

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

May 11, 2020 – Virtual Meeting

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

STAFF: Russell Bridges
Lynn Trabue
Billy Wooten

MINUTES COMPILED BY: Caity Hamilton

CALL TO ORDER The meeting was called to order at 3:56 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 during the technical difficulties that delayed the meeting's start. He also noted that members of the public were being admitted virtually and would remain on mute for the duration of the meeting, but were welcome to email their questions to the office.

MINUTES **April 2020**
Motion by Ms. Rauers, seconded by Ms. Heimes, that the Minutes of the April 19, 2019 meeting be approved. Motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT **April 2020**
Russell presented the April Treasurer's Report for information.
Motion by Mr. Lang, seconded by Ms. Hodge, that the April Treasurer's Report be approved. There was discussion, the motion passed, and **Ms. Rauers dissented**.

OLD BUSINESS 2020 - 2021 Budget *Report* Operating Budget
Mr. Bridges reported that in a staff meeting conference call Chatham County's Finance Director stated that COVID-19 had negatively impacted the County's finances and all budgets were being reviewed before being accepted. **Mr. Bridges** advised that there is a possibility that there may be adjustments made to the budget before it is accepted, but that it is going before the commission intact.

June 9 General Primary/NP General/PPP: March 24 PPP May 19 General Primary / PPP

Mr. Bridges reported that absentee by mail began on April 21 and goes through June 5 at 5pm. There have been a lot of inquiries about people not receiving their ballots when they were requested well in advance of April 21. This is due to the date of the election being moved back and causing the absentee mail date to be moved back with it. Since the 21st, 40,000 absentee ballots have been sent out to Chatham County voters and as of the meeting date 6,000 absentee ballots have been received back. This election would typically see about 4,000 returned and a presidential election would see 6,000, so we are set to surpass a typical presidential election. Early voting will begin on Monday, May 18 and run through June 5 with two open early voting locations. **Mr. Bridges** also spoke about increasing absentee staff to accommodate the influx of absentee ballots, as well as instituting 3 separate 8-hour shifts to begin at 7 am on Election Day. Registrar is projecting that 100,000 ballots will be received in total. **Ms. Heimes** asked if all absentee ballot counting will be done in house; **Mr. Bridges** replied that it will be, and that the warehouse has been reconfigured to spread out the absentee teams to work with 15 people per shift and still maintain social distancing.

Mr. Bridges reported that the State's decision not to send out UOCAVA ballots, had prompted us to deploy the mobile ballots printers sooner than planned. He also briefly touched on the new Adjudication system that we are expected to receive, which will be used by absentee workers.

Mr. Bridges advised that we will have about 650 poll workers, with only 10-12 indicating they are uncomfortable with working due to COVID-19. The Southwest Library has offered their

training space to us for poll worker training, allowing us to safely reopen training to the managers and new clerks only – managers will receive extra training and new clerks still need to receive their initial training. **Mr. Wooten** advised the Board that the library's training space has good AV equipment and is capable of housing 200 people, so we will be increasing manager class sizes to 45 while still being able to socially distance; new clerk classes will be very small and will take place in our usual training space. The bulk of the training for managers especially will be focused on the new health and safety guidelines; **Mr. Wooten** reported that the Health and Safety department produced a 4-page Election Day guide for us that he tailored to better fit the poll workers and our unique situation. The State in conjunction with the CDC will also produce a handout on this subject. **Mr. Wooten** also advised that the training room will be open for a few days in early June to allow poll workers to drop by and work with the training team to refresh their memories on the voting machines.

Mr. Bridges addressed the availability of our polling locations – the issue surrounding senior living centers has been known, but a few churches have unexpectedly pulled out. We are working individually with these locations to try to bring them back, as well as looking for other facilities in affected areas. Chatham Emergency Services has made any viable fire station available for us, and several issues have already been remedied that way and by asking nearby churches to fill the need. **Ms. Rauers** asked the number of locations that had declined to participate and how many of those had a firm alternative. **Mr. Bridges** answered that 11 have declined and 4 have a confirmed alternate and 3 have potentials. **Ms. Rauers** then asked what the legal timeframe is for notifying the public of changes and how they would be notified. **Mr. Bridges** replied that he has the latitude to change a polling place up to the day of the election under emergency circumstances and in this case it would not be practical to notify by postcard as usual, but instead would put it to the media and use signs on the door of the normal polls and the temporary ones.

