

MINUTES

Erie County Council

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BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order

Chairman Bayle called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by Chairman Bayle.

Roll Call

Members present: Chairman Charlie Bayle, Vice Chair Jim Winarski (via Zoom), Andre Horton, Tom Spagel
Others present: Karen Chillcott, Megan Moore, Tonia Fernandez, Jill Pennsy

Hearing of the Public

There were no members of the public who wished to be heard.

New Business

Mrs. Fernandez provided an update on her focus, emphasizing her ballot-related tasks. She highlighted that the results from the primary election were carefully considered. She elaborated that the process involved certifying the winners, which then led to the creation of a candidate list. She reported that, in August, candidates from minor parties submitted the required paperwork for inclusion on the ballot. She added that there were a couple of substitute nominations discussed during the process. She stated that an auditor position for a two-year term in Gerard Township, originally omitted from the primary, was successfully added to the ballot. She explained that it provided an opportunity for political parties to nominate a candidate. She mentioned that a Republican candidate had been officially confirmed for this position, thereby completing the candidate list.

Mr. Horton inquired about the deadline for candidates to announce their withdrawal from the ballot.

Mrs. Fernandez informed him that the last date for withdrawal, applicable to candidates nominated during the primary, was August 24th.

Mr. Horton sought clarification regarding whether the same withdrawal date applied to minor parties that did not hold a primary.

Mrs. Fernandez stated that there was a seven-day window for challenging petitions after August 1st, which marked the final day for those minor parties to submit their paperwork. She expressed uncertainty about the exact withdrawal date for such candidates.

Mr. Horton explained that he had raised his previous question because of the current state of elections, noting that it was an unusual time. He articulated that he had previously taken an oath to the flag, acknowledging that the nation did not always consistently meet the high aspirations it set for all its citizens. He reflected on the significance of being an American and the importance of the pledge of allegiance. He expressed his ongoing dedication to the ideals of the nation and its potential, despite the challenges it faced. He expressed his commitment to understanding the election process fully, emphasizing the importance of being informed, considering his role on the Board.

Mrs. Fernandez assured him that she would provide him with the accurate date once she had verified the correct answer. She continued to explain that they had worked carefully on creating the list of candidates and putting together the ballot. She assured them that they had thoroughly reviewed the ballots and were confident in their accuracy and reliability, as they were presenting them to the Board and the Clerk of Elections.

Mr. Bayle stated that they had the opportunity to review the ballots. He emphasized taking as much time as they needed to thoroughly inspect the ballots and provide a comprehensive list. He inquired if Mr. Winarski had also had a chance to review them.

Mr. Winarski expressed his trust in the experts and confirmed that everything appeared to be in good order from his perspective.

Mr. Horton interjected, stating that experts visited their office daily, but their advice often went unheard.

Mr. Bayle responded by emphasizing their commitment to listening to their staff and maintaining high integrity in the office's processes. He mentioned that their attention to detail had made them a model for others to follow.

Mr. Spagel stated that he found it amusing that some people claimed things were not transparent when he felt that they have a very transparent process.

Mrs. Fernandez provided an update on poll worker training, expressing satisfaction with the progress. She mentioned that the introduction of electronic poll books had initially faced some resistance but noted that most workers became enthusiastic after training. She also thanked the Board for the raise in training pay.

Mr. Spagel recalled an incident where a worker was initially hesitant to participate due to the \$20 compensation, but when it was increased to \$30, she was delighted.

Mr. Bayle acknowledged the challenge of fully compensating the workers for

their true worth but stressed the significance of offering additional benefits whenever possible as a gesture of appreciation for their commitment and contributions.

Mrs. Fernandez provided a positive assessment of the workers' performance, with recognition for Sue Sheffield and Jim Czerpak. She emphasized the excellent work carried out by these individuals. She mentioned that she had the opportunity to collaborate with them in the mornings to assist with poll worker registration and ensure the smooth operation of the processes, and she commended their exceptional performance.

Mr. Bayle inquired about any feedback or concerns regarding the poll pads.

Mrs. Fernandez shared that one individual had expressed concerns about the security of the poll pads, fearing they could be vulnerable to hacking. She reassured the person concerned that the poll pads were not connected to the internet and that the information was loaded onto them from the office, making them secure.

Mr. Horton emphasized that one of the reasons they were considered the gold standard was their commitment to consistency. He underlined that they have maintained that consistency both before and after the introduction of new machines, emphasizing their commitment to not running anything less than a secure and reliable system.

Mrs. Fernandez informed the Board about the upcoming plan, scheduled for Wednesday, which involved commencing logic and accuracy testing. She extended an invitation for everyone to visit the office. She explained that the testing procedure would entail using a set of ballots with predetermined results, with bubbles already marked through central scanners. She added that a report would be generated to ensure that the results align with expectations, essentially testing each contest and bubble for proper functionality.

Mrs. Chillcot shared her observations of the smooth operations performed by their staff. She expressed her gratitude for the effective training and the seamless functioning of operations, both at the Convention Center and at their current location. She also mentioned the encouraging sight of people attending training sessions, highlighting the diverse cross-section of attendees and the sheer number of individuals participating. She stated that she found the engagement and dedication of Erie County residents to be highly inspiring and encouraging. Mr. Bayle inquired about the progress in compensating the workers, addressing his question to Mrs. Pennsy.

Mrs. Pennsy provided an update on the payment process, indicating that it was progressing well. She mentioned that they had been successfully making payments, with approximately half of the payments completed by the time the training had concluded. She acknowledged that there had been instances where

payment cards were lost and needed to be reissued, but overall, the process had been running smoothly.

Mr. Bayle reflected on their past experiences and commented that the current payment process was more efficient than their initial attempts. He recalled the initial challenge when he was tasked with processing payment cards and how they had worked through those difficulties.

Mr. Horton praised Mr. Bayle's efforts and acknowledged the challenges they faced, especially on election night. He stressed the importance of crisis management, emphasizing the need to promptly provide accurate information. He also expressed concern about the potential influx of people seeking information and encouraged patience, as they already had a significant number of people in the building, and adding more could complicate the situation further.

2023 General Election Ballot Approval

Mr. Horton made a motion to accept the ballot as it was, seconded by Mr. Spagel, and passed 4-0.

Adjournment

Mr. Horton made a motion to adjourn the meeting.