

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

**March, 2021**

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

**STAFF:** Billy Wooten  
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 everyone for attending and for their patience as the Board continues to meet virtually. He reminded the public that while the meeting is open for their viewing, participation is limited to members of the Board and relevant staff only. **Mr. Mahoney** also welcomed James Hall as the newest Board member and Billy Wooten as the new Interim Supervisor.

**MINUTES:** **February 8, 2021**  
**Motion by Mr. Lang, seconded by Ms. Heimes, that the Minutes of the February 8, 2021 meeting be approved.**  
**Ms. Heimes** asked if the letter to the Secretary of State mentioned in previous meetings had been drafted – **Mr. Wooten** responded that it would be drafted and sent by the next meeting date.  
**A vote was taken to approve the minutes and passed unanimously.**

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** **February 2021**  
**Mr. Wooten** explained that the look and title of the Treasurer’s Report has been changed under the chairman’s guidance. It would now be referred to as a Financial Report and would include a new, more comprehensive look at the expenses throughout the month in question. This month’s report follows the original format, but the next meeting he will be presenting the new format to show where the Board of Elections stands in overall budget, spend trends, and better descriptions of individual expenses. **Mr. Mahoney** thanked Billy for his initiative and further explained that this new report would more properly reflect the office’s finances as the Board does not have a Treasurer and that the biggest difference would be that the Financial Report would not need to be voted on and accepted as information, but would instead act as just a report. **Mr. Wooten** stated that since we have the ability to run the same budget reports as the County and we are comfortable with running those reports, we can give a more helpful and in-depth explanation to the Board. **Ms. Hodge** asked about the charge listed on the report from Dominion Voting Services; **Mr. Wooten** confirmed that it is a continued charge from last year that they have recently billed us for. The bill is for a new machines order and maintenance related to the November election. **Mr. Hall** asked if we have the ability to generate reports from prior months. **Mr. Wooten** responded that the County system does have that capability.

**Supervisor’s Report**

**Mr. Wooten** stated that this is the first time in many months that we have not had a giant election looming on the horizon, so this is the best time for staff to work on background items. One of the bigger projects that is now close to completion is auditing, packing, and labelling boxes of old election materials. Staff recently completed packing 518 boxes from three years of elections material that must be kept in storage; many more boxes of older material will be scheduled for official destruction. **Mr. Wooten** has been attending webinars and meetings to get oriented with his new position. Most temporary staff have been furloughed and will be called back when they are needed; there are three that are still performing valuable daily functions. All education material, flyers, and poll worker materials are being examined and reworked for consistency and new job descriptions are being developed for poll workers as there have been

recent changes to their functions. Staff has also drafted a calendar of events and tasks for this year; there has always been an election events calendar, but we were in need of a master calendar.

**Mr. Wooten** also advised the Board that we have started the process of reviewing polls in anticipation of upcoming elections, and asked that the public apprise us of any locations they know of that would be willing to host us as a poll. **Mr. Mahoney** asked him to review the requirements for polls for the public's benefit and **Mr. Wooten** advised that they need to be ADA accessible, have ample and open parking, must be located in the area of the precinct or community that votes there, and the size of the location must match the need of the poll. **Mr. Hall** expressed his concern that there were some polls that were not located in the correct precinct and **Mr. Wooten** stated that he would be willing to meet with **Mr. Hall** anytime to discuss specific locations. **Mr. Mahoney** explained to the Board and the public that there was no requirement that a poll be located inside of a specific precinct, and although that is what we strive for in opening a polling location it is not always feasible. He also explained that because districts, such as Senate and House, do not always align exactly with precinct boundaries, precincts will frequently straddle other district lines making it seem like a poll is out of place when considering one of those districts. **Ms. Heimes** mentioned that her district has had several boundary changes and sometimes a poll location will close and the best alternative is near the community but not in the same district as the old poll. **Ms. Hodge** added that that has happened to her as well and it is a nuanced issue for polls and the public may have concerns that staff is unaware of. **Mr. Hall** clarified that what he had been informed of had to do with school board and commissioners districts not lining up. **Mr. Wooten** explained that this is likely due to the boundary changes made by the City of Savannah several years ago that altered district boundaries but not precincts, leading to a large number of polling locations with split ballots. These locations serve one community, but that community is made up of more than one district for school board and commissioners as well as other offices, so the community receives different ballots in the same poll. He offered to produce a split poll report if the Board would like to review it.

**Ms. Hodge** asked if the layoffs that **Mr. Wooten** mentioned previously were mandated or if there was a need. **Mr. Wooten** replied that the budget for temporary workers has run out for the current budget year and there was no work for many of the temporary workers now anyway. He added that they are all eligible for unemployment benefits and will only be furloughed for 3-5 months; in the meantime, the temporary staffing agency can place them elsewhere if they want. **Mr. Mahoney** noted that there are hundreds of workers that only work Election Day and that many of the key workers throughout the year are seasonal temporary workers, not full time permanent, and there is not as much work available off-season. He then asked if staff could produce a report and recommendations on the current precincts in light of possible law changes, as well as existing polls and known or potential changes to those. **Ms. Heimes** mentioned that voters must be informed of any changes via postcards well in advance of an election and **Mr. Mahoney** asked if there was a set schedule for when this needed to happen. **Mr. Wooten** replied that this date was on the new calendar and he could let the Board know after the meeting. **Mr. Mahoney** stated that he believes the best way for the public to keep track of changes is through My Voter Page.

