

ELECTION BOARD
October 19, 2020

Present at the meeting were:

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

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

The Election Board met on Monday, October 19, 2020 at 11:30 a.m. The meeting was conducted via telephone conference and in person in the Extension Office Meeting Room. The meeting was recorded by the County.

Public Comments: Karen Anderson questioned why the meeting minutes did not contain the answers to the questions asked by the public. She asked if poll workers are trained in provisional ballots, as she stated that a gentleman in the spring was turned away from voting due to a signature mismatch. Ms. Anderson urged the use of provisional ballots and suggested that additional training or guidance on provisional ballots be provided to poll workers. Ms. Anderson asked if all ballots had been mailed out. She also questioned why the list of volunteers that are working the extra ballot drop off hours in the Veterans Memorial Building could not be provided to the Democrats. She said that people were told not to bother the staff in the Voter Registration Office and stated that the Board should look at getting additional help in the office. Ms. Anderson questioned what the zip code issue was on the ballot envelopes.

Melanie Wertz stated that she and her spouse received ballots with hand-written zip codes on the envelopes and that this was a hold up to the entire process. She also asked what the start time would be for election day, as she was in the process of recruiting volunteers.

Ann Miller asked if all ballots have been mailed out. She questioned how the information goes into the electronic system on the votespa.com website. Ms. Miller provided information on her ballot experience and what she saw on the website tracking system. She stated that she had not received a ballot and there was no processing date in the system. She expressed concern about mailing delays and questioned how many other people were experiencing this issue.

Alane Balchunas questioned if all the requested and processed mail in ballots had been mailed and asked if Wheatfield presented a problem due to processing the municipalities alphabetically. She stated she lives in Rye Township and questioned if those ballots had been mailed and when. Ms. Balchunas questioned the zip code correction issue and stated that Commissioner Eby said he was now aware of the corrections. She asked how the issue occurred. She also asked how many zip codes there were in the County and how the error was not noticed previously. Ms. Balchunas asked who were making the corrections to the envelopes. She commented that Commissioner Eby stated he would like to understand how the issue occurred, that the dilemma was taken care of, and extra workers were making the envelope corrections. Ms. Balchunas again questioned if Rye Township's ballots were mailed and when.

Ann Miller commented that there was a small slip of paper included with the ballots.

Cindy Roney stated that in her ballot she received a small, highlighted piece of paper with instructions including putting the borough/township on the back of the envelope. She commented that the instructions did not specify which envelope to put the information on and said the print and paper were both small and could be easily missed. She asked for confirmation that the information should be placed on the outer envelope and stated that the instructions were confusing. Ms. Roney said she did not remember this from the primary election.

Alane Balchunas said she also did not remember the instruction paper in the primary election and questioned if the instructions contradict the CCAP video posted on the website and ballot return literature. She said she does not understand what problems could arise from not putting the municipality on the back of the outer envelope.

Ann Miller questioned if there is a privacy issue with the information on the outside of the envelope. She asked if this is a requirement of the state. She questioned if her ballot would be counted if the back of the envelope was not completed.

Approval of the Minutes: Patti McLaughlin made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 5, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Meeting Business: Election Litigation Update: Solicitor Bunt stated that the Republican lawsuit, filed in the Federal Court, has been dismissed since the last meeting for multiple reasons. He did comment that it is possible an appeal could be pursued but it is getting late for that action. He said that the Democratic lawsuit, filed in the Commonwealth Court, but decided by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, has one issue outstanding. The Secretary of the Department of State recently filed a petition as to whether counties are required to do any signature analysis. He said this is not firmly decided, but other than that issue the State lawsuit has been decided. Solicitor Bunt did state that an appeal could also be pursued on the lawsuit, but the timeframe for an appeal is getting late.

In-Person Ballot Delivery: Commissioner Eby commented that discussion needed to occur regarding streamlining the work in the Voter Registration/Elections Office. He questioned if there could possibly be a quick way for voters to drop off a ballot without utilizing the office, thus alleviating the congestion in the small office. Commissioner Watson stated that the extended ballot drop off hours went well earlier in the day and suggested putting the ballot box in the hallway of the Veterans Memorial Building for the day, under the surveillance cameras. She also recommended a sign at the box indicating that ballots could be deposited. Commissioner Eby questioned how incomplete ballots would be addressed. Commissioner Watson stated that the box would need to be manned then. Patti McLaughlin commented that a sign at the box could contain verbiage instructing individuals to check their ballot envelope to ensure it is complete. Commissioner Eby wanted to discuss the possibility of having the box manned. Commissioner Watson stated that if the box was manned then you would need two individuals to man it from each political party and a cost could be incurred. Patti McLaughlin stated that when an individual mails a ballot they are not asked if the outer envelope is complete. Further discussion continued regarding having individuals stationed at the ballot box. Commissioner Eby stated that the individuals that were mailing out ballots could be used to staff the ballot box, but he would need to check with the Director of Voter Registration/Election. Karen Anderson commented that two individuals from each political party would not necessarily

be needed during regular work hours. She stated that a single County employee would be sufficient during the day. Commissioner Eby wanted to try manning the ballot drop box with one employee and stated that the temporary employees used for ballot mailing could possibly be used. Additional conversation occurred regarding which employees could be utilized for the ballot box.

