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**Minutes of the Richland County Board of Elections & Voter Registration**

**Special Meeting**

**July 9, 2020**

**4:00 PM**

**In Attendance**

**Board Members**

1. Dr. Charles P. Austin, Sr. - Chair
2. Dr. Duncan A. Buell – Vice Chair
3. Mrs. Anjanette D. President
4. Mrs. Yolanda Y. Taylor

**Staff Members**

Ms. Alexandria Stephens

Mr. Terry Graham, Sr.

Mrs. Rebecca Brown

Mr. John Mosley

Ms. Sheron Harris

Miss Lakeisha Diggs

Mr. Cale Carter

**Call to Order**

A meeting of the Richland County Board of Elections & Voter Registration was called to order on Thursday July 9, 2020 at 4:00 PM with Chair Dr. Austin presiding.

**Moment of Meditation**

Dr. Austin called for a Moment of Meditation.

**Adoption of Agenda**

Dr. Buell moved that we approve the agenda. Mrs. Taylor seconded the motion. The vote in favor was unanimous.

**Old Business – No action requested**

Election Systems- Mr. Mosley stated machines have been delivered and Signage has been posted.

Absentee Services – 20,269 requests, 12,448 returned, over 11,000 not returned. Discussed hiring seasonal workers and additional staff. Also discussed additional space in different locations around the county.

Precinct and Poll Workers – all locations were contacted in December for November, but we are currently checking with locations to verify. Payroll Mgr. stated checks for poll workers would go out this week.

Poll worker applications 1093, precinct division is working to get through applications and Ms. Stephens would like to bring in help to contact applications. Open enrollment will take place to discuss training, direct deposit.

Chris Trainer asked how many poll workers would be needed for November and Mrs. Stephens stated around 1100.

Dr. Buell reached out to University to seek assistance. Dr. Austin stated he would ask Allen, Benedict and Midlands Tech to request poll workers.

Annie McDaniel has asked about satellite locations in outlying locations like Ballentine, Southside, etc. Ms. Sheron Harris stated satellites are set up

**New Business – No Action Requested**

Dr. Austin welcomed Ms. Stephens. Ms. Stephens stated how excited she is about working with the Office and is already working with the different departments.

Director’s Report- Poll worker recruitment process: We plan to bring in extra staff to help go through the applications. Each applicant will be contacted and advised when open enrollment will take place. It will take place by appointment only. More poll workers will be brought in than usual, to cover those who may change their minds or fall ill. The goal is to have all poll workers recruited and staffed by a specific date. Dr. Austin requested a report from Mrs. Brown who stated poll workers will begin trauining in September and poll workers can be hired by end of September. New workers will sit through an online training before attending hands-on training for clerks and asst. clerks. Every poll worker must attend training prior to each election. Dr. Austin stated Board Members would be attending a training session. Mrs. Brown suggested they attend a clerk training session. Dr. Austin asked Mr. Graham how many poll workers usually return to work the next election, he replied 85% during a regular election cycle. Mr. Cale Carter asked how covid-19 would affect staff during the election process. Ms. Stephens stated we would continue to practice social distancing when possible, using our PPEs, frequently washing hands, etc. Rep. McDaniel asked about using current poll workers to recruit new poll workers. Mrs. Brown stated the goal is to only combine polling location out of necessity. Laptops should programmed to allow voters to be pulled from all of the laptops.

Town of Eastover Election July 14, 2020- Municipal Election. All equipment has been delivered, signage has been placed and poll workers have been confirmed. The election will take place at Eastover Park, 1031 Main St.

Prepare a report by September 1, 2020 with 3 plans: plans A, B, C. If we do not have the maximum amount of polling locations and workers, what will be the plans B & C to make up for that.

Mr. Leonardo Brown stated PIO has been receiving a great response about how to become a poll worker. They have slowed down the publications because the office has been inundated with requests.

**Public Comments-**

Rep. McDaniel made some very insightful suggestions about utilizing time effectively for the poll worker application process, training, etc. She also recommended paying poll workers after 7pm.

Mrs. Rebekah Woodford gave comments and offered many helpful ideas to make the polling location experience more efficient. She also suggested Ms. Stephens write a letter to the poll workers letting them know what her plan would be to make things better at the polls. She also suggested emails be sent in a timely manner. Another suggestion made was to have the Board members work the polls, and to have experienced clerks conduct training sessions.

Mrs. Edie Willard welcomed Ms. Stephens to SC and expressed excitement to have her here with us. She also commended the staff for all of the hard work they do to prepare for elections and stated people do not know all that is needed to run a successful election. She also asked about alleged ballot discrepancies and if they could be addressed during testing.

Dr. Matt Kisner echoed Mrs. Willard’s sentiments. He also addressed increasing satellite locations and getting them in shape to make the experience a smooth as possible.

Mrs. Tina Herbert gave remarks as well, welcoming Ms. Stephens and about the polling process.

Rep. McDaniel stated we should be careful when singling out any one person, when all employees are working hard to make sure things run properly.

**Board and Director Comments**

Dr. Buell welcomed Ms. Stephens and stated our biggest jobs are making sure we have enough clerks and poll workers for the fall. He asked the political parties to assist with this. The more satellite location during absentee voting, the less likely there are to have long lines.

Mrs. President also welcomed Ms. Stephens, echoed Dr. Buell’s sentiments and thanked everyone for participating on the zoom call.

Dr. Austin stated he does not have the luxury of pointing fingers or blaming others for disconnects. He takes his job very seriously and stated systematic strategic planning is needed for a successful election. We need to work together. The easiest thing is to point fingers; the difficult thing to do is to get in the trenches and work together to get the job done. The Board was not hired to run this agency, but is here to assist Ms Stephens.

Ms. Stephens gave her remarks. She will be sitting down with everyone individually and promote teamwork.

**Executive Session Adjournment**

Mrs. Taylor moved to adjourn and Dr. Buell seconded.

**Submitted by:** Ms. Michelle D. Harrington, Administrative Coordinator