

ELECTION BOARD
September 21, 2020

Present at the meeting were:

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

Present from the Public via Phone: Karen Anderson, Alane Balchunas, Donna Cohick, Gene Cohick, Ann Miller, Cindy Roney, Melanie Wertz, and Evelyn Delia

The Election Board met on Monday, September 21, 2020 at 11:30 a.m. The meeting was conducted via telephone conference and in person in the Commissioners' Conference Room. The meeting was recorded by the County and Melanie Wertz.

Public Comments: Karen Anderson stated that she had been in contact with Election Office Director, Bonnie Delancey with questions and asked if her questions were passed along to the Election Board. She stated that she could ask the questions now or wait to see if they were addressed during the meeting.

Approval of the Minutes: Patti McLaughlin made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 14, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Meeting Business: Election Litigation Update: Solicitor Bunt provided an update on the pending litigations regarding the election. He stated that decisions had been made by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania regarding the Democratic lawsuit. He provided the following information on the Supreme Court decisions:

- Drop boxes are permitted by law, but not required
- The deadline for returning ballots by mail was changed to on or before 5 p.m. on the Friday after election day. In the case of the upcoming general election that date would be November 6th. A ballot that is postmarked on or before election day will be counted if received by the 5 p.m. deadline on the Friday after election day. Postmarks would be liberally construed.
- Poll watchers must be a resident of the County in which they are a watcher. This did not change.
- County Voter Registration Offices are not responsible to contact voters that did not complete their mail-in ballots correctly or completely.
- A naked ballot, or a ballot not in a secrecy envelope will be invalid and not counted.

Solicitor Bunt stated that he was aware that some counties may be appealing these decisions to the U.S. Supreme Court. He also commented that the Federal Court has dissolved the stay on the Republican lawsuit and it is active again. He was not aware of any decisions being reached regarding the Republican lawsuit at the time of the meeting.

Ballot Drop Boxes: Solicitor Bunt stated that due to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision regarding drop boxes, the Election Board could move forward with a decision on this issue if they wish.

Commissioner Eby amended the agenda to allow public comment on the lawsuit decisions, specifically the drop box issue.

Public Comments: Alane Balchunas stated that the sound quality of the meeting was poor. She commented that while the Supreme Court decision found that drop boxes are not required, she said they are still necessary. Ms. Balchunas said it was imperative that Perry County get at least one drop box to accommodate the western part of the County. She continued and said that the County should look into acquiring several drop boxes, as this was not the last election that would be conducted primarily by mail. She stated that the drop box would provide a safe, convenient, and future way to cast ballots. Ms. Balchunas said that this decision should be made now instead of being kicked down the road.

Further discussion occurred regarding the security of drop boxes.

Alane Balchunas stated that appropriate, secure measures could be made to ensure the public drop boxes are safe through surveillance measures and there should be immediate and punitive actions taken to anyone interfering with the boxes.

Cindy Roney questioned if the Election Board has spoken to other Counties officials regarding their experience with drop boxes in regards to vandalism.

Ann Miller seconded everything that Alane said, but also commented that in addition to the security issue, COVID-19 is also an ongoing issue. She stated that this is a life and death situation for some voters, and said the County should make it as easy as possible for those that are immune compromised to vote. She commented that at least one drop box could be secured and again said that the Courthouse entrance is a safe place to put a drop box. Ms. Miller stated that she doesn't see how there could be an argument against a drop box in the Courthouse.

Melanie Wertz asked if appointments would need to be made to drop off a ballot at the Voter Registration Office. She stated that since appointments were not necessary it would cause an issue since it would take up the time of Bonnie Delancey to accept ballots and she is already extremely busy.

Karen Anderson stated that it is not her job to find a location for ballot drop boxes, but suggested the following places: Blain Elementary, post offices, and township buildings. She stated that it is the Election Board's job to find safe, secure locations and also ensure residents have the ability to vote.

Melanie Wertz agreed with all the comments being made.

Donna Cohick voiced concerns regarding the security of drop boxes and said she believes the boxes could be tampered with.

Evelyn Delia stated she supports having ballot drop boxes in the County. She commented that it is every citizen's constitutional right to vote in a democracy. She said that in the current COVID

pandemic many voters cannot come to the polls. She said that the Election Board must ensure that all residents of Perry County can send in their ballot in a quick and safe way. Ms. Delia reminded everyone that it is a right to vote.

Karen Anderson recommended speaking with the Pennsylvania State Police about security and safety of drop boxes.

Ann Miller asked what the argument against a drop box in the Courthouse entrance was.

Meeting Business: Ballot Drop Boxes: Commissioner Watson stated a drop box in the Courthouse would only be accessible during office hours. She stated that extended hours at the Veterans Memorial Building on evenings and weekends would allow residents to come in, outside of regular office hours, to drop off ballots. Commissioner Watson stated that if someone can come into New Bloomfield to drop off a ballot in the Courthouse, there should not be an issue with dropping the ballot off at the Veterans Memorial Building.

Commissioner Watson made a motion to table the issue of drop boxes. Patti McLaughlin seconded the motion. Commissioner Eby stated that at the next meeting a decision would be made regarding the issue. All agreed. Motion carried.

Public Comments: Melanie Wertz asked Commissioner Watson if appointments would need to be made for the extended hours.

Alane Balchunas asked if the evening and Saturday hours would be posted on the website. She stated she would look forward to seeing the information on the website.

Karen Anderson questioned if anyone had calculated the cost of overtime to have 2 people work the extended hours. She also asked if they would be of different political parties. Ms. Anderson stated that she had been recruited by the State Democratic Party to help them with the Voter Protection Program. She commented that the focus is on the preparation of ballots. She asked the following questions.

- Share the proof of the ballot prior to printing
- Are the ballots printed inhouse or by a vendor?
- When will the printing start?
- How long to print ballots?
- Is the mailing of ballots through a vendor?
- When will mailing of ballots start and what is the timeframe to get all ballots mailed?
- Will voters be accommodated if they come into the Voter Office for a mail-in ballot?

She stated that the biggest issue was sharing the ballot proof with the Democratic party. Ms. Anderson asked who she should call regarding these questions. She reiterated that the ballot proof would need to be seen prior to printing.

Alane Balchunas again stated that the sound quality of the meeting was poor. She also requested that speakers introduce themselves prior to speaking.

Ann Miller said she understood that the drop box issue had been tabled but stated that due to extended hours at the Veterans Memorial Building for ballot drop off, there could be a lot of people coming in which could cause an issue.

Patti McLaughlin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion.

The next Election Board meeting is scheduled for September 28, 2020 at 11:30 a.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room.