

Meeting Minutes
Chatham County Board of Registrars
August 26, 2020

The August 2020 conference call meeting of the Chatham County Board of Registrars was called to order by Board Chairman Colin McRae.

Members of the Board in attendance by phone were Ms. Andrews, Chairman McRae, Mr. Norse, Mr. Pannell and Mr. Slay. Staff in attendance included Ms. Sabrina German, Director and Mrs. Inger Bostick, Assistant Director. Several members of the public also participated.

Board Chairman McRae led the participants in the Pledge of Allegiance to begin the meeting.

Approval of July 2020 Meeting Minutes: Ms. Andrews made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the July 2020 meeting as written. Mr. Pannell seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Old Business

November 3, 2020 General Election Advance Voting: Ms. German provided a summary of Advance Voting locations for the November 3, 2020 General Election. All six sites will be open for all three weeks of Advance Voting for the General Election, a change from prior years when only the Main Office was open the entire time. Additionally, weekend voting will be offered on two different weekends (both Saturday and Sunday).

The six sites that will be in operation are the Main Office, Mosquito Control, Islands Library, Southwest Chatham Library, Pooler Recreation Center and the Savannah Civic Center. Ms. German also noted that a flyer listing all dates, times and locations of Advance Voting will be available on the Voter Registration website and will be issued to news media through the Chatham County Public Information Office.

Absentee Ballot Request Processing Satellite Site: Ms. German indicated that, due to the very large expected demand for absentee ballots, a satellite location will be set up at the Savannah International Trade & Convention Center for processing of those requests. Ms. German informed the Board of the process led by the County Manager's Office, the choice of this particular site and Ms. German also explained the security measures that will be in place to protect the sanctity of the absentee ballot requests processed at the location.

Transportation: Ms. German informed the Board members that the Department is scheduled to receive a County-owned automobile for use in transporting absentee ballot applications to the Trade Center and that the vehicle is also expected to be used for transportation of voted absentee ballots picked up from ballot drop boxes to be taken to the Main Office.

Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes: Ms. German explained that the procurement and placement of additional ballot drop boxes is being studied. Mr. McRae mentioned that civic organizations and members of the public have stepped forward to contribute financially and logistically to this effort. A tentative working list of ballot drop box locations was provided by Ms. German to potentially include Coastal Georgia Center/Minus Avenue in Garden City, the Savannah Civic Center, Frank Murray Community Center on Whitmarsh Island, the Chatham County Police Department precinct on the Islands as well as a potential for a Live Oak Library location.

Ms. German noted that it is conceivable that up to 8 drop boxes may be installed throughout the County and that volunteers will need to augment staff to assist in collection of ballots from these drop boxes. Ms. German advised the Board members of current election codes governing ballot drop boxes, which must be emptied by a team of at least two people every 72 hours before Advance Voting begins on October 12 and every 24 hours at a minimum thereafter. Mr. Slay also mentioned that one team will need to be dedicated to each drop box installed on Election Day to ensure that the drop box closes promptly at 7:00 p.m. as legally required and that the final ballots in the box are collected. Mr. McRae followed up on this point to advise the Board members to consider participating on a ballot drop box collection team and noted the possibility of having representation from staff, Board members and political party representatives on each team if feasible.

Finally, Board members instructed staff to advertise the list of absentee ballot drop box locations once these locations are finalized.

New Business

August 11, 2020 Primary Runoff Recap: Ms. German provided the total number of voters who voted via each method during the August 11, 2020 Primary Runoff. These numbers included 8,042 absentee votes, 3,194 advance in-person votes and 8,149 Election Day votes cast for a total of 19,401 overall which equates to an approximately 10% turn-out rate.

2016 State Election Board Case: Ms. German updated the Board members on a case from the 2016 General Election that the State Election Board is currently reviewing. The matter stems from the malfunction of an elevator at the Savannah Civic Center during Advance Voting. Ms. German indicated that she had received notice of a State Election Board hearing on September 10 regarding this matter that staff will participate in. However, Ms. German also mentioned that since the elevator malfunction was outside of the control of election officials that no violation had actually occurred in this case. Nevertheless, Chairman McRae advised Ms. German to involve the County Attorney's office in this matter for advice and counsel and Ms. German indicated that she will do so.

Voter Registration Totals

Ms. German reported 190,982 active and 26,747 inactive voters. Ms. German stated that a report on pending voters could not be provided at this time but will be provided at the meeting in September 2020.

Voter Challenges

Ms. German indicated 80 felon, 70 deceased and 15 request to be removed challenges are up for approval by the Board today. At 12:47 p.m., Mr. Pannell made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Norse to approve placing a challenged status on the above mentioned voters.

Public Discussion:

Mr. Stephens from Lake Shore Homeowners' Association inquired about using one of their facilities for either an Advance Voting location or an absentee ballot drop box site. Due to resource and time constraints, the location could not be used for an Advance Voting location. Furthermore, because the location is private property, the use of an absentee ballot drop box at the location is also not permitted by law.

Mr. Lang of the Chatham County Board of Election was recognized to present a proposal for Advance Voting and/or an absentee ballot drop box site at Savannah State University. Due to the same circumstances as indicated above to Lake Shore, the Advance Voting location is not feasible for the November 3, 2020 General Election but will consider the drop box location.

The meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m.