

## **ELECTION BOARD**

**August 31, 2020**

**Present at the meeting were:**

Gary Eby  
Brenda Watson  
Pattie McLaughlin  
Bill Bunt  
Bonnie Delancey  
Shannon Hines

**Present from the Public via Phone:** Karen Anderson, Alane Balchunas, Jean Burlington, Donna Cohick, Ann Miller, and Melanie Wertz

Election Board met on Monday, August 31, 2020 at 11:30 a.m. The meeting was conducted via telephone conference and in person in the Commissioners' Conference Room.

**Appointment of Election Board Officials:** Solicitor Bunt requested nominations for Chairman of the Perry County Board of Elections. Patti McLaughlin made a motion to nominate Gary Eby as Chairman of the Perry County Election Board. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Solicitor Bunt requested nominations for Vice-Chairman of the Perry County Board of Elections. Patti McLaughlin made a motion to nominate Brenda Watson as Vice-Chairman of the Perry County Board of Elections. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Solicitor Bunt requested nominations for Secretary of the Perry County Board of Elections. Commissioner Eby made a motion to nominate Patti McLaughlin as Secretary of the Perry County Board of Elections. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Solicitor Bunt then turned the meeting over to Commissioner Eby as Chairman.

**Public Comments:** Alane Balchunas commented on the statement made by Cindy Roney during the Commissioners' Public Meeting, regarding the mail-in ballot applications and phone calls she and her husband had received from the RNC and Donald Trump Jr. She questioned what is happening and if anyone else in the County is experiencing this same situation. Ms. Balchunas stated that the Commissioners and Solicitor should get information out to the local newspapers and townships so that residents are aware of what is happening. She asked what actions would be taken to communicate that the County is not associated or endorsing the information being sent out by the RNC.

Karen Anderson seconded Ms. Balchunas's comment and stated that the Election Board should be proactive to make it clear in the public venues that mail-in ballot applications should be obtained by either contacting the County Voter Registration Office or by visiting the State's website.

**Executive Session:** Patti McLaughlin made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss ongoing election lawsuits. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

The Board reconvened from Executive Session. Solicitor Bunt presented an overview of the ongoing election lawsuits.

**Meeting Business:** A discussion was held regarding public notice of election procedures. The Board discussed the current election procedures and how quickly the procedures could change. Solicitor Bunt stated that information put out now could potentially be inaccurate based on any decisions that result from the pending lawsuits. Commissioner Eby made a suggestion that information be put out regarding the mail-in ballot application solicitation that was presented during public comments. Further discussion occurred regarding alerting the public of the mail-in ballot solicitation and the fact that they are not endorsed by the County, nor being sent by the County.

Commissioner Watson made a motion to put information out in the public forum, that the mail-in ballot application information being put out by political parties, is not from the Perry County Voter Registration Office. Patti McLaughlin seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

The Board discussed guidance received from the Pennsylvania Department of State regarding the return of absentee and mail-in ballots and “naked ballots.” Commissioner Watson stated that based on the primary election no changes need to be made regarding missing official election ballot envelopes. Discussion occurred regarding ballot boxes and the possibility of extending the hours of the Voter Registration Office.

Commissioner Watson made a motion to table taking action based on the Department of State guidelines until the next meeting. Patti McLaughlin seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

The Board discussed postage as it related to absentee and mail-in ballots. For the upcoming election only, the State has made the offer to reimburse for postage on absentee and mail-in ballots. Bonnie Delancey voiced a concern that paying the postage during this election, could result in voters assuming that postage will be paid moving forward. She stated that hunting license and tax postage must be provided by the sender and ballots should not be handled differently. Patti McLaughlin stated that all elections are important, not just the upcoming election. She stated that this election should not be treated any differently than previous elections.

Patti McLaughlin made a motion to not accept the State paid postage for absentee and mail-in ballots. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Further discussion occurred regarding ballot drop boxes. The Board discussed the possibility of tampering with the boxes by individuals and the security required for ballot boxes. Bonnie Delancey also commented on the staffing needed to check drop boxes daily and also the storage required for multiple drop boxes.

Patti McLaughlin made a motion to table the drop box issue until the next meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

**Public Comments:** Alane Balchunas questioned if the Board has considered recruiting younger individuals to work the polls and provide proper training. She stated that the Board should not wait until the last minute to recruit poll workers. She commented that communication should be going out now to ensure fully staffed polls. Ms. Balchunas recommended communicating this information via the County website, and also by soliciting current poll workers for recommendations.

Bonnie Delancey recommended that the Committee Representatives provide a listing of volunteers that the County could pull poll workers from. She stated that the listing could be emailed directly to her.

Ann Miller stated that during the Board discussions, drop boxes were talked about in the plural. She stated that multiple ballot drop boxes were not necessary, but one box in the Courthouse would be appropriate. Ms. Miller stated that this would allow individuals to drop off ballots without contact with another person, due to COVID. She also advocated for extended Voter Registration hours for ballot drop off. She recommended that the medicine box in the Courthouse be moved, and a ballot drop box be put in its place.

Melanie Wertz asked where she can go to get election questions answered. She stated that she called Commissioner Watson and did not receive an answer. Ms. Wertz questioned if she could deliver the ballots of elderly individuals to Voter Registration herself. She also asked why she gets different answers from different counties. She stated that waiting for the lawsuit decisions will not allow enough time to get information communicated to everyone in the County.

Karen Anderson commented that common sense seems to be forgotten in regards to the election. She stated that she cannot understand why someone cannot deliver another person's ballot, since a third party delivers ballots when they are mailed. Ms. Anderson said we need to ensure that everyone gets the right to vote. She stated that she will be holding the Board to the fire regarding these issues, and that the Board should be holding someone higher to the fire as well. She requested that the Board continue to reach out to State and Federal elected officials regarding these concerns.

Ann Miller stated that mail delivered to the New Bloomfield post office and put in the boxes goes to Harrisburg prior to local delivery.

Alane Balchunas questioned how many ballots were rejected during the primary election due to the envelopes being not filled out correctly or not returned in the correct envelopes.

The next Election Board meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2020 at 11:30 a.m.

Patti McLaughlin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 1:05 p.m.