

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

December, 2020

- BOARD MEMBERS:** Thomas J. Mahoney - Chairman
Malinda Hodge – Vice Chair
Marianne Heimes
Antwan Lang – arrived at 3:40
Debbie Rauers – arrived at 3:50
- STAFF:** Russell Bridges
Billy Wooten
John Leffler
Savannah Martin
Caity Hamilton
- CALL TO ORDER** The meeting was called to order at 3:37 P.M. by **Tom Mahoney** who gave an Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- CHAIR ADDRESS** **Mr. Mahoney** thanked staff for their hard work throughout the election season.
- MINUTES** **November 2020**
Motion by Ms. Hodge that the minutes be tabled as not all members of the board were present and she had not had time to review them thoroughly. **Mr. Lang** seconded and all voted in favor. **Motion passed.**
- TREASURER’S REPORT** **November 2020**
Ms. Hodge made a motion to accept the November Treasurer’s Report, seconded by **Mr. Lang**. **Mr. Bridges** described several of the line items in the report. The bulk of expenses went to Express Professionals for the temporary staff. This report is beginning to reflect the costs of the new warehouse, including the camera system, communications system, and lighting. **Ms. Heimes** asked if it reflected the new answering service and **Mr. Bridges** stated that it did not, as that is being underwritten by the County. **Mr. Mahoney** called for the vote and all voted in favor. **The November Treasurer’s Report was accepted.**
- December 2020**
Ms. Hodge made a motion to accept the December Treasurer’s Report, seconded by **Mr. Lang**. **Mr. Bridges** described several of the line items in the report. This report reflects similar Express expenses related to the absentee process and preparing the warehouse for use; this included AC installation and an electrician. Also included were expenses related to the November election, such as transportation of machines, sample ballots, and sneeze guards (minimum of 2 per polling location). **Mr. Mahoney** called for the vote and all voted in favor. **The December Treasurer’s Report was accepted.**
- OLD BUSINESS** **Nov 3 General Election**
Mr. Bridges stated that while the election had been discussed in certification meetings, there had not yet been an in depth review and he would call on several members of staff to give reports on several aspects of the election.
- Polls
Ms. Hamilton reported that the polling locations had been much the same as they were in August; six polls required replacements and were replaced by the same locations they had been in August, and four had reopened for use. All locations that were no longer being used as replacements or had to be replaced received signage to indicate where voters should go instead. No complaints were reported about a lack of signage or trouble finding a particular location.
- Absentee
Mr. Bridges reported that 41,641 absentee ballots had been processed and an even higher volume had been anticipated, making the preparation of the Annex a priority. The absentee

process was moved in the 6500 square foot space which had allowed for a smoother process and a safer working area.

Ms. Martin reported that the size of the building spaced workers and stations very well and allowed for different stations to be developed, which made the process smoother than before. She described the process briefly and pointed out that all stations and processes were viewable by the public from a large, open public area. **Mr. Mahoney** thanked **Ms. Martin** for her organizational work, as well as **Mr. Wooten** and the other workers. He stated that in his own visits to the Annex he could attest to the long hours, nights, and weekends that staff worked to complete counting in a remarkably short period of time and stated that the next challenge would be adjusting to how people will vote after the pandemic. **Ms. Martin** stated that the team averaged 14,000 counted per day. **Mr. Bridges** asked roughly how many people were employed to count ballots; **Ms. Martin** replied that about 74 people were there throughout the absentee counting process.

Early Voting

Mr. Bridges reported that Voter Registration has opened all six early voting centers for the election and two of them had weekend hours. He then asked **Mr. Leffler** to present a report on warehouse operations.

Warehouse

Mr. Leffler reported that his team prepared 876 printers, 814 BMDs, 386 poll pads, and sent out almost all of the available equipment to the polls. More equipment was actually ordered to supply the polls with as many back-ups as possible. He stated that during Election Day, only 5 complaints were reported – one poll pad was programmed incorrectly and had to be replaced, one was delivered to the wrong location, and two scanners on Tybee were switched during delivery and had to be switched back to the correct sites. Any other problems that were encountered were printer jams or electrical issues due to machines being incorrectly connected to one another during opening. All issues were resolved quickly and were minimal, especially in context with the more than 2,000 pieces of equipment that were sent out. **Mr. Mahoney** thanked **Mr. Leffler** and the warehouse for their hard work behind the scenes. **Ms. Heimes** asked if the problems had been zeroed in on to ensure that they would not happen again; **Mr. Leffler** replied that the error in scanner delivery had been addressed with the vendor and the poll pad had been packed wrong at the warehouse, which was also addressed. **Ms. Rauers** expressed concern with how poll managers are trained to react to these issues. **Mr. Leffler** answered that there is a process in place for problems that affect the flow of voting, such as a scanner issue, which includes voting with emergency ballots that are set aside in a designated area and scanned in to be counted by the poll manager once the issue is resolved. Both **Ms. Rauers** and **Ms. Heimes** expressed a need for public education to clarify the process in such a situation. **Mr. Mahoney** agreed that more can be done to explain the failsafes employed during Election Day and reminded the Board and the public that the measure taken after the election, such as audits and recounts, as well as the multiple back-ups and paper ballots, should instill confidence in the voter.

