

MINUTES

Erie County Council

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BOARD OF ELECTION MEETING MINUTES 8-11-22

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Rennie at 1:04pm.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chairwoman Rennie, Vice-Chairman Scutella, Charlie Bayle, Andre Horton, Ellen Schauerman, Brian Shank, and Jim Winarski (via phone)
Others Present: Julie Slomski, Megan Moore, Solicitor Tom Talarico, Amy Swartzfager CPA, Tonia Fernandez, Jim Czerpak, and Jill Pennsy

Hearing of the Public

There were no members of the public present to speak.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Scutella, seconded by Mrs. Schauerman, and carried 7-0.

March 1, 2022

April 14, 2022

April 25, 2022

May 5, 2022

May 25, 2022

June 6, 2022

Election Report

Summarization of 2022 Primary Election.

Tonia Fernandez gave an update on the 2022 Primary Election.

2022 General Primary Overview

Tonia Fernandez, Elections Supervisor

Pre-Election

- The Elections Office processed 19,975 vote by mail applications
And we counted 16,650 voted, returned ballots.

- We also recorded that 38,592 votes cast at the polls

In total 55,394 or 31.2% of registered voters in Erie County voted in the Primary.

Election Day

- We had a very successful Election Day. Although we were faced with staffing shortages in our office, everyone involved did a remarkable job at assisting the poll workers and voters.
- The online help desk we now have available for poll workers has proven to be a valuable tool and it frees up our phone lines.
- As with most primaries we received several calls from voters that were unable to vote for their candidate of choice because they were not registered with the candidates' party. As always, I investigated the concerns and the party affiliation we have on file were accurate. Before next year's primary election I would like to conduct more voter outreach efforts to educate the public on how to verify their party affiliation and possibly request changes before the deadline and Election Day.

Provisional Ballots

188 provisional ballots were issued at the polls for various reasons. Upon discovery, during canvassing 37 of the ballots were rejected, 15 partially counted and 136 fully counted.

Recount

As you are aware the Acting Secretary of the Commonwealth issued a mandatory recount of the votes cast at the May 17th General Primary for the office of the United States Senate. Our office was able to conduct the recount in two days, without significant issues.

2% audit

In accordance with the Pennsylvania Election Code, we conducted our 2% hand count audit of the election. The results determined that our voting machines tallied the votes correctly.

Post-Election

I've created a vigorous reconciliation process to determine the accuracy of our elections.

- Our team looks at the number of voters signed in at each poll and compares it to the number of registered voters in that precinct along with the number of votes cast at that poll.
- We also confirm that all provisional ballots are accounted for and that the proper security measures have been recorded.
- These efforts help us to ensure the integrity of our poll workers and the election.
- The post-election reconciliation process has verified the accuracy of the primary election results.

Preparations for the next election

- We plan to incorporate an online help desk for voters. The link to the help desk will be posted on our website.
- I also have some great ideas for the candidates during next year's petition filing period, I plan to present these ideas a little closer to next year. For now, one election at a time.

2022 General Primary- Areas Of Opportunity

Julie Slomski, County Clerk

- Our 28 elected Constables should be working their elected precincts on Election Day. We have not utilized Constables in this official capacity since 2019. We have 26/28 of these Constables able to serve in the November General Election and will work with our Elected Constables and the PA Fraternal Order of Constables to create a plan.
- We had 781 Poll Workers total out of the 894 desired. Our Poll Worker coordinator has been working diligently to confirm interest and assess openings to assure Polls receive the coverage needed.
- We had individual concerns for various precincts in need of additional tablets and general supplies and are addressing those accordingly.
- We received feedback from our Poll Workers on additional specifics for our trainings and will be adjusting accordingly as well.
- The main concern from our poll workers was the error with the number of ballots in the ballot packs received from our printer, Gohrs/Haines. The ballot packs should have had 50 ballots in each pack and the majority had various amounts from 40 to 60 ballots in each pack. This caused confusion at the polls in the tabulation paperwork as well as the reconciliation with the Election Staff post- Election. We have discussed this with Gohrs/Haines and they ensured that they have changed their process through weighing and hand counting the packs.
- Three of our Millcreek polling locations will be moving prior to the General Election. Our Custodian, Jim Czerpak is in the process of securing new polling locations for Millcreek 13, 18, & 22.