**Ms. Hodge** commended **Mr. Wooten** on being proactive and asked if it would be possible to formalize the process of onboarding a new board member, as the process has always been very informal. **Mr. Wooten** replied that he could certainly formalize the process and mentioned that **Mr. Hall** had already planned to come by to meet with him.

#### OLD BUSINESS:

#### Annex

**Mr. Wooten** reported that the County architect had proposed a cost for several recognized needed changes to the Annex warehouse and that he had recently met with budget officials and the assistant county manager to discuss these costs as well as the budget. The County is looking at several solutions to our space and safety issue, such as completing some of the architect's recommendations, buying the Annex, or expanding the Employability building. They are considering many options that they hope will provide us a safe and adequate warehouse solution. He touched briefly on the budget, stating that most of our requests were granted and the main areas of discussion were in regards to building expenses at the Annex. **Mr. Mahoney** reminded the Board that a new building had been requested and proposed almost 20 years ago and that he supports having one single location for all elections operations for the sake of safety and

simplicity. **Ms. Heimes** said that she believes the Employability building would serve our purposes best as is it quite large and we could use the auxiliary parking lot to build a new warehouse. **Mr. Wooten** updated the Board on the Employability building – the right side is dedicated to our operations through the remainder of this year at minimum, while the left is currently being used to deliver the COVID-19 vaccine and may be available sometime next year. **Ms. Heimes** wondered how much a new warehouse would cost to build and stated that the Board should push for a new building to accommodate the growing elections operations, as they will only grow larger from this point on. She asked if we could present a proposal to the County as they have done in the past. **Mr. Wooten** stated that they could and added that John Leffler and Russell Bridges had gone together to meet with the County architect, who had developed a tailored plan based on the needs for the Annex; the same architect had also looked at the Employability building when it was first acquired. **Mr. Mahoney** added that he hoped that the Employability building was large enough, as most of our space needs are due to the increased number of machines and their increased size, as well as the growth in staffing around election season. He suggested that we possibly rotate uses in main spaces as certain processes did not overlap time-wise. **Mr. Wooten** added that we need open space as we have stacks of machines that require a forklift, which also changes the job description of temps hired for the warehouse, all of which the County is aware of.

**Ms. Heimes made a motion** to hire an architect to determine whether the use of the Employability building with an additional new warehouse build would be more feasible than upgrading the Annex; and to have staff contact the County architect to prepare a report on his past findings on the Employability building and ask him to speak at the next meeting. **A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**2021-2022 Budget**

**Mr. Wooten** reported on the proposed operation budget for the upcoming fiscal year, pointing out where the County budget officials had approved our requests and where they had asked for additional information and discussion. The budget office has already granted most requests and increased our budget by an overall total of 29%; we will have the chance to discuss the items in question and **Mr. Wooten** had received communication during the meeting that the assistant county manager would like to visit and discuss the Annex.

**Mr. Wooten** moved on to discuss the upcoming elections included in the next fiscal year: the possible March special election, the general primary in May, and the runoff in July. The runoff itself would fall into the 2022-2023 fiscal year, but all the preparation would be in the upcoming one. **Mr. Mahoney** asked about the budget for permanent staff; **Mr. Wooten** stated that currently the budget covered four permanent and four long-term temporary staff. **Mr. Mahoney** stated that the Board has wanted to increase the number of permanent staff for a long time and that four employees is insufficient for a large county with the new increase in workload. **Mr. Wooten** agreed that the department has been historically understaffed and said that he would be meeting soon with County HR to discuss our options to bring on more staff. **Ms. Hodge** mentioned that the committee she had formed would be helpful in deciding how many spots would be ideal to add to staff and asked if we could look at other county structures for help. **Mr. Wooten** stated that he had recently participated in a survey on that subject and would share its findings. **Ms. Hodge** added that it may be beneficial to include items like out-of-house marketing in the budget. In closing, **Mr. Wooten** added that his invitation to review budget sheets and financial reports with Mr. Hall was open to the whole Board at any point.

**Ms. Heimes** noted that she would like to move forward on some of the things discussed in last year's board retreat, namely regarding a mission statement and updating bylaws, and that updates needed to be complete no later than 10 days before any meeting. **Ms. Hodge** agreed and noted that **Mr. Wooten** had done the groundwork on the mission statement at that time. **Mr. Mahoney** asked that by-laws and mission statement be added to the Old Business section of the next meeting agenda.

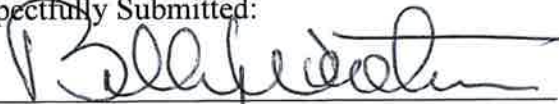
**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion by Mr. Lang, seconded by Mr. Hall, to adjourn the meeting.**

**ALL APPROVED.**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



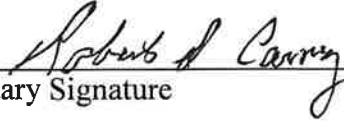
Billy Wooten  
Interim Supervisor, Secretary to the Board

4/12/2021

Date Approved



Thomas J. Mahoney, III  
Chair



Notary Signature

5/20/21

Date Notarized

**ROBERT S. CARNEY**  
Notary Public, Chatham County GA  
My Commission Expires 5/21/25