

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

**October 2020**

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

**STAFF:** Russell Bridges  
Lynn Trabue  
John Leffler  
Savannah Martin  
Caity Hamilton

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

**CHAIR ADDRESS** **Mr. Mahoney** stated that there was a full schedule for today’s agenda and added an item to be discussed at the end of the meeting – District 2 Commissioner Qualifications. He also encouraged voters to take advantage of the 21 days of Early Voting and the expanded sites Voter Registration has added for this election.

**MINUTES** **September 2020**  
**Motion by Mr. Lang, seconded by Ms. Heimes**, that the Minutes of the September 2020 meeting be approved. There was no additional discussion. **Motion passed unanimously.**

**TREASURER’S REPORT** **August 2020**  
The August 2020 Treasurer’s Report was distributed to the members of the Board for review after the August meeting. **Motion by Mr. Lang, seconded by Ms. Heimes**, that the Minutes of the September 2020 meeting be accepted. **Ms. Rauers** requested clarification of a certain line, which **Mr. Bridges** explained was in regards to Express Employment Professionals, the company now managing all the temporary workers for Chatham County. **Mr. Mahoney called for the vote and the August 2020 Treasurer’s Report, which passed unanimously.**

**September 2020:**  
**Motion by Mr. Lang, seconded by Ms. Hodge**, that the September 2020 Treasurer’s Report be accepted. All approved, but **Ms. Rauers**, who abstained due to difficulty in understanding the report.

**OLD BUSINESS** **11/03 General Election**  
Early Voting  
**Mr. Bridges** reported that Early Voting had started that morning and was very busy at all locations. 1117 Eisenhower had a long line by 6:30 am and had stretched past the Tag Office most of the day. He reported that there was no count yet from Voter Registration. Voter Registration opened 6 sites for this election, all of which will be open for a total of 21 days; only two sites will have weekend hours.

Polls  
**Ms. Hamilton** gave a report on the status of the polls, stating that 79 polling locations had confirmed for the Nov. 3 Election and reporting that one poll, New Covenant Seventh Day Adventist had dropped out on Thursday of the previous week but the pastor had stated Friday that he would bring the issue back to the board to reconsider and that he was very open to reversing that decision. **Ms. Hodge** commented that staff should visit all 92 polls before the election to ensure that the locations are prepared. **Ms. Heimes** stated that there was likely not enough time for staff to visit all polls. **Mr. Lang** asked if all polling location had been checked and certified that they were prepared. **Mr. Bridges** stated that the State survey team had tested electrical, ADA compliance, and egress and ingress earlier in the year and certified each location. **Mr. Lang** asked if Chatham County elections staff had personally checked each one this year and **Mr. Bridges** replied that our polling location guidelines are based on the State’s guidelines so staff has not personally checked each one this year. **Ms. Hodge** suggested many of the issues that arise come from last minute changes made by the facility that are found out on Election Day because they did not inform staff and that someone from staff should stay in contact with the

polls at all times. **Mr. Mahoney** replied that staff already keeps in constant contact with the polling locations. **Mr. Bridges** added that SERVPRO is still contracted to clean polling locations after this election and estimated that at least 75 locations will be signed up to receive that service. He also reported that we are in better shape with polls than in the June and August election because several closed polls have reopened for us and we are making every effort to avoid unnecessary changes to locations.

#### Warehouse

**Mr. Leffler** reported that warehouse staff is behind in their typical timeline, but with a larger staff there was no worry as to completing their work on time. He also pointed out that rumors in the media about Pooler Rec Center machines being down were unfounded and that one Poll Pad had malfunctioned and been quickly replaced before being returned to the warehouse and repaired. There were no reports from any Early Voting site of any machines down. **Ms. Rauers** requested clarification as to the delay in the warehouse; **Mr. Leffler** explained that L&A had had a delay but would be completed the next week, and that some Poll Pads had to be redone due to an app needing to be updated. Poll Pads will be finished by the following Monday or Tuesday. He also reported that the new cache box had been installed, which would speed up the process dramatically. **Ms. Rauers** asked the cost of the cache box. **Mr. Bridges** answered that it will be free to us through the end of the year; in early 2021 we will have the opportunity to negotiate purchase. It has shown that there is a definite benefit to having it installed by speeding up the process and giving the warehouse team breathing room. **Mr. Leffler** finished his report by saying that there is now an Excel spreadsheet showing each piece of equipment and allocating it to its correct location; this will be printed out and marked to account for each piece as we go in to the election. **Mr. Bridges** reported that we have asked for more scanners as back-ups for the polls and additional BMDs for the polls.