Check-in

Mr. Bridges asked **Mr. Wooten** to touch on some of the questions the Board had in his report regarding end-of-day processes for Election Day. **Mr. Wooten** stated that voters are presented with several options when a scanner goes down. They can place their ballot into the designated slot on the scanner to be cast when the problem has been resolved, they can have their ballot voided and return at a later time to vote and cast their ballot, or they can wait at the poll until the issue is resolved and then cast their ballot. When ballots are placed in the emergency bin it is the responsibility of the manager to then run them through the scanner and cast them when they are able. **Ms. Rauers** asked what they are taught in training and whether poll managers are qualified to touch and scan ballots. **Mr. Wooten** clarified that the steps he had just run through were the same as taught in training; managers are taught to use the locked and sealed emergency bin when necessary, and that each poll worker, including managers, takes a serious oath written and distributed by the Secretary of State regarding their conduct and responsibilities during Election Day and swear to uphold election law throughout the process. **Ms. Heimes** asked if having signage to post in this situation that would describe the process to voters would be helpful. **Mr. Mahoney** stated that he felt that might help clarify and asked **Ms. Rauers** if she would support signage to resolve her concerns. **Ms. Rauers** asked for clarification as to whether poll managers could touch ballots and stated a concern that unauthorized changes could be made by managers; **Mr. Wooten** stated that poll workers can assist a voter at any point, including touching a ballot if

necessary. **Ms. Hodge** asked that, since the poll balances itself, wouldn't any discrepancies in votes be seen immediately? **Mr. Bridges** stated that this was correct as votes are balanced across several levels including on election night. **Mr. Wooten** continued his report, saying that there was a change in check-in forms that had to be implemented at the last minute, but otherwise was very smooth and went faster than expected due to a larger staff and a better process. **Mr. Bridges** agreed, stating that we utilized the largest background staff yet with 13 county field techs and 4 back-ups, 47 Dominion field techs, 4 support people in the office. **Mr. Lang** asked if there was a process that had changed with the voting cards; **Mr. Wooten** replied that the receiving area had been changed to include several processes at the same table for expediency and accounting purposes. **Mr. Lang** asked if the process can be documented on paper. **Mr. Bridges** stated that any of these processes can be put on paper, especially as they are still be developed and refined. **Mr. Bridges** reported that training for November has begun on 8/31 and continued until 10/28; 1025 class seats had been attended and only 95 missed. Clerks, new clerks, managers, and tech had all received separate training and about 350 new workers were processed before the November election. So many new people had applied that processing applicants had been paused and 100 new workers had their paperwork pending for the next election. **Mr. Lang** asked if 350 out of 1000 new workers had not been processed. **Mr. Bridges** clarified that 350 out of 450 had been processed, with 100 in process now. **Mr. Lang** asked if all workers that had participated in the election had been paid. **Mr. Bridges** replied that they had.

Audit

Mr. Bridges reported that we had been aware well before the election that the audit would happen and had started to prepare. Changes in the absentee process paved the way for the RLA process. One of the requirements was to build a ballot manifest – teams received ballots from Voter Registration and recorded what they were, where they went, and who handled them. This helped to create an organizational system that made it so any ballot could be quickly found and returned to its correct location. The purpose of the audit is to hand count a small sample of ballots from any given race that could be compared to the full election and would statistically validate it. The State chose the Presidential race and chose to run the audit with a 100% sample and their process guidance would have had the counties pulling 60% of their ballots from that race. Rather than have 60% of the ballots removed from their order and replaced with a placeholder, they chose to have all ballots counted. **Mr. Bridges** stressed that this was a hand counted audit and not a hand recount. In several counties ballots were found to have not been counted; Chatham county did not have this experience. With a less than 45 ballot difference on our hand audit, we were well below the expected 10% margin of error. We did not have to recertify our results based on this difference as it was not a recount. **Mr. Bridges** then asked **Ms. Martin** and **Mr. Wooten** to report on the admin side of the audit.

Ms. Martin reported that teams kept careful track of the ballots throughout the audit process and uploaded documentation to a system called ARLO as they went so the State could periodically check our progress. She added that the vote review panels were very professional and did their jobs well. **Mr. Wooten** agreed that all the teams were professional and the information from the State was good. He added that the Brennon and Carter Centers were very informative and their team members were helpful with the process as well. There were a few minor issues with poll watchers during the audit, but the guidance for poll watchers was posted in the public and private areas and helped to clarify their roles. The review panels were professional and concise in their decision making, only asking **Mr. Wooten** twice for his assistance in a decision.

