

ELECTION BOARD
October 26, 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, Tammy Dursham, Dave Hammar, Ann Miller, Jim Ryan, Greg Wirth, and Jacob Zentichko

The Election Board met on Monday, October 26, 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 what the process and schedule would be for November 3rd for opening ballots and for the volunteers. She asked about social distancing and masking on Election Day as well.

Jim Ryan asked what the final number of registered voters was for the upcoming election. Bonnie Delancey said that an approximate number was 30,000.

Alane Balchunas questioned if that number of voters was a significant increase from previous elections.

Approval of the Minutes: Patti McLaughlin made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 19, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Meeting Business: Election Litigation Update: Solicitor Bunt stated that there was no update regarding the previous Republican and Democrat lawsuits, but a separate litigation has been instituted at the end of the previous week. The complaint was filed in the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania regarding declaratory and injunctive relief. Solicitor Bunt commented that the lawsuit was asking the Federal Court to determine it was unconstitutional for the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to extend the time for ballots to be returned by mail beyond Election Day. He said he was not aware of any action being taken on the lawsuit at the time of the meeting.

Election Day Process: Discussion occurred regarding the procedures for Election Day. Commissioner Eby stated that the number of volunteers for the day had been increased from previous years. Commissioner Eby stated that it had been decided at the last meeting that ballots would start to be opened at 7:00 a.m. on Election Day, with the remainder of the volunteers arriving at approximately 7:30 a.m. to start the rest of the processing. Commissioner Watson reiterated this schedule and suggested the Extension Office Meeting Room as a possible location for volunteers to work. Discussion continued regarding additional locations for volunteers to

work in the Veterans Memorial Building on Election Day to promote social distancing and the logistics of multiple locations. Shannon Hines was asked to reserve the Extension Office Meeting Room for Election Day.

Public Comments: Jim Ryan stated he wanted to ask in both the Commissioners' Meeting and the Election Board meeting, as there is a perception that the County's position on the prepaid postage may be inconsistent as approximately \$1.3 million of CARES Act funding was distributed to various groups. He questioned why postage funding was not accepted but other grant funding was accepted. He said that if all 30,000 voters voted by mail the cost would be less than \$20,000. Mr. Ryan also questioned why would the County not pay for postage in the future as it promotes safe voting due to the COVID pandemic and is a small amount of money in respect to the entire County budget. He also said it would uphold democracy.

Karen Anderson questioned how many ballots were mailed out. She also asked if mask wearing would be enforced on Election Day, for the people working the elections. She wanted to know how the process will be kept secure due to multiple teams working on the ballots. She asked who the other teams would consist of, outside of the volunteers appointed by the parties. Ms. Anderson commented that the list of volunteers provided by the Democrats included alternates in case additional help is needed. She also asked how the days following Election Day would be handled and if volunteers would be called on. She voiced her upset about the County not participating in prepaid postage, and said she considered it a poll tax. Ms. Anderson stated that young people contacted her, as they were not aware of how to send letters and get stamps. She said the reasoning that it will cause confusion, is not valid as it conveys voters are not smart. She said that comparing voting with hunting is ridiculous.

Alane Balchunas questioned how the deer/dog licenses and paying taxes can be compared to the right to vote. She stated that this is an illogical argument and the right to vote is much more important.

Ann Miller stated that she concurred with Jim Ryan and Karen Anderson's comments. She stated that the Commissioners knew the postage would be reimbursed and they should have taken the chance. She also recommended that the Department of State should have been contacted to see how the reimbursement would work and also the Board should have reached out to other counties. Ms. Miller commented that any ballot coming in without postage will still be received at the County, and the County will be responsible for paying the postage. She urged the Board to consider prepaid postage for the next election, as voting is a right.

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

The next Election Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 29, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. in the Extension Meeting Room.