#### Absentee

**Mr. Bridges** has also asked the State for more high speed scanners for the absentee team. September 18 marked the first day of absentee ballot mailing, which was done through Runbeck in the new partnership option the State offered. The State has also launched the secure absentee request portal for the public to request their ballots. They also launched Ballottrax for the public to track their ballots via text or email updates that will tell them when the request had been received, when the ballot had been mailed, and when the ballot has been received back and accepted. And estimated 45,000 requests had been received and Voter Registration is anticipating 60-80,000 total. Early Voting is running for 21 days and Registrar has opened all 6 of their sites for the duration of that time. Two sites will have weekend hours – the Main Office and the Civic Center. **Ms. Trabue** has scheduled 65 people for the absentee team, who will begin processing ballots on Oct 19 at the new warehouse and will run in two shifts for as long as necessary until all ballots have been processed. The annex warehouse is being prepared and will have a large space with a public and private area so there is plenty of space for workers and a separate space for observers, partitioned by a half-Plexiglas wall.

**Mr. Mahoney** suggested a press release reminding voters that if they have requested an absentee ballot but would like to vote in person instead, they should make every effort to bring their absentee ballot with them to speed up the process. Their absentee ballot has to be cancelled for them to vote in person and can only be done by calling Voter Registration if no absentee ballot is turned in. **Mr. Mahoney** stated that there is time now for voters to change their mind and call Voter Registration to cancel their absentee ballots before going to the polls, which will save time. **Mr. Bridges** stated that he has received several emails from voters to this effect and has passed them along to Voter Registration. He stressed the fact that it takes someone with knowledge of, and access to, the voter database to correctly address the issue and reported that there would be an alternate check-in section set aside in the polls on Election Day to address this issue and allow for regular voters to continue without delay.

**Ms. Heimes** asked about our plan for answering phones on Election Day. **Mr. Bridges** replied that the rollover service provided by CMS was already in place as of the previous week and advised that there are scripts in place to help them answer questions. He also advised that the poll workers will get a special extension number to call on Election Day and that there will be additional people working in the office to help with their questions regarding paperwork and machines. **Ms. Hodge** asked if the poll workers would also be sent to CMS if all lines were busy. **Mr. Bridges** explained that the poll workers will have a separate extension to call, but if their call is unanswered it will roll over. CMS employs people that are able to answer simple questions with a given script so calls from poll workers can be rerouted back to the office if the

question can't be immediately answered.

#### Poll Workers

**Ms. Trabue** reported that they had secured 92 managers, 271 assistant managers, 773 clerks, 51 standbys, and had 90 applicants for the absentee team. **Ms. Hodges** asked if **Ms. Trabue** and her team were calling applicants with feedback about their applications and whether or not they are needed. **Ms. Trabue** expressed that she and her team were in the process of calling absentee applicants back. **Ms. Hodges** suggested posting a general update on the website to let poll workers know that they would be contacted at some point. **Ms. Heimes** added that she had had several phone calls from interested people that had applied and not heard back. **Mr. Mahoney** requested that staff begin to notify those that would not be used in the election. **Mr. Lang** suggested a press release on the number of poll workers; **Mr. Mahoney** agreed and added that he would like to thank the public for responding to the Board of Elections' call for new poll workers. **Mr. Bridges** also thanked the public and stated that we are fortunate to have had such a tremendous intake for this cycle.

