MINUTES of the
November 1, 2023, Meeting of
The Frederick County Board of Elections

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 pm, in person and virtually, by Board President Mary Costello.

PRESENT:

Mary Costello, President
Nathaniel C.W. Wilson, Vice President
Shirley McDonald, Secretary
Ted Neeves, Board Member
Michael Sowell, Board Member
Daniel B. Loftus, Board Counsel [WebEx]
M.C. Keegan-Ayer, County Council Liaison
Barbara Wagner, Election Director
Anthony Gutierrez, Deputy Director
Thomas Coogan, Election Program Manager
Marc R. Welch, Voting Operations Manager
Diane Zepp, Voter Registration

Winston E. Mann, visitor
Jay Kaminsky, visitor
Mari Lee, Democratic Central Committee [WebEx]
Shelley Aloi, Republican Central Committee [WebEx]

****

ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

None

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES

The Director noted a spelling error under Board Counsel Report; change "this as" to "this is". Also remove "and the staff" from both the first sentence in second paragraph and third sentence in third paragraph. Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve the October 4, 2023, meeting minutes as amended. Mr. Neeves seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

COUNCIL LIASON COMMENTS

Thursday, November 3, 2023, at 7:00 pm, Winchester Hall, MDoT will be coming for their annual meeting with the Frederick County General Assembly delegation, County Council and municipal leaders regarding transportation priorities for the county. It will be streamed online.

The County Executive will present her legislative packet to the Frederick County delegation on December 2nd at Winchester Hall at 10am. The County Executive will hold her first budget meeting on December 4 at 6 pm at Winchester Hall.

BOARD COUNSEL REPORT

Mr. Loftus has not received notice at this time that the plaintiff has filed a reply brief in the Gibson case; the deadline was October 31.

At the October State Board Biennial meeting, SBE met with the LBE attorneys to discuss such topics as electioneering issues, State Board guidelines and other items for the 2024 elections.

ELECTION DIRECTOR REPORT

1. **Announcements and Important Meetings**

   11/6   Election Hero's Day

   11/8   Risk Management Meeting

   11/9   Biannual Building Manager Meeting (Frederick)

   11/10 Veteran's Day

   11/14 Online Election Judge Training Rollout (virtual)

   11/15 Frederick County Departmental Director's Leadership Course (Transit)

   11/16 Director's Meeting in Anne Arundel County

   11/23 Thanksgiving

   11/29 LWV Panelist on Rank Choice Voting

   ➢ 2024 Election Candidacy
     - The State website is the best place to get an up-to-date listing of candidates. As of 10/4/2023, SBE has had 39 Candidates for statewide offices. Currently, FC has 2 Board of Education candidates.

   Primary Election Tuesday, May 14, 2024

   Early Voting Dates – Thursday, May 2-9, 2024

2. **Voter Registration**

VOTER REGISTRATION STATISTICS REPORT   As of 11/1/2023

TOTAL ACTIVE + PENDING:	199,612			
PARTY	**ACTIVE**	**PENDING**	**TOTAL**	**PERCENT**
DEM	77,670	20	77,690	38.92%
REP	67,541	5	67,546	33.84%
LIB	1,199	0	1,199	0.60%
UNA	51,434	24	51,458	25.78%
OTHERS - TOTAL	1,717	2	1,719	0.86%
TOTAL	199,561	51	199,612	100.00%

VOTER REGISTRATION TRANSACTIONS REPORT	October 2023
Additions to County Registration	914
Subtractions from County Active Status	451
Party Affiliation Changes	273
Address Changes within Jurisdiction	929
Name Changes	563

➢ **Pending status – identification has not been able to be verified by either MVA or the Social Security Administration.**

CURRENT PENDING VOTERS
As of 11/1/2023

Reason	Number
ID Not Provided	7
ID Not Verified	41
Incomplete Application	3
TOTAL	51

In October, 21 pending voters were made active.

3. General and Continuing Items

Frederick County Board of Elections will be a designated satellite office to take candidate filings for Delegates to the National Conventions starting in January 2024. SBE is requesting all designated sites to stay open until 9 pm to accept filings from Jan 29th to Feb 9th.

Warehouse

The warehouse has received solar power systems and supporting equipment for use with the ballot drop box cameras to be deployed at certain locations.

Voting Systems Division

The Thurmont Municipal Election was on Tuesday, October 31. The election office provided 2 DS-200 ballot scanners and 4 voting booths.

The team has completed site visits to private polling place locations expected to be used for the 2024 elections.

Work on the documents and materials for the 2024 Polling Place Plan are nearly complete and will be submitted to the State Board for their approval.

Development and preparation of the voting system/warehouse database implementation is ongoing. This new, custom-built software, VuTrak, is an upgrade to systems and allows better central control of voting system equipment and related supplies as well as to help with inventory management of all state-owned and county-owned office equipment.

Electronic Pollbook Project

- Pollbook Solution – Using Legacy for 2024. Statewide testing for new pollbooks to begin December 4-10. I have assigned myself, Shakir, Bob Seebald and Phoenix Blount as testers. Testing location TBD. Mr. Neeves asked that the Board be kept up to date.