Possible Action Items

Election Security Grant

Ms. Slomski stated that in a letter addressed to Councilman Horton from the Department of State there is \$22,215.85 for this grant. Ms. Slomski gave a description of the camera positions to be implemented as well as the card lock. She addressed the concern of Chairman Shank having closed circuit cameras for our office only, but due to the courthouse system and for transparency, it would be better to keep them with the overall system.

Mr. Shank stated it would be better for the cameras to be isolated instead of the Sheriff's office having access. Solicitor Talarico stated he thought less was better, and didn't understand the need to have any cameras in the office. He stated the Board should consider if they even want cameras in the Election office, and how to set them up so it is not accessible to the public.

Ms. Slomski noted the cameras would not focus on the workers, but on the cage for ballots and the glass results room.

Mr. Horton stated he had concerns with the cameras and the staff actions being misinterpreted, as had happened in Georgia and was now part of the January 6th hearings.

Chairwoman Rennie questioned what the restriction were on videos and request for footage. Solicitor Talarico stated if there were no cameras, there was no issue. He stated his issue was with the privacy of the workers.

Mr. Horton stated with the current climate and people's actions, and right to know requests, there should be concern.

Mrs. Schauerma n stated the integrity of our Election office is unmatched on a state level.

Chairwoman Rennie wanted to underline that there is a difference between cameras for monitoring conduct versus security, and would support this endeavor.

Mrs. Fernandez stated she is 100% for security and transparency, but does have concerns for the workers' privacy, but does want to be able to say with certainty there was no tampering with the ballots.

She recalled a time that a poll watcher tried to come into the result room while the cards were being read, and became aggressive and arguing while blocking the exit of the room.

Mrs. Schauerma n questioned the time they would run, and if they could be customized. Mr. Scutella questioned if the State was mandating the videos, and who had control of their use.

Vote: A motion was made by Mr. Shank, seconded by Mr. Bayle, and carried 6-1 (Horton).

Act 88

Ms. Slomski reported that we would be allotted approximately \$5.15 per voter, for a total of \$911,743.00. The grant will be on a fiscal calendar. She noted the requirements of the accepting the money and what it could be used for with the year.

Chairwoman Rennie stated she saw potential for this money, and had some doubts. She stated after studying it that this will put government money where it is needed, for technology that will greatly assist the office in conducting elections efficiently.

Vote: A motion was made by Mrs. Schauerma n, seconded by Mr. Scutella, and carried 6-1 (

Poll Worker Payment

Mrs. Pennsy gave a report on using Rapid Financials instead of cash for paying poll workers. The money would be transferred from CourtFunds to a pay card , eliminating having a large amount of cash in the courthouse. She stated the cost would be \$.55 per disbursement. A representative of the company gave a quick presentation to the Board about the company, a member of the FDIC. Mr. Horton questioned if there was a cost to the worker. The representative stated the different options available to the worker to receive funds without cost. Mr. Horton questioned if there were any hidden fees. The representative noted an inactivity fee after so many days, but can be reimbursed if the worker calls. Mrs. Schauerma n stated as a prior poll worker, the process of collecting a large sum of money at the end of the night to pay the other workers was dangerous and long. Mrs. Pennsy noted the poll workers would be alerted as soon as the funds are uploaded.

Vote: A motion was made by Mrs. Schauerma n, seconded by Mr. Shank, and carried 7-0.

Ballot Extractor

Ms. Slomski stated that with Act 88 money ballot extractors are a necessity. Ms. Fernandez gave a short description of the machines, and their need in the office. Mrs. Schauerman questioned the safety features of the machine. Mr. Bayle questioned if the ballots were pre-counted, and if there was a check and balance.

Vote: A motion was made by Mr. Shank, seconded by Mr. Scutella, and carried 7-0.

**Questions and Comments
from the Board**

Ms. Moore gave an update on the voter outreach services. The office has been going into the community for registrations, questions, and worker recruitment. She stated the need for poll workers, and pre-canvass workers. Mr. Shank questioned if the book-mobile could also be used for the services. Ms. Moore stated it was something that she and Director Pierce had spoken about for a future time.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:39pm.