#### New Poll Workers

**Ms. Martin** reported that 195 new workers have been processed and are ready to be added to a training class; 98 new applicants are waiting for a return on their background checks from the sheriff's office; and that 16 people that had been waiting in the Early Voting line had voted and come over to apply immediately after. **Ms. Rauers** asked who handles the personal info during the application process. **Mr. Bridges** answered that a mix of both permanent and temporary staff, overseen by permanent staff, handles all application information. **Mr. Mahoney** added that we do not have many permanent staff so it is necessary to have a team of both temporary and permanent staff to perform all functions.

**Ms. Hodge** asked about the progress with tech staffing. **Mr. Bridges** reported that our goal for techs is 17 and they will be trained on Oct 24 and will support their given regions as always. Dominion will be providing techs for each poll and in addition to their support of the machines will be supporting a new wait time software. He added that 500 poll workers had been trained with managers classes starting next week and two new classes added for new workers. He also noted that all new workers would be used in some capacity during the election. **Mr. Lang** asked the demographics of the techs and how much these techs were being paid; **Mr. Bridges** answered that he did not have demographic information in front of him but could let **Mr. Lang** know and stated that they receive \$300 for Election Day in addition to \$40 for training. He continued that intake of workers would slow down coming up to November, with new applicants likely being used for the runoffs but not for Nov. 3. **Mr. Lang** recommended a press conference to detail these things for the public. **Ms. Heimes** asked if we had filled the new positions in the polls that have not been needed in past elections; **Mr. Bridges** responded that these had been taken into account with the increase in poll workers at every poll. Some of the smallest polls would only have one additional worker, but most would have at least two, in particular an exit position to make sure voters did not leave without casting their ballot, and one worker to walk through the line checking to make sure voters are at the correct poll. **Mr. Lang** asked about whether PPE was for workers only or could be handed out to the public. **Mr. Bridges** responded that it is meant for the workers, but if there was extra at a poll it could be given out to the public if necessary. **Mr. Mahoney** encouraged the public to bring and wear their own mask and not to rely on their poll to provide one for them because supplies would run out. **Ms. Heimes** mentioned that it was still mandatory to wear a mask in public and suggested that Russo Marketing partner to put out information. **Ms. Rauers** asked about signage for poll changes; **Mr. Bridges** advised that signs were being processed.

#### New Voting System

**Mr. Bridges** reported that all BMDs and Poll Pads would be deployed for the election and more had been requested. **Mr. Mahoney** reiterated that the cache box was in place and would speed up data processing to help avoid the delay that was seen in June due to slow speeds.

#### Buildings

**Mr. Bridges** reported that the new warehouses would be on a 3-year lease to give the County time to come up with a more permanent solution. He mentioned that some members of the Board had not yet seen the space and welcomed them to visit when they could, as well as the new training space at Employability's old building.

#### RLA

**Mr. Bridges** reminded the Board that Risk Limiting Audits would occur during this election;

they are a randomized selection of ballots to be audited to ensure accuracy in the election.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**District 2 Commissioner Qualifications**

