

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

April, 2020 – Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

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

STAFF: Russell Bridges
Lynn Trabue

MINUTES: Caity Hamilton

CALL TO ORDER The meeting was called to order at 3:31 P.M. by **Tom Mahoney** who gave an Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CHAIR ADDRESS **Mr. Mahoney** thanked those assembled for their patience in making an unusual Meeting situation work through Zoom. He also noted that due to the nature of the meeting, there would be no public comment section and instead the public could email their questions to the Elections Office. **Mr. Mahoney** also spoke about the State's choice to move the election and efforts being made to hold an election in a pandemic.

MINUTES **March 2020**
Motion by Ms. Heimes, seconded by Ms. Hodge, that the Minutes of the March, 2019 meeting be approved. **Ms. Rauers** made a motion to amend the minutes, which was not seconded. Motion to accept minutes passed; **Ms. Rauers** dissented.

TREASURER'S REPORT **March 2020**
Russell presented the March Treasurer's Report for information.
Motion by Mr. Lang, seconded by Ms. Heimes, that the March Treasurer's Report be accepted as information. **Ms. Rauers** asked for clarification on several line items, which were addressed by **Mr. Bridges**. Motion to accept the report passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS **Budget:**
Mr. Bridges reported that the full budget request had been accepted and would be presented to the commission. He added that it may be necessary to revisit it in the future as the full effect of the pandemic is revealed.

Presidential Preference Primary:

Mr. Bridges stated that the PPP had once again been pushed back by the Secretary of State; the new date will be June 9, 2020. As of the meeting date, there had been 9,500 absentee ballot requests approved – **Mr. Bridges** is projecting 100,000 absentee requests will be made. The state will not begin mailing ballots until 4/21/2020 in order to comply with the 45 day window. There will be no change in the way early voting will be conducted as far as is known; early voting will begin on 5/18/2020. **Mr. Bridges** also indicated that poll worker training will be pushed into May when it is deemed safer; about 622 people were scheduled for training and almost all of those were cancelled. Only 12 people have yet to go through new clerk training, and these are the people training will be focused towards in May. With guidance from the state, the training requirement has been waived for those who were originally trained for the PPP in March. **Mr. Bridges** mentioned several ways that training could take place remotely, including conference calls and Zoom webinars. There are also several options in increasing sanitizing the polling places, and a new grant available from the state that would match up to 90% of sanitation efforts by the counties up to \$5,000.

Ms. Hodge asked whether it would possible to ask the public to wear masks to the polls. **Mr. Bridges** responded that is something to look into in addition to providing masks to those who do not have one.

Several members of the board expressed their concern with informing the public of the changes to the election, with focus on absentee ballots and confusion surrounding the

combination of PPP and General Primary ballots. They all shared ideas on how the public could best be informed of these issues. **Mr. Bridges** agreed that there is a lot of confusion in the public and that there is already an effort underway to help educate, but advised that a balance would have to be found since there are 551 ballot styles and there is not a clear way to share each one with the correct demographic.

Ms. Rauers asked about the assisted living and senior centers usually used as polling places and whether they were still making themselves available in addition to other polling place losses and potential solutions being considered. **Mr. Bridges** stated that some senior centers and assisted living had opted not to open for this election, but several were waiting to make the decision based on the status of the pandemic. A few potential new locations have already been identified, but creative solutions will have to be considered going forward. **Ms. Rauers** also expressed concern that ES&S has stated they are not supporting the Balotar system and **Mr. Bridges** clarified that system being used is entirely new and not associated with ES&S. **Ms. Rauers** also pointed out issues with the format of the State's absentee ballot request, which **Mr. Bridges** acknowledged as an issue the State is aware of.

Ms. Heimes expressed concern regarding the absentee ballot counting process since an atypical volume is expected. **Mr. Bridges** projected that at least 50 people would be needed to process, working in shifts and starting as early as possible. He stated that they had already reached out to the existing groups and asked them to help with recruiting. He also indicated that some poll workers that may not be needed at the polls could be transferred to absentee processing if a low in-person turnout is expected. **Mr. Bridges** advised that he has asked the State if it would be possible to get more ballot scanners to speed up processing and is looking for off-site accommodations for the absentee crew. **Ms. Heimes** also mentioned the need for heightened security and **Mr. Bridges** advised that the sheriff's office is as willing as always to provide assistance.

Ms. Rauers asked if the candidate list had been updated since a recent candidate withdrawal – **Mr. Bridges** answered that no new changes have been made and the list on the Elections website is up to date. **Ms. Heimes** stated that she would like to see state and federal candidates added to the county candidate list, which was supported by other board members.

New Voting System:

Mr. Bridges reported that the new voting machines had already been used by the public during early voting for original March date of the PPP and were well-received. He also reminded the board that all demonstrations planned by the State had been cancelled due to the pandemic. He advised that warehouse staff was in the process of streamlining to prepare for the election with a focus on optimizing space and preordering supplies, such as ballot paper, to make sure all orders have arrived in advance. **Mr. Bridges** also noted that the mobile ballot printers would be employed in this election.

New Building/Warehouse Expansion

Mr. Bridges presented a report on two new buildings totaling about 12,000 square feet that had been located by the County Manager's real estate connection. The landlord is willing to make changes to the buildings as needed to accommodate the equipment, which would provide space for storage, testing, and regular workflow – absentee and check-in workers could use the new space as well. He advised that before any contract is signed the board would be invited to tour the space and provide input.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Several members of the public accessed the meeting via Zoom. Due to the nature of the meeting the public was invited to forward their questions and comments to the Elections Office.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Ms. Hodge, seconded by Ms. Rauers, to adjourn the meeting.

ALL APPROVED.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:44 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Russell Bridges
Supervisor, Secretary to the Board



Thomas J. Mahoney, III
Chair

Date Approved

Notary Signature

Date Notarized