Mr. Wooten reported that several of the workers were concerned with the public and the press taking their pictures. Many of them felt unsafe, as they had heard in the news that workers were being threatened and visited at their homes. Two workers ultimately asked to be excused and did not return to work. **Mr. Mahoney** stated that he felt this concern should be passed along to the Secretary of State for their guidance. **Ms. Rauers** stated that the press was responsible and she saw many photos in the paper and on Facebook. **Ms. Hodge** said that she felt that the media and the public were very invasive and in her time there as an observer she herself felt very uncomfortable with the lack of privacy and could only imagine how the workers felt with that level of invasiveness all day, every day. **Ms. Heimes** said she worried that in the case of a riot or other emergency there was no exit other than the front door, and in her observation the press was respectful while the public was not. **Ms. Heimes** made a motion that a statement be drafted and sent to the Secretary of State regarding photos taken without consent and the general safety of the workers. **Ms. Hodge** seconded the motion. **Mr. Mahoney** asked if **Ms. Heimes** would like the letter to be presented at the January meeting for approval; she responded that would be fine. **A vote was taken and all voted in favor. The motion passed.**

Recount

Mr. Bridges reported that the statewide recount undertaken for the Presidential race in the November election was the first of its kind in Georgia; the difference between past recounts and this one was that all ballots were scanned through a scanner, rather than being hand counted or tallied with memory cards. Chatham county had a 7-ballot difference and recertified the results. The results were then submitted to the State to be used in their recertification. The ballots in this race have now been counted three times – the outcome never changed and the numbers stayed close, which demonstrates that the system works and concerns are unfounded. **Mr. Mahoney** personally congratulated **Mr. Bridges** for successfully leading his team through difficult election. **Ms. Heimes** said that she observed a lot of the work and saw that while the days were long and many of the workers were exhausted, the dedication was evident. She made a motion that a luncheon be held for the workers that completed the counting. **Ms. Hodge** seconded the motion. **Ms. Rauers** stated that they had tried to hold luncheons for poll workers in the past and they hadn't worked out, so was not in favor of attempting another. **Ms. Heimes** responded that her motion was specifically relevant to those working to count ballots for absentee, audits, and recounts. A vote was taken and **Ms. Heimes, Ms. Hodge, and Mr. Lang** voted in favor. **Ms. Rauers** dissented. **The motion passed.**

2021 Calendar

Mr. Bridges presented the 2021 meeting calendar, as is always presented in December each year. He reviewed the process of scheduling meetings on the 2nd Monday each month at 3:30 pm and stated that the meetings would be moved if they coincided with a County holiday or an election day. **Mr. Mahoney** stressed the need to be flexible with meeting dates next year as possible election days evolve. **Mr. Lang** asked who pays for ESPLOST elections; **Mr. Bridges** responded that the County pays for these elections and not the school board. **Mr. Mahoney** called for the vote; **Ms. Heimes** motioned to accept the 2021 Calendar, **Ms. Hodge** seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Mahoney asked the Board if they would like to revisit the minutes that were tabled at the beginning of the meeting. A motion was made and seconded but the minutes were not reviewed or accepted and instead will be presented again at the January meeting. **Ms. Rauers** asked for the cost of the June and November elections and wanted to revisit the cost of transportation as listed in the accepted Treasurers reports. **Mr. Mahoney** stated this would have to be revisited in another agenda at a later date.

Mr. Lang made a motion to adjourn the main meeting and enter the scheduled Executive session. **Ms. Heimes** seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

NEW BUSINESS

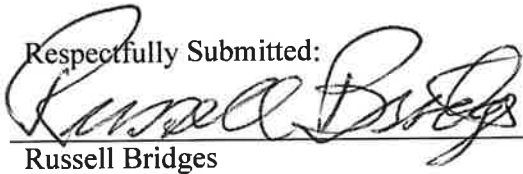
ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Lang made a motion to adjourn the main meeting and enter the scheduled Executive session. **Ms. Heimes** seconded the motion.

ALL APPROVED.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 PM.

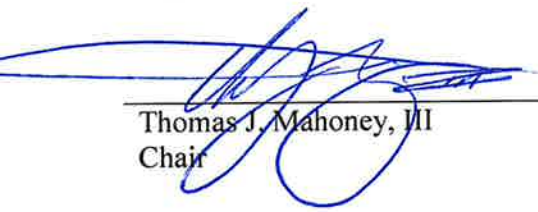
Respectfully Submitted:



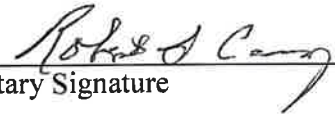
Russell Bridges
Supervisor, Secretary to the Board



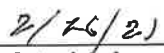
Date Approved



Thomas J. Mahoney, III
Chair



Notary Signature



Date Notarized

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