**Mr. Mahoney** reported that the qualifications of Mr. Tony Riley for District 2 Commissioner had been challenged per O.C.G.A 21-2-6(b). **Mr. Mahoney** had received communication the night before stating that Mr. Riley had been convicted of a felony and had served time within the 10-year window preceding the qualification period. **Mr. Mahoney** addressed the Board and the public to say that while the situation is regrettable, the circumstances are not ideal, and the Board takes no pleasure in their position, it is the duty of the Board to challenge Mr. Riley's qualifications due to the evidence presented. He called for a motion to challenge Mr. Riley's qualifications. **Ms. Hodge, Ms. Heimes, and Mr. Lang** asked several questions related to the process of disqualification, the rights of the candidates, alternatives to challenges and disqualification, legal terms and phrases, and the timeline. Each were concerned with the timing of the challenge and whether the information had been known for a length of time preceding **Mr. Mahoney's** receipt of the challenge. **Mr. Mahoney** answered that there would be a hearing with the Board and the County attorney and that Mr. Riley and his representation would have the opportunity to argue their case. He also stated that further study would need to be done on the process. **Mr. Bridges** stated that Mr. Riley has the right to appeal the Board's decision. **Mr. Lang** asked what body the appeal would go before and **Mr. Bridges** stated that it would go before the Superior Court. After more discussion along these same lines, **Mr. Lang** made a motion to challenge Mr. Riley's qualifications; **Ms. Heimes** seconded and asked who would set up the hearing. **Mr. Mahoney** stated that was the responsibility of the Board of Elections and asked **Mr. Bridges** what the next steps would be. **Mr. Bridges** replied that he would send an official notification letter by overnight delivery to Mr. Riley, advertise the subsequent meeting, and conduct a hearing. He then advised that it would be up to the Board as a body to determine a range of dates to offer for the hearing that could be coordinated with Mr. Riley. The meeting would then be advertised and conducted. **Mr. Lang** asked if it was possible to know who sent the information. **Mr. Mahoney** stated that it was received from Ms. Carry Smith. **Ms. Heimes** confirmed that it was received directly by **Ms. Rauers** only and that no other Board member directly received a copy. **Mr. Lang** confirmed that the packet was forwarded to the Board by **Mr. Mahoney**. **Mr. Lang** then withdrew his motion due to the conflict of challenging a member or his own party. **Ms. Heimes** made the same motion, with **Ms. Hodge** seconding. **Ms. Heimes** mentioned that a new venue would be needed, and Mr. Mahoney stated that they may ask for the County Commission chambers. **Mr. Bridges** agreed that a larger venue would be found to accommodate social distancing. **Ms. Hodge** stated that she interprets O.C.G.A 21-2-6(b) as meaning that the window to challenge has passed. **Mr. Lang** clarified whether that means she believes that his candidacy should have been challenged before the primary election, which **Ms. Hodge** confirmed. **Mr. Mahoney** stated that this is an argument that can be made by Mr. Riley's representation during the hearing. **Mr. Lang** asked if **Mr. Mahoney** is stating that there is no time limit for the Board to bring this challenge forward, **Mr. Mahoney** confirmed that that is his understanding. **Ms. Heimes** asked if the challenge could be brought forward after the November election and **Mr. Mahoney** restated his previous answer. **Mr. Lang** asked if waiting until after the election would open up options for the Democratic party to appoint another candidate should the challenge be upheld and stated that he would like a legal opinion before challenging. **Mr. Mahoney** stated again that he believes it is the duty of the Board to present this challenge and the forum to get a legal opinion is the hearing.

**Mr. Mahoney** called for the vote; **Ms. Rauers** and **Ms. Heimes** voted to challenge Mr. Riley's qualifications, **Mr. Lang** and **Ms. Hodge** voted against. **Mr. Mahoney** voted in favor and **the qualification will be challenged in a qualification hearing**. **Mr. Mahoney** directed staff to advise Mr. Riley right away and begin the process of scheduling the hearing.

**Ms. Hodge** stated that she submitted for grant funding for the Board, and if it is given the Board will need to vote to accept the funds. **Mr. Mahoney** asked how much money the grant would provide and Ms. Hodge said that the pool of money is \$250 billion but the amount allocated to us will be determined by need. She also stated that she inform them that there are only 3 staff members, which may influence the decision favorably.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion by Ms. Heimes to adjourn.**

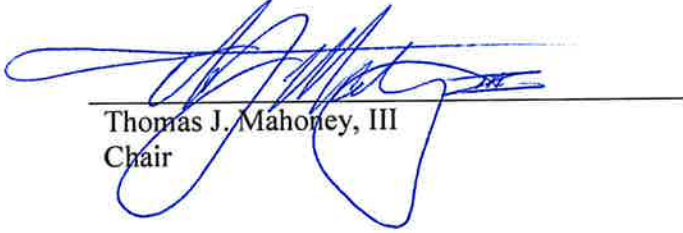
The meeting was adjourned at 6:09 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Russell Bridges  
Supervisor, Secretary to the Board

11/17/2020  
Date Approved



Thomas J. Mahoney, III  
Chair

Robert S. Carney  
Notary Signature

2/26/21  
Date Notarized

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

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