

Minutes of the Richland County Board of Voter Registration and Elections
Wednesday, September 9, 2015
4:00pm, County Council Chambers

Board Members in Attendance

Ms. Marjorie Johnson, Chair

Ms. Adell Adams, Vice-Chair

Ms. Sylvia Holley

Ms. Jane Emerson

Mr. E. Peter Kennedy

Staff in Attendance

Mr. Samuel Selph, Director

Ms. Lillian McBride, Deputy Director

Staff Members – Elections & Voter Registration Department

Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

- A motion was made to adopt the meeting's agenda. Seconded. Approved.

Approval of Board Meeting Minutes

- The Board Members reviewed the minutes from August 12, 2015.
- A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes. Seconded. Approved.

Board Chair Comments

- Code Compliance Name Change
 - Ms. Johnson informed the Board of an article in the law that stated that the name should be the Board of Elections & Voter Registration of Richland County.
 - The law omits the word commission so additional clarification has been sought as to what name members should be referred to.

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- Until clarification has been received regarding the omission of Commissioners, Board Members will be referred to as Ms. and Mr.
- Personnel Action Protocol
 - Ms. Johnson stated that at the meeting that was held in August 2015, there was a personnel discussion that was held in public session that was out of order and should not have been held.
 - The Freedom of Information Act specifically excludes personnel matters, contractual matters, financial matters and legal matters to be discussed in public session; any discussions as to who was hired, not hired, fired, reprimanded, etc. should not be discussed in public session.
 - In the future, if a discussion regarding the above mentioned items is discussed in open session, that discussion will be called out of order.

Board Comments

- Ms. Emerson – Richland Board Strategic Plan / Work Session
 - Ms. Emerson informed the Board Members of a training session that was conducted by the State Election Commission where emphasis was placed on how important it is to have a strategic plan that will map out priorities for the next 2 - 3 years; from that strategic plan flows the executive director's evaluation; and the director's direction to the staff.
 - Concerns were raised as to not having the proper information from the past as well as not wanting to bring up past issues as the department strives to move forward.
 - Additionally, if the department is already following the state plan, there is no need for the development of any other plans.
 - A motion was made to have a leader come in and assist with developing a strategic plan for the next 3-5 years. Seconded. 2-Yes, 3-No; motion failed.

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- Ms. Emerson – Monthly Staff Reports to Board
 - Ms. Emerson proposed to receive brief and informal comments from the department's main staff members as to what is going well, what are some objectives, challenges, or concerns and if staff need help in any way.
 - A discussion ensued regarding the proposal and concerns were raised regarding following protocol and that any challenges staff may be facing and comments they may have, should be brought to the director and the director bring those concerns to the Board Member's attention.
 - Ms. Emerson raised concerns regarding whether Board Members could request to meet with the Director due to a previous request that raised concerns because of the request to "meet."
 - Board Members are only allowed to "meet" in public sessions but they are able to request to "speak" with the Director.
 - Additionally, clarification was sought as to the appropriateness of speaking with staff members on an individual basis.
 - Board Members are allowed to speak with staff but were reminded to follow the department's proper chain of command and that they are not permitted to speak with staff for interrogational purposes.
 - A motion was made to hear from senior staff members at each board meeting. Seconded. Yes - 2; No - 3. Motion failed.
- Ms. Emerson – Implementation of Hamm Report Recommendations
 - Ms. Emerson provided a synopsis of Attorney Hamm's report recommendations from the 2012 November General Election.
 - It was agreed that each item would be discussed and responses received from Board Members and / or the Director.
 1. Require detailed monthly reports to the Board from the Executive Director on specific actions taken each month to prepare for the next election.

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- Although the Director provides the Board Members with a verbal monthly update during Board Meetings, it would be beneficial to some if the report was provided in a written format for accountability purposes.
2. Require written monthly updates from the Executive Director on the current number of registered voters in Richland County.
 - Mr. Selph stated that he requests and receives registered voters information from division heads within the department.
 - Although the report recommends receiving the information on a monthly basis, the Board can decide to request the information on a quarterly basis.
 - The Director was requested to provide registered voter information to the Board on a monthly basis via email.
 3. Establish standards of individual staff accountability for actions taken or not taken and require ongoing communication among staff members on key election preparation issues.
 - It was discussed that this item is a Director's task.
 4. Require that every voting machine owned by Richland County be tested and available for use during any election.
 - Mr. Selph stated that this process is completed before and after every election.
 5. Require that senior election staff meet on a regular basis to discuss and reach specific agreement on the number of voting machines that should be assigned to each precinct after applying the statutory standard of 1 voting machine in each precinct for every 250 registered voters.
 - It was stated that this item is a requirement of the Director as the department prepares for each election.

