in Pooler.

The following discussion revealed that the Garden City Precinct is changing a polling location within a precinct. Adding the polls in Pooler would be changing precincts. Change Notification cards are mailed to the affected voters in either of the situations. Other communication methods are also utilized. However, there is always some degree of confusion among the populous.

Ms. Rauers suggested that since one of the needed polls in Pooler is available, perhaps we could at least add that poll to the list of active polling locations. She also mentioned other polling locations discussed in the July Board Meeting.

Mr. Mahoney shared that the Board had decided to consider these other locations at a later meeting. Regarding Garden City, the next step is to advertise the poll location change for Garden City. The Staff will make the recommendation, and then the Board will vote on the matter at in September.

Mr. Lang clarified that he does not object to moving the Garden City poll from one place to another. He objects to making this change while, at the same time, waiting to add precinct(s) in Pooler.

Ms. Heimes stated that her understanding is not that we are not pulling back on Pooler, but Pooler has pulled back on us.

PUBLIC COMMENT

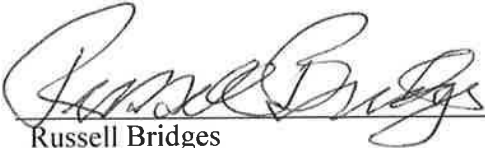
Several members of the public addressed the board

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Antwan Lang to adjourn the meeting. **ALL APPROVED.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:33 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Russell Bridges
Supervisor, Secretary to the Board

9/9/2019

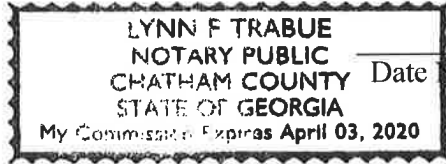
Date Approved



Thomas J. Mahoney, III
Chair



Notary Signature



9-24-19

Date Notarized