

ELECTION BOARD
May 10, 2021

Present at the meeting were:

Brian Allen
Gary Eby
Brenda Watson
Bill Bunt
Bonnie Delancey
Shannon Hines

Present from the Public via Phone/In Person: Karen Anderson, Alane Balchunas, Frank Campbell, Donna Cohick, Kim McMullen, Wes Smith, and Melanie Wertz

The Election Board met on Monday, May 10, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. The meeting was conducted via WebEx video/telephone conference and in person in the Commissioners' Meeting Room. The meeting was recorded by the County.

Commissioner Allen turned the meeting over to Solicitor Bunt as the Election Board had not previously met since the previous election and a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary of the Board needed to be selected.

Solicitor Bunt requested nominations for Chair of the Election Board. Commissioner Allen made a motion to nominate Brenda Watson as Chair of the Perry County Board of Elections. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Solicitor Bunt requested nominations for Vice-Chair of the Election Board. Commissioner Allen made a motion to nominate Gary R. Eby as Vice-Chair of the Perry County Board of Elections. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. Commissioner Eby abstained. Motion carried.

Solicitor Bunt requested nominations for Secretary of the Election Board. Commissioner Eby made a motion to nominate Brian Allen 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 Watson as Chair.

Public Comments: Karen Anderson commented that she was hoping by the end of the meeting, she would have a clear picture on how the election will work this year.

Approval of the Minutes: Commissioner Eby made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 2, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Allen seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Meeting Business: Election Communications with the Department of State: Solicitor Bunt said that the Department of State had provided the following information:

- Absentee and mail-in ballots must be received by 8:00 p.m. on May 18th and the deadline was not extended like the previous year

- UMOVA and military ballots must be received by May 25th at 5:00 p.m. and canvassing would begin on May 26th with the start time to be determined by the County

Solicitor Bunt commented that the County had asked the following two questions to the Department of State regarding the absentee and mail-in ballot envelopes and received responses:

- If a ballot envelope is not signed what should the County do? The Department of State advised that the envelope must be signed and if it is not signed, it should not be counted.
- If the ballot envelope does not have a date on it or the date is clearly incorrect, should the ballot be counted? Solicitor Bunt commented that last year, the date line did not specify “today’s date” and some voters wrote their date of birth on the line. The ballot envelope has been revised since last year’s election to say “today’s date” at the date line. The Department of State responded that the date issue is still being reviewed by legal counsel and they would provide further guidance to the County with an answer on which date (today’s date, date of birth) should be accepted on the ballot envelope.

Solicitor Bunt said there are several items that need to be discussed during the meeting, to include: the time ballot envelopes will be opened, the time the ballots will start to be processed, the contact person from each local political party the Director of Elections should communicate with regarding election procedures, and what documentation is required for party observers on Election Day.

Commissioner Allen made a motion to follow the Department of State’s guidance that ballot envelopes must be signed in order to be counted. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Watson recommended holding off on making a decision on envelope dates and provide the Department of State time to respond to the question the County asked.

Election Day Process: Commissioner Eby said that due to the projected small volume of mail-in and absentee ballots, he recommended a start time of 7:30 a.m. to open the ballot envelopes, and then start to process them at 8:00 a.m.

Commissioner Eby made a motion to start, no earlier than 7:30 a.m., opening ballot envelopes and start processing ballots not before 8:00 a.m. Commissioner Allen seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Bonnie Delancey, Director of Elections, stated that prior to opening ballot envelopes, the envelopes and the ballot applications need to be separated. She stated that this needed to occur prior to Election Day. Discussion occurred regarding the logistics of this process and whether the process of separating the two items would be open to the public for observation.

Commissioner Allen made a motion to proceed with the separation of the ballot envelope from the applications and that the process would be open to the public on Monday, May 17th. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Party Communication: Discussion occurred regarding who the Director of Elections should communicate with from each local political party regarding election information. Solicitor Bunt stated the former Election Boards had instructed the Director of Elections to communicate with

the party chairs, but guidance should be provided on how the current Board would like the communication to happen.

Commissioner Allen made a motion that the Director of Elections should communicate all election information to the party chairman of each local political party. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Election Day Assistance: A discussion occurred regarding the volunteers needed for the upcoming Election Day. Bonnie Delancey stated that during the day the work could be handled by internal County employees and no outside volunteers would be needed.

Election Night Assistance: Bonnie Delancey recommended that on Election Night, three representatives from each party be requested to provide assistance if needed.

Commissioner Eby made a motion, based on the Director of Elections recommendations, to use in house staff during the daytime hours on election day, and on election night a maximum of three volunteers from each party be in attendance to provide assistance. Commissioner Allen seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Bonnie Delancey would reach out to each party chair regarding the assistance needed during the upcoming election.

Observers on Election Day: Solicitor Bunt stated that during last year's election, the official observers provided documentation verifying they were authorized to observe the election day process. He commented that the observer does not need to be the same person all day long and recommended one observer from each political party be permitted on election day. A discussion occurred regarding the observer process. Karen Anderson commented that the one official observer last year had a letter from the State party, but election laws states that each candidate may have a representative present on election day with a letter.

Commissioner Eby made a motion that anyone can observe the application/envelope separation process on May 17th, and on Election Day, official observers representing a party, to include the state, county, or candidate level, must provide documentation from the party or candidate to be in attendance. Commissioner Allen seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Future Election Board Meetings: Solicitor Bunt recommended, based on Ms. Anderson's comments from a previous meeting, that the Board set a meeting date for the fall election. The Board discussed different dates and asked for feedback from those participating in the meeting.

Commissioner Allen made a motion to scheduled the first fall meeting on September 27 at 11:00 a.m. and the second meeting on October 18 at 11:00 a.m. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Public Comments: Kim McMullen asked for further explanation on the signature process on the ballot envelopes.

Melanie Wertz stated that she felt the discussion regarding communicating with the party chair person was directed at her. She provided information on how the past election process was handled and how the current election was handled. Ms. Wertz questioned what happens if the party chair is unavailable and defers communications to the vice chair.

A discussion occurred regarding a process if the party chair is not available to pass along communications to the party members and how this process should be handled. The group talked about one person being the contact for each party, instead of communicating with multiple members of each party.

Commissioner Eby made a motion that the political party chair may delegate the communication duties to another person, via a written or email notification, for the entire election process. Commissioner Allen seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Melanie Wertz stated that she would be forwarding a previous email to the Commissioners from the Democratic party chair, stating that she should be the contact person for election day volunteers.

Karen Anderson asked where the mail-in and absentee ballot canvassing would take place on election day. Ms. Anderson was informed that all canvassing of mail-in ballots would occur in the Veterans Memorial Building.

Commissioner Allen made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.