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6. Establish a voting machine inventory program by specific serial number.
 - There is an inventory program in place and that information is vital in preparing for each election in Richland County.
 7. The Executive Director must confirm to the Board that all machine readable ballots printed at the election office contain all required margins and placement to avoid any future 'misaligned ballot' problems that occurred during the 2012 General Election.
 - This item came about from issues encountered during the 2012 November General Election.
 - Mr. Selph informed the Board that safeguards have been put in place to ensure this issue does not reoccur from ballots that are printed in the department.
- A motion was made to use the synopsis of Attorney Hamm's report recommendations from the 2012 November General Election as a guide when preparing for elections. Motion seconded. Yes – 4, No – 1. Motion approved.

• **Director's Comments & Updates**

- Mr. Selph provided the Board with the following responses regarding Attorney Hamm's Report Recommendations:
- The Hamm Report came about as a result of the 2012 November election which has been referred to as a failed election due to a failure of accountability.
 - Staff members met to review and discuss the report and implemented various measures and safeguards to ensure there is not a repeat of the 2012 November General Election.

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○ Voting Machines

- The numbers of voting machines that are assigned to each precinct are calculated according to state law; 1 voting machine for every 250 registered voters.
- After the 2014 election, all voting machines were tested and cleared.
- At the present time, there are 1124 operable voting machines.
- Before the November 2015 elections, the 343 voting machines that are needed will be cleared, tested, and checked.

○ Voting Machine Batteries

- Voting machine batteries are currently being charged at the warehouse in preparation for the upcoming elections.
- Preventive maintenance on all the voting machines will be conducted in December of 2015.
- The majority of the voting machines are approximately 10 years old and the motherboard batteries are in need of being replaced.
- The estimated cost to replace the motherboard batteries is approximately \$75,000.00.

○ Registered Voters

- The number of registered voters change every day; at the present time, there are approximately 237,000 registered voters in Richland County.
- The Board can be provided with the number of registered voters and that information can also be found by visiting www.scvotes.org.

○ Status and Preparation for 2015 Budgeted Elections

- Elections will be held for the City of Columbia , Town of Arcadia Lakes, Town of Irmo, Town of Blythewood, and the City of Cayce.

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- *City of Columbia Election*
 - A meeting was held with the Mayor and City officials regarding preparations for the upcoming election.
 - The department presented the City with proposals outlining the election preparations.
 - 343 voting machines will be used and 82 precincts will be opened.
 - 4 machines will be placed in the department's lobby for absentee voting beginning October 5, 2015.
 - The City of Columbia election certification will be held at 9:00am and the City of Columbia Commissioners will certify the election.
 - The estimated election costs are approximately \$140,000; at the conclusion of the election, the department will invoice the City of Columbia for all expenses incurred and the City will reimburse the County.

- *Town of Arcadia Lakes*
 - There are 729 registered voters within the Town of Arcadia Lakes.
 - The Town has their own election commission.
 - Absentee voting will begin on October 5, 2015; 2 voting machines will be placed in the department's lobby for absentee voting.

- *City of Cayce Election*
 - The City of Cayce Election will be held on September 15, 2015
 - 98 voters were zoned from Lexington into Richland County.
 - The polling site has been moved into the City of Cayce.

- *Town of Blythewood*
 - As of today, no one has filed to run against the Town of Blythewood's Mayor.

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- 4 council seats have opposition so the election will be held on November 3, 2015.
- The Board Members will have to certify the Town of Blythewood election.
- The certification will be held on November 5, 2015 at 10:15am.
- *Town of Irmo*
 - 2 precincts will be open for less than 200 voters.
 - The election will be held on November 3, 2015.
- *FY2016 Budget Proposal - Elections*
 - The department will prepare a budget proposal with items needed to conduct FY2016 elections.
 - If the department's budget proposal is not funded as needed, the department will submit an ROA to request needed funds.
- *Status of Proposed Major Capital Project*
 - Each year the County requests that departments develop a plan where the County can invest in a project that will enhance and improve the department.
 - The department will submit a proposal regarding the property on Forest Drive for the combination and relocation of the department's warehouse and department.
- *Status of ROA Budget Allocations*
 - The department's ROA will be submitted in October 2015 and will request that monies be made available to the department from the funds expended for the City of Columbia election reimbursement.

Executive Session re: Director's Quarterly Evaluation

- A motion was made to proceed into Executive Session. Seconded. Approved.
- A motion was made to come out of Executive Session. Seconded. Approved.

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- The Board indicated stated that they had completed the review of the Director's 2nd Quarter Report.
- The Board also stated that no decisions were made and there were no actions to report.

Public Questions & Comments

- None

Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15pm.

Recorded by: Amie Brunson