Voter Registration Division is currently working on this month's Eric and have completed 76% of it with a Due date of the 17th of November. This month's ERIC report has NCOA, In-state, Cross state reports with over six thousand to process. The Jury list was completed on October 20th and was due by the 31st.

Election Judge Division

Meet & Greet on November 2 full. One at 10am and the other at 5pm.

Volunteer Voter Registration training on November 9.

Volunteer Voter Registration training on December 7.

Judge applications are currently at 635 total. The Judge team will be conducting a meet & greet event in office for potential judge applicants on November 2. We will start training around February 24th.

Social Media and Website Content is a group effort to update all sites/pages with the latest information. The Voter Registration Statistics page launched. Reports will be published by the 15th of each month.

The Board of Elections is approximately 6 months from the Primary Election on May 14th, 2024.

Major goals include the following:

- Districts/Precincts Clean-up – plan to take out lines between precincts that already vote in the same place and share the same ballot style. These changes WILL NOT affect the place where the voter votes on Election Day.
- 59 Election Day Polling Places – affected by SB410.
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) each division is tasked with going over current procedures and writing or re-writing them to a standard which can be given to any incoming employee to assist with training. – Mid October to be completed

Grants

The Board of Elections worked with the Office of Emergency Management to submit one project. The DHS grant will be used for the AI Phone for Suite 125 this fall. Quote for the work has been received and we are waiting for coordination with DEM to move forward.

BJAG Grant – This Grant has closed, and all work has been completed.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Biennial Meeting Update

Ms. Costello is still waiting for the evaluation form. The Director will check on this.

Election Operations Manager Marc Welch attended the Five Steps to a Safer Election session. He

presented information to the Board on de-escalation (the handout will be provided to our Chief Election Judges) and "5 Steps to a Safer Election" including building partnerships with other agencies. We already do this with between 20 to 30 agencies around the county but this will be very helpful to expand our partnership.

B. Board Orientation Retreat Planning Update

Ms. Costello thanked everyone for their efforts making this is a success. Mr. Neeves commented that we may need to do a refresher or a more deep dive closer to early voting and canvassing.

C. High Speed Sorter Updates

Program Manager Tom Coogan reported that our new high-speed Inbound Mail Processing Unit is in the testing phase; we anticipate delivery 30-45 days from now with on-site training to follow. The SBE development team is working with 5 Local Boards on system processes and compatibility.

D. Vacancy Announcements

The Director reports they are working on filling three vacant positions around the office.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposed Election Judge Pilot Program

The Director is proposing an "Openers and Closers" pilot program: openers to work from 6am to 2pm and closers to come in from 1pm to closing. This will give more flexibility to encourage more participation. It will be at the Thurmont Library Early Center and four Election Day locations: Point of Rocks, Walkersville and Deer Crossing. There will be two openers and two closers at each of these sites who will receive $50 for training and $125 for each day they work. The Director requested board approval for this pilot. Ms. McDonald made the motion to approve the plan and Mr. Neeves seconded. Mr. Wilson requested that in the future, when practicable, the board would receive information 30 days prior to being asked to approve such items so they have sufficient time to review the proposal. The Director noted there may be times that a quick response from the board will be needed to meet an impending State deadline. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Other

Regarding Ms. Lee's comments at the last board meeting regarding current public access system, Mr. Wilson asked how this became the system and if there is any research ongoing about other systems? The Director said we started using this system in 2020 due to the pandemic. Marc Welch said WebEx became the default that best met our needs. We tried Facebook for a while but due to their frequent updates, it became untenable to keep up with it. Mr. Wilson would be interested in a little more user friendly system. Mr. Loftus stated that two of things that we concentrate on with

bylaws was online public comment and second, the fact that the written minutes are the official record of the meetings. There is also a budget consideration for online storage.

Ms. Keegan-Ayer noted that whatever system we use must be encrypted, which is one reason the County went with WebEx as opposed to Facebook. She suggested checking with the County IIT Department because it is not as easy as it sounds to switch platforms. Mr. Loftus noted SBE uses an online system and they keep their minutes in video. The Director will check into it.

DISCLOSURES

Ms. McDonald reported an $83 donation to the Democratic Central Committee this month. She also attended Steve McKay's community meeting on Saturday the 28th. Finally, she also gave a $50 tuition contribution to Emerge.

Ms. Costello made a $150 contribution to Jessica Fitzwater's campaign.

Mr. Neeves attended the Meet and Greet for the Democratic Senator this past Saturday.

NEXT MEETING

The next Board meeting will be Wednesday, December 6, 2023, at 2:00 pm at 8490 Progress Drive.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Per the by-laws, public comment is allowed after a request has been approved by the Board President.

Mr. Jay Kaminsky thanked the board for the opening, closing notice and the continued conversation of recording the meeting and pushing that along. He is concerned about the Board of Elections voter registration data application which he said still includes a concerning sentence. He has referred 27 election judges so far. He requested to tour the USPS facility but was denied for some reason.

The Director noted that data application form was changed by SBE as of October 4 and we currently have the new version posted, including the new language provided by the State. She wants to make certain that he has the most accurate information.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Neeves, seconded by Mr. Sowell, passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 2:43 pm by Ms. Costello.

Minutes Approved by:

_____   _____
Mary Costello, Board President   Date

Mary Costello   _Dec. 6, 2023_