Ms. Rauers asked what training was being provided for the absentee ballot team, and **Mr. Bridges** replied that training is still being developed, as the Adjudication module has not been vetted yet. Absentee leads will be trained first, then the rest of the teams will be brought in. **Ms. Rauers** asked if the State had provided any online training and **Mr. Bridges** replied that they had not provided training beyond a set of videos on the Adjudication module that had been released late last week. He also stated that absentee teams will use the same basic method as before with the previous system, but now would not have to hand-scan ballots and could use the ballot scanner to batch feed 60 per minute. **Ms. Rauers** asked if the standard 10-day certification deadline was still in place – **Mr. Bridges** replied that he has not received communication of any changes.

Ms. Heimes stated that they would like to see an initiative to work with the media to push out updates on changes to aspects of the election, with a focus on absentee ballots. **Ms. Hodges** expressed the same sentiment. **Ms. Heimes** made a motion to partner with media on updates, which was seconded by **Ms. Rauers** and passed unanimously.

New Voting System

Mr. Bridges presented an updated staff report covering the space needs due to new equipment, the warehouse in the office parking lot, and the 2 pod storage units, which will be returned soon. He stated that the equipment is currently being prepared for the election and we have asked the State for more scanners several times and have not heard if we will receive them. **Mr. Bridges** repeated that we have deployed the mobile ballot printers and added that we ordered ballots from our printer before knowing that the State would not be producing UOCAVA ballots and have since generated in-office about 200 UOCAVA ballots.

Mr. Bridges described the Adjudication module further, stating that it would do electronically what a team of people used to do manually, would provide an audit trail and stored history, and store the original ballot, corrected ballot, and notes regarding the corrections. This means the ballot handling teams will only have to manage the casting of the ballots while a dedicated adjudication team goes behind them. He also mentioned that L&A would be starting in the next week. **Ms. Hodges** asked if the mobile printer units had already been purchased; **Mr. Bridges** stated they were purchased by the State for every county. Every county got at least 1 and we received 3.

Building / Warehouse Expansion

Mr. Bridges reminded the Board that the County had offered to have their primary real estate group find other warehouse facilities for us and the 2 warehouse options discussed in previous meetings were now in lease negotiations and would provide a 2-3 year space solution. The property owner will need to make adjustments to security and HVAC to meet our needs. We will use this space to store and deploy election equipment and keep the office warehouse space for election operations like Check In or Absentee. Ultimately, the County is planning a new facility, location undetermined, to be built at least 3 years from now.

NEW BUSINESS

June 8th Board Meeting

Mr. Bridges recommended moving the June 8th Board meeting to a later date, as it would occur the day before the election. After some discussion, **Ms. Heimes** introduced a motion to move the meeting to June 1st and at that meeting decide a special meeting date to certify the election. **Ms. Rauers** seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bridges stated he would advertise the new meeting date as soon as possible and requested that board members send suggestions regarding the earlier motion to partner with media with a focus on informing the public about absentee ballots. **Ms. Heimes** also requested that public present send in their questions via email.

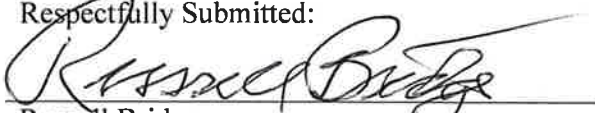
PUBLIC COMMENT

Several members of the public were present virtually; only one question was received by the Elections Office prior to the meeting and was handled outside of the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Mahoney adjourned the meeting at 5:32 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:




Russell Bridges
Supervisor, Secretary to the Board

6/5/2020

Date Approved



Thomas J. Mahoney, III
Chair



Notary Signature
1/20/21

Date Notarized

ROBERT S. CARNEY
Notary Public, Chatham County GA
My Commission Expires 5/1/23