

THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS OF CHATHAM COUNTY
MINUTES

May 10, 2021

**virtual meeting*

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

STAFF: Billy Wooten
Caity Hamilton

CALL TO ORDER: **Tom Mahoney** called the meeting to order at 3:32 P.M. He gave an Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CHAIR ADDRESS: **Mr. Mahoney** thanked everyone for attending the meeting and stated that we are in a good position to focus on things we were not able to do during the busy 2020 election cycle.

MINUTES: **March 2021**
Motion by Mr. Hall, seconded by Mr. Lang, that the Minutes of the meeting be approved. There was no discussion and the Minutes were unanimously approved.

FINANCIAL REPORT: **March 2021**
Mr. Wooten presented the Financial Report for information. He pointed out that if a line item on the report is blank then nothing has been spent in that category this month. He invited the Board to contact him any time if they have questions about a category or item listed and he would provide additional details. There were no questions and no discussion.

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT: **Mr. Wooten** gave a brief update on day-to-day activities and mentioned that the county alerted him today that they would be conducting an audit, which has not been done since 2017. He remarked that an audit is always wise when a change in management occurs to mark the end of the previous record and management era. He is looking forward to working with the county auditor to bring the department up to date.

Polls
Mr. Wooten reviewed the ongoing poll location changes, saying that we are still looking for a location for 7-09; he described the precinct and called for the public to send in tips on potential sites. He also discussed possible changes to 7-11 to split the precinct and establish a second poll. There has been a growth from 3500 voters to nearly 7000 in about a year. While the current poll has expanded their facility and is willing and happy to continue hosting, establishing a second poll in the region would prevent long lines. We are partnering with Voter Registration and have reached out to the MPC to get maps. We will study these and potentially split the precinct at Benton Blvd. It may be June before this is presented to the Board to give ample time to complete the study. **Mr. Wooten** wrapped up the report by saying that the adjustments to 7-11 are the most important but we will also research adjusting other precincts.

OLD BUSINESS: **Annex Update**
Mr. Wooten stated that work on the Annex will be underway shortly. Equipment is arriving now and we have scheduled the next steps of disassembling, moving, and

reassembling shelves, etc. The work is slow going, but we hope to have it complete in August. He extended an open invitation to the Board and encouraged them to stay in the public area for their safety during construction. **Mr. Mahoney** asked if we will be using the old warehouse at the office for absentee operations; **Mr. Wooten** confirmed that we plan to use it for absentee and possibly as a demo poll where the public could visit to see the voting machines. **Ms. Heimes** added that she would like us to consider the possibility of enhancing the office with shatter-proof windows in the front. **Mr. Wooten** agreed that would be a worthwhile project and stated that we could also consider the possibility of adding office space for staff at the Annex. **Mr. Mahoney** agreed with Ms. Heimes that the Eisenhower office needs improvements. **Mr. Wooten** added that we need to look at the flow of the office and research the possibility of cutting a doorway into the back as a second entrance and exit to the warehouse as there could be a lot of public, poll watchers, and press coming through the office for the 2022 elections. It would also be helpful to connect our space to the training room in the future. **Mr. Wooten** said that there would be productive discussions about it in the future that would involve Voter Registration. They could share the space for absentee processing to streamline the coordination between both departments. **Ms. Hodge** commented that the public may be less interested in our processes outside of the election cycle, but she appreciates staff communication and planning. **Mr. Mahoney** stated that Chatham County is growing quickly and we have to grow with it. **Mr. Wooten** completed the update by saying the warehouse updates are a major step forward for elections and will eventually require a full-time warehouse and equipment manager, which he has mentioned to the county. The four largest counties ahead of Chatham County have a dedicated staff person to run their warehouse operations and more permanent staff than we have. We will need to have the same as soon as possible to ensure that elections remain fair, efficient, and safe.

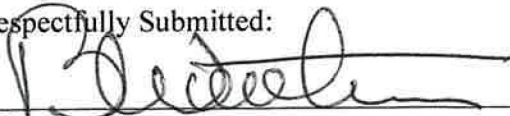
NEW BUSINESS: Media Photography Policy

Mr. Wooten stated that the Board has raised concerns with past press and public photography, especially during the 2020 elections, causing many workers to raise their concerns and some workers to quit. Some Georgia counties have media policies based on code; staff studied Cobb County's policy in particular and modified it to suit our county. It is some work on the media's part and they become responsible for knowing their limits, but it established the poll managers as the authority at the polls regarding photography and filming and formalizes the process. This would keep the press from just showing up at a poll or remote absentee processing without the knowledge of the office. He pointed out to the Board that this is just a draft version and can be altered and will require a Board vote to be adopted. **Ms. Heimes** asked if the policy would apply to the general public and **Mr. Wooten** responded that the general public is already barred from the private area at polls and processing centers and only poll watchers have access and are prohibited from filming. **Mr. Mahoney** asked if election workers are subject to being photographed and **Mr. Wooten** stated that they can object, but there is also a way to set up the processing center so that their faces are obscured but their actions are still visible and transparent. Any election worker can go to their manager and object to being photographed or filmed and they will make accommodations. **Mr. Mahoney** stated that the public is entitled to see everything we do, but workers have a right to privacy. While the work is - public, the workers need to be protected. **Ms. Hodge** asked if a waiver could be created and signed by workers. **Mr. Wooten** said that the media will sometimes ask at polls and the managers will ask their workers if they object before agreeing; that can be done with a paper waiver instead of verbally. **Mr. Hall** stated that he thought the media was supposed to ask for names when they photograph or film a person. **Mr. Wooten** replied that they are and that the problem is typically at the processing center, not at the polls. The press and public are kept in the public area of the processing center but can film and photograph workers through the Plexiglas,

leading to many issues. **Ms. Heimes** added that she had witnessed press and public film staff through the windows at the office without their consent and then misconstrue what was being done inside without ever asking staff about what they were doing. **Mr. Mahoney** suggested that the policy either be passed or tabled by a motion from the Board. **Ms. Heimes moved to table the policy for more research and adjustment and the addition of something that could relate to the general public. Mr. Hall seconded the motion and the policy was tabled.**

ADJOURNMENT: **Motion by Mr. Lang** to adjourn the meeting.
ALL APPROVED. The meeting was adjourned at 4:19 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:




Billy Wooten
Interim Supervisor, Secretary to the Board

6-14-21

Date Approved



Thomas J. Mahoney, III
Chair



Notary Signature

5/18/21

Date Notarized

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