

ELECTION BOARD

April 3, 2023

Present at the meeting were:

Larry Reisinger
Shannon Hines
David Lanza
Bill Bunt
Sarah Geesaman

Present from the Public via Phone/In Person: Dana Cotton, Crystal Failor, Dave Pundock, and Wes Smith

The Election Board met on Monday, April 3, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. The meeting was conducted virtually via WebEx video/telephone conference and in person in the Commissioners' Conference Room. The meeting was recorded by the County.

Public Comments: None

Approval of the Minutes: David Lanza made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 6, 2023 meeting. Shannon Hines seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Meeting Business: Sarah Geesaman, Director of Election/Voter Registration stated that the Department of State had provided an informational insert on how to correctly vote by mail and she would like to include the insert in all mail-in and absentee ballots that are going out. David Lanza asked for clarification on who would receive the insert and the process that would be used. Shannon Hines made a motion to include the instructional insert in mail-in and absentee ballots. Commissioner Reisinger seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Ms. Geesaman provided information on the Department of State's Designated Agent Form. She said that whenever a voter comes into the office to pick up a mail-in or absentee ballot for someone other than themselves, they need to provide the completed form in order to get a ballot for another person. The Board discussed who would utilize the form and in what circumstances it would be used. Further discussion also occurred regarding the form being used by individuals returning a ballot for another voter. David Lanza made a motion to authorize usage of the Department of State's Designated Agent form when providing more than one ballot to a voter. Shannon Hines seconded the motion. The Board discussed retention of the form. David Lanza clarified the motion to include that the form be retained per the law. All agreed. Motion carried.

Ms. Geesaman said she had found out that special provisional ballots do not need to be printed and said the same ballots that are used for everything else may be used. She recommended that if a voter at a polling location needs a provisional ballot the poll workers provide a regular ballot and stamp it provisional. She said they will still utilize the same process to submit the provisional ballot, except that the actual ballot will have a provisional stamp instead of having different colored ballots printed for this use. Ms. Geesaman stated that this process will save on ballot printing costs. Solicitor Bunt and Ms. Geesaman went through the process a poll worker would use if a voter would need a provisional ballot. Commissioner Reisinger said he liked that the previous method utilized provisional ballots that were printed on different colored paper. Solicitor Bunt said that in previous elections provisional ballot envelopes were not completed

properly which resulted in ballots not being counted. Shannon Hines asked what the cost savings would be by not printing special provisional ballots. The Board further discussed how the provisional ballot voting process works. Solicitor Bunt stated that the Board would also need to decide how to handle a provisional ballot that does not have a stamp, if they choose to go with Ms. Geesaman's recommendation. Ms. Geesaman stated that during the last election approximately 300 color coded provisional ballots were ordered, and only about 25 were used. Shannon Hines made a motion to stamp the regular ballots "provisional" and utilize them for provisional voting purposes with training on the new process provided to the Judges of Election. Commissioner Reisinger seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Sarah Geesaman stated that Judge of Election training would take place on April 4 at 9:00 a.m. and April 5 at 6:30 p.m. in the Freedom Building. She said that they will be going through election day processes from start to finish and each precinct would be receiving a binder with information.

Ms. Geesaman said the number of ballots needed for the upcoming election would be going to the printer soon and paper size would also be decided.

Sarah Geesaman said that she is trying to fill some inspector vacancies and the Act 88 grant report had been submitted and clarification on expenditures had been requested by DCED.

Ms. Geesaman asked the Board to consider posting the specimen ballots on the county website for the public to view. She said two democratic specimen ballots and two specimen republican ballots are provided in each poll kit to be displayed at the polling locations. Ms. Geesaman said many counties already do this and her office gets inundated with phone calls asking for information on the ballot prior to election day. Shannon Hines asked for confirmation that the specimen ballots are clearly noted as specimens and cannot be read by a ballot scanner. Sarah Geesaman confirmed that specimen ballots cannot be scanned. David Lanza made a motion that specimen ballots be posted on the County website. Shannon Hines seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Sarah Geesaman stated that to date her office had received 1,471 mail-in ballot applications and 66 absentee ballot applications.

Ms. Geesaman said that Dana Cotton had been in touch to let her know that Kirk Hench and Barb Hench would be observers during the L&A testing on April 11 and 12.

Solicitor Bunt stated that the Commonwealth Court has said they do not have the proper jurisdiction on curing ballots but did say that whether a county cures or not, they will probably be sued by one of the political parties. He stated that Perry County's policy has been that once a ballot is cast it cannot be cured. Shannon Hines clarified that if a voter asks the election staff to review their ballot envelope the election staff will still do that and alert the voter of any issues prior to the ballot being cast. David Lanza made a motion to continue the policy of not curing ballots once they are received by the Election Office. Shannon Hines seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Shannon Hines said that the next Election Board meeting would be held on April 17th at 11:00 a.m.

David Lanza questioned the rules and procedures for the drop boxes. He said he understands that there are two ballot drop boxes, one in the Veterans Memorial Building and one in the Freedom available during regular business hours. Sarah Geesaman said that they have offered extended ballot drop off hours and staff have stayed later to facilitate this. Mr. Lanza said that unless a voter provides a designated agent form, they can only drop off their own ballot. He questioned what safeguards there are to stop someone from dropping more than one ballot in the drop box. Sarah Geesaman said that we do not control who puts a ballot in a mailbox and about 90% of ballots come through the mail. Solicitor Bunt stated that historically an employee has not been assigned to sit and watch the drop box. David Lanza questioned the security cameras that view the ballot drop box areas. Solicitor Bunt requested that questions regarding security cameras and systems in the building should be discussed in an Executive Session.

Public Comments: Dana Cotton stated that her understanding is that the designated agent form can be used by anyone who meets ADA requirements and anyone over the age of 65. She also said that the form is only good for a specific election and a new designated agent form must be completed for the next election. Ms. Cotton asked if the Judge of Election would be responsible for stamping the ballot provisional. She also asked what would happen if a ballot was not stamped “provisional.” She said that in previous elections if someone was not in the sign in book at a polling location, poll workers were told to call the Election Office. She said that these individuals should be provided a provisional ballot and said this did not always occur when she was a watcher. Ms. Cotton said that a number of ballots were rejected during the previous election due to missing a date etc. and noted that many of these voters were senior citizens and Republicans. She asked the Board to reconsider their stance on curing ballots. She said that voters who did not receive their mail in ballot could go to the polling location. Ms. Cotton also said she recalled there was a situation in which individuals could vote if their ballot was rejected, but could not recall the details. Ms. Cotton asked if the specimen ballots would be published in the local newspaper showing the countywide and statewide candidates.

David Lanza made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:06 p.m. Shannon Hines seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.