Election Day Start Time: Commissioner Eby stated that legally the County could not start before 7:00 a.m. and ballot opening would be the first step. He commented that an envelope opening machine would be utilized to expedite the process. Commissioner Watson said that the ballots could be opened by precinct and then that precinct would be assigned to certain volunteers who would process the ballots through to the end. She suggested that ballot opening start at 7:00 a.m. and a member of each political party could observe this process. Commissioner Watson recommended that at approximately 7:30 a.m. the other volunteers arrive to start the processing of the ballots that had been opened. She suggested that five volunteers from each political party be present on election day to help process. Commissioner Watson stated that these volunteers would be chosen by the County chairs who would set the schedules for the volunteers for the day. Patti McLaughlin stated that Bonnie Delancey would be in contact with the chairs to get the volunteers and only five volunteers from each party, at a time should be processing ballots. The Board agreed that one volunteer from each political party should be present at 7:00 a.m. to observe the opening of ballots and then the remainder of the volunteers arrive at 7:30 a.m. to start processing. Also, the Board confirmed that the party chairs may schedule shifts of volunteers through the day to cover the hours, as long as there are five volunteers from each party present.

Melanie Wertz said she was doing the volunteer schedule for the Democrats, but due to the confusion and the request for five volunteers, she would do her best at such short notice.

Bonnie Delancey, Director of Voter Registration/Elections provided examples of the slip of paper with the instructions that were discussed previously. She also presented a copy of the back of the outer ballot return envelope and an envelope with the zip code issue. Ms. Delancey stated that the envelopes with the zip code issue in question were used during the primary election and what voters are seeing now are left over envelopes from the primary. She said that labels and handwritten corrections were made on these envelopes so that the envelopes could be used. She stated that the slip of paper with instructions that are included with the ballots, are to inform the voter. Ms. Delancey commented that the addition of the township/borough information is for internal processing purposes only and is not required. She said that the ballot applications are scanned into the SURE system and then labels can be printed. When labels are printed that date is captured in the system as the mail date, but it is inaccurate. She said many individuals saw a mail date on the state website of October 8th, but this was the date that the labels for the ballot envelopes were printed. Ms. Delancey stated that when the ballots are returned, the envelope barcode is scanned and that date is then shown on the state website as the received date. She confirmed that the mail date showing on the state website is not correct and again reiterated that it is the date the return label was printed. Ms. Delancey said she is explaining the provisional ballot process with the poll workers. She confirmed that all ballots had been mailed as of Saturday or Monday morning.

Ann Miller questioned what date shows when a ballot is mailed on the votespa website.

Alane Balchunas asked if a trial had been done using the new envelope opening machine. She stated it was good to know that it had been tried out.

Karen Anderson commented that Solicitor Bunt had stated there is still outstanding litigation regarding signature comparison. She asked for clarification on whether it was saying we should or should not compare signatures. Ms. Anderson said the Board had voted not to compare, but wondered where that leaves the process. She asked what will happen to individuals that have signature discrepancies.

Public Comments: Ann Miller said there was confusion on how to process the ballots that were brought in due to lack of sufficient workers. She said that she had begged for a locked drop box in secure places, but that was talked down by the Commissioner. She commented that the drop box would have solved the issue. Ms. Miller stated that she cannot help if people do not know how fill out the ballot envelope. She said that in Dauphin County there are volunteers looking over the ballots and the Department of State approved that. She said it was a drive thru at the Jewish Community Center.

Karen Anderson said she understood that the Board had decided to not provide return postage for the mail in ballots. She said she did not understand why that was not approved since the State would reimburse the cost. Ms. Anderson stated that someone came to her and said they had gone to the ACLU and they said that the USPS will charge the County for any ballots sent back without postage.

Commissioner Watson stated that the Board needed to decide if the volunteers would ask if the return ballot envelopes are signed to ensure that all ballots count. Commissioner Watson made a motion to educate the volunteers that they should ask voters dropping off ballots whether the declaration on the back of the envelope was completed and ask them to complete it if necessary. Patti McLaughlin seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Patti McLaughlin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

The next Election Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 22, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. in the Extension Meeting Room.