

MINUTES

Erie County Council

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REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance Chairman Bayle called the meeting to order and recited The Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call Members present: Chairman Bayle, Vice Chair Winarski (via Zoom), Andre Horton (via Zoom), Thomas Spagel (via Zoom, arrived after roll call)

Others present: Karen Chillcott, Megan Moore, Tonia Fernandez

Hearing of the Public Freda Tepfer, Erie: Ms. Tepfer expressed her gratitude to the Elections department for their efforts in streamlining the voting process. She shared her positive experience as a Judge of Elections, noting that she was able to leave her polling place by 8:39pm and the Courthouse by 9:00pm, a significant improvement from prior years when it took until after 10:00pm to leave the building. She credited the efficient setup for allowing easier delegation of responsibilities to other poll workers. She then referred to a recent court decision by Judge Susan Paradise Baxter regarding curing ballots. She expressed a broader wish for a future where the need to cure ballots, especially those without dates or with incorrect dates, could be eliminated. She stated that she looked forward to a more streamlined and hassle-free voting process in the future.

Mary Rennie, Erie: Mrs. Rennie, former Chair of the Board of Elections, emphasized the paramount importance of election integrity. She took pride in the opportunity provided by the Commonwealth in 2022 to receive Election Integrity funds, which were wisely invested in the infrastructure of elections for long-term benefits. She echoed Mrs. Tepfer's sentiments that it was a well-spent investment. She expressed concern about the potential negative impact of a lack of attention to detail. She mentioned the posting of Election results on the County webpage as "Election 2024," raising questions about how such a simple matter could go wrong. She raised her concern about a major compromise in the integrity of the Board. She highlighted an instance where someone who did not qualify for an emergency ballot was allowed to vote with one, and that individual, who was also on the ballot and the Chair of County Council, openly bragged about it. She underscored the seriousness of this issue, emphasizing that fabricating information on an official Election document constituted a clear violation of the law. She made it clear that her remarks were not a reflection on the new County Clerk, absolving her of responsibility for the issue. She pointed to a systemic problem of ignoring issues within the Elections Department and the

Board of Elections, which could potentially worsen problems rather than to address them.

Election Report

Mrs. Fernandez reported on the success of the 2023 Municipal Election. She shared key statistics, stating that the Voter Registration Office processed 23,042 mail ballot applications, with 19,042 voted and returned. Additionally, 42,579 votes were cast at the polls on Election Day, totaling a voter participation rate of 35.77%. She highlighted the efficiency of Election Day, noting the utilization of electronic poll books at every polling location in Erie County. She noted that despite minor issues like printing errors, the presence of a representative from KNOWiNK, the manufacturer of the poll pads, facilitated quick troubleshooting. She stated that the electronic poll pads allowed for the recording of voter participation in record time, a significant improvement from the previous month-long process. She expressed gratitude to the Board of Elections for the acquisition of the mail sorter and electronic poll books, emphasizing their positive impact on election integrity and efficiency. She emphasized that the results presented to the Board were true and accurate.

Ms. Chillcott stated that the election team conducted two recounts for the recent election - one for Washington Township Council and another for Lawrence Park. She noted that in the recount for the Washington Township position, nearly 23,000 ballots were scanned and the results remained unchanged, with only a single vote differing. In the Lawrence Park race, a recount of all the ballots revealed a minor discrepancy of two write-ins and a slight variation in only a couple of votes. She expressed satisfaction with the technology used and commended the Election team for their seamless execution of the recount process, emphasizing the reliability of the procedures in place.

Chairman Bayle commended the Election team. He expressed confidence in the team's ability to process votes and noted that Erie County residents should similarly have complete confidence in the electoral process. He conveyed his gratitude to Erie County and its residents.

Mr. Winarski acknowledged that Election night went smoothly, making the entire process much simpler. He expressed appreciation for the efficiency, noting that it was evident in the expressions of the poll workers when they came in after their long day. He extended kudos to the team and specifically mentioned Mrs. Fernandez and Ms. Chillcott, recognizing their work throughout the entire process, not just on Election night. He emphasized that their efforts did not go unnoticed and thanked them both.

Mr. Spagel inquired about any issues with the contested ballots that were hand-selected at the end of the evening.

Mr. Bayle responded that everything had been counted appropriately, and there were no issues.

Mr. Spagel expressed his gratitude and appreciated everyone's great effort and

effective work.

Mr. Bayle acknowledged the successful election night, but cautioned against resting on their laurels. He anticipated that there might still be some processes that would need refinement. He mentioned that it was Ms. Chillcott's first time at the helm, and he acknowledged the importance of her witnessing the process firsthand. He encouraged Ms. Chillcott to consider ways to enhance and contribute to the process. He anticipated future discussions on how to further improve the electoral process and stated a need for the continuous pursuit of perfection and ongoing efforts to achieve excellence.

Certification of Results

Ms. Chillcott provided the Election results for state races:

- Justice of the Supreme Court: Carolyn Carluccio received 30,348 votes.
- Judge of the Superior Court: Jill Beck received 33,014 votes.
- Judge of the Superior Court: Tamika Lane received 26,838 votes.
- Judge of the Commonwealth Court: Matthew Wolf received 32,134 votes.
- Judge of the Court of Common Pleas: Peter Sala received 35,341 votes.

A motion to certify the election results was made by Horton, seconded by Spagel, and passed 4-0.

Adjournment

Mr. Horton made a motion to adjourn the meeting.