

MINUTES

Erie County Council

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ELECTION BOARD MINUTES 4-14-22

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Rennie at 2:31pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairwoman Rennie.

Roll Call

Members present: Chairwoman Rennie, Vice-Chairman Scutella, Charlie Bayle, Andre Horton, Brian Shank, Ellen Schauerman, and Jim Winarski (via phone)
Others present: Julie Slomski, Megan Moore

Hearing of the Public

Tom Eddy, Fairview: Mr. Eddy stated he was a member of the Erie County Republican party, and a state committee member. He questioned the safety of the two ballot drop boxes located at the County Courthouse. He had concerns about ballot harvesting, and the safety measures being used to ensure all ballots were legally deposited in the boxes.

Jim Wertz, Erie: Mr. Wertz stated he was Chairman of the Erie County Democratic Party, and had not planned on speaking that day, but felt he needed to respond to the previous comments. He stated there were no instances of voter fraud by mail in the Commonwealth of PA, or anywhere else. He also stated voters are permitted to deliver others' ballots by completing a form. He explained the convenience of the drop off box for voters, and it was deemed secure by this body, particularly Councilman Shank. He stated the only documented instances of voter fraud were completed by Republicans, and before restricting access to casting a ballot at a drop box, the realities should be looked at for the last many decades.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

February 15, 2022

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Scutella, and carried 6-0.

Mr. Horton has recused himself from voting as he is an unopposed Democratic Committeeman (Ward1, District3) on the ballot.

Presentation of Election Night Reporting-Tonia Fernandez & Sebastian

Ms. Fernandez stated she was concerned about a third party being responsible for election night results. She spoke with the County IT Department, and Sebastian Comsa would present.

Comsa

Mr. Comsa stated he was tasked with updating the look of the results on the website to be more visually pleasing. He presented visuals for the Board to view. Ms. Fernandez stated she was pleased with what was updated, and with the Board's approval they would continue to build upon what was presented that day. Chairwoman Rennie thanked them, and stated it would be a great feature to have for elections.

Election Report

Ms. Slomski delivered the election report. She stated all ballot positions had been reviewed. The poll workers training was complete and successful. All Judge of Elections positions have been filled, and precinct spots are being filled. Logic and accuracy testing will take place next week. If ballots are certified by the Board, early in person voting will begin on Monday April 18, 2022. There were 15,912 mail-in ballot applications submitted up to that date. There was confirmation from Gohrs-Haines that with a certified ballot, the first batch of ballots would be in the mail at the end of next week. It was requested that Gohrs-Haines give an update on batches completed at the end of each day. The Election Office required the State Department to clarify the correct procedure for non-binary candidates on the ballot with the Democratic State Committee. The State Department replied, and suggested the local committee offer their solution as well. This action was completed with the approval of the non-binary candidate.

Possible Board Action

A. Change of Polling Location

A motion was made by Mr. Scutella, seconded by Mrs. Schauerma, and carried 6-0 to relocate the City of Erie 6th Ward 9th District polling location from New Vision Church to Sacred Heart Social Hall.

B. Possible Certification of the 2022 Erie County Primary Election Ballot

A motion was made by Mr. Shank, seconded by Mr. Scutella, and carried 6-0 to certify the 2022 ballots.

Comments and Questions from the Board

Mrs. Schauerma stated that at the CCAP conference there were lengthy discussions concerning elections and drop boxes. She further stated that while the drop boxes were not illegal, it is illegal for someone else to drop off another person's ballot without the proper paperwork; there is no way to know if that is happening without someone being there and watching.

Chairwoman Rennie stated she understands the concerns about election security, and they work very hard to stay within the law. She affirmed that discussions last year decided the courthouse was the safest place to put the drop box. She stated it was a service they were proud of, but the office must always be vigilant about election security. She said it would be a discussion that continued, but was proud of the job the election office did, working hard at transparency, accuracy, and efficiency; their integrity is second to none.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Schauerma at 2:53 pm.