



GLYNN COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS AND REGISTRATION

Meeting, Tuesday April 13, 2021

The April meeting of the Board of Elections and Registration was called to order by Chairman Gibson at 2:00 p.m.

Present were Patricia Gibson, Chairman; Patricia Featherstone, Vice Chairman; Keith Rustin, Secretary; Sandy Dean, Member; Tommy Clark, Member; Christopher Channell, Supervisor; Christina Redden, Assistant Supervisor; Michelle Grovner; Gail Reid; Max Hess; and Lavonia Clark

Public Comment

Ms. Grovner inquired about changes related to SB202 and the Board's plans to implement the new laws. Board members replied this topic would be addressed in this meeting. Ms. Grovner was asked to follow up with any lingering questions after adjournment.

Agenda Amendment

Ms. Gibson requested to amend the agenda to include an update about the term of the Board's nonpartisan member. The Board agreed to add this item to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Dean made a motion to accept the minutes for the March 9, 2021 Meeting as read. Ms. Featherstone seconded, and the motion carried 5-0.

Old Business

Poll Worker Background Checks

Mr. Channell explained policies from other counties. Some counties perform full background checks on every poll worker, which could include a social media review. Other counties required poll workers to be registered voters, to ensure they were not serving a felony sentence, and performed a check against the national sex offender registry. The Glynn County Sheriff's Office will perform full background checks if asked, but the Board will be charged a fee for the service. The Board debated pros and cons of each option. All members agreed that poll workers should be reevaluated before each statewide election cycle. Currently, all poll workers have been verified based on active voter registrations and a clear national registry report. Mr. Channell also noted the challenge with student poll workers who are not old enough to register to vote and would likely not show up on a criminal background check. Mr. Channell recommended requiring student poll worker applications to include a letter of recommendation.

Ms. Dean made a motion for staff to develop a policy requiring all poll workers to be registered voters and clear from the national registry. Furthermore, the policy will require student poll workers to submit a letter of recommendation from a teacher, school, political party, or civic organization. This policy will be presented at the May meeting for final Board approval. Mr. Rustin seconded the motion. Ms. Featherstone inquired about requiring full background checks for poll managers due to the significant job duties performed. Ms. Gibson stated the proposed policy should be a starting point and allowed to evolve over time as it is implemented and reevaluated. The motion carried 5-0.



Term of Non Partisan Board Member

Ms. Gibson explained how, due to a past vacancy and delayed County appointment, the term of this seat expires in August instead of the May date set forth in the initial legislation. Ms. Gibson has been working with the county's legal counsel to determine if and how the next term could be corrected to the original date. The legal interpretation indicated this can only be done by an act of local legislation and the current legislative calendar will not provide enough time to pass the legislation before the new term is set to begin. Ms. Dean commented it did not take an act of legislation when the term was originally moved to August. Mr. Channell explained the original document from the County Commissioners did not specify the dates of the term, only that a four-year term would begin August. It was later determined the past appointee was entitled to a full four years. Mr. Clark commented that upon his initial appointment, he verbally agreed to serve a shorter term to end in May, but his official appointment documents did not correct the issue. Ms. Gibson recommended a work session be scheduled with the County attorney to resolve this issue and ensure that future terms will expire in May along with the partisan seats.

New Business

SB202

Mr. Channell provided a summary of the new voting laws, highlighting changes which directly impact the Board and local voters. These changes include all aspects of voting law, including absentee voting, State oversight, advanced voting hours, election calendars and timetables, provisional and challenged voters, and transparency. Ms. Featherstone commented on the volume of changes and inquired if there has been any training offered by the State. Mr. Channell responded the State is creating a set of FAQs to address the legislation and training should be expected at the conference in August. Ms. Featherstone and Mr. Clark emphasized the importance of fully understanding the new laws to ensure the Board's compliance. Some changes, such as additional advanced voting hours and increased absentee ballot security, will necessitate a \$5500 increase to the FY22 Budget. Mr. Channell has contacted the Finance Department and County Administration to discuss this revision.

There has been significant public response since the passing of the bill. The office staff has offered no comment to allow the Board time to review the law and begin implementation. Mr. Channell presented a draft of the *2021 Voter's Guide* which addresses the key changes directly impacting local voters. Once approved, office staff plans to begin voter education throughout the community in preparation for the November municipal and May 2022 primary elections. Ms. Redden commented there have been requests for interviews from most of the local media outlets. Furthermore, substantial incomplete or misinformation is spreading throughout the community, which increases the Board's challenge of boosting voter confidence.

Office Report

Mr. Channell presented the remaining FY21 Budget. The cost of the recent Special Election was \$54,972. Ms. Featherstone commented this does not include the countywide costs such as public works machine delivery, IT support, and loss of rental income for Ballard. Ms. Featherstone commented on the low turnout for the election and that this should be used as a baseline for planning elections costs. Mr. Channell stated the unexpected SPLOST election cost and legal fees incurred expenditures of \$73,021.41. These two unexpected costs will cause this fiscal year to end overbudget. Had these expenses not been incurred, the office would have been under budget. Office spending is currently frozen for the rest of the fiscal year.



Mr. Channell also presented excerpts from a recent report from *The Carter Center* on the Risk Limiting Audit and hand recount performed after the Presidential Election. Representatives from the organization were allowed special access during the event. The report made special mention of Glynn County's success during the recount due to the Board's full involvement of both parties. It complimented the bipartisanship shown by the volunteers and how the parties became stakeholders in the process. The report suggested this should become a statewide policy in future audits.

Mr. Channell reported on a recent open records request received. It is a substantial request, and a cost estimate has been submitted in response. Mr. Channell noted that recent office procedures put in place to manage open records requests seemed to have worked well in this first trial. Additional office reporting included progress on creating precinct floorplans for future reference and there is no news on the CVS building relocation or the Elections Technician position request.

Board Member Comments

Ms. Featherstone inquired about the upcoming conference in August. Mr. Channell responded there has been no new information provided from the State. Ms. Featherstone commented the deliveries for the Special Election went well and were more efficient. Ms. Gibson agreed. The policies put in place for that election will be carried forward to future elections. Ms. Featherstone requested final metrics from the Special Election.

Ms. Featherstone noted the changes related to SB202 are substantial and it may be too soon to give full press interviews. Ms. Featherstone proposed the law be broken down into separate categories to be thoroughly discussed and strategized at each upcoming meeting. Ms. Gibson commented the Board will also continue to learn as elections work continues throughout this year and 2022. Ms. Gibson further commented how important it will be to boost voter confidence by remaining positive when discussing the legislation. The Board agreed to follow Ms. Featherstone's proposed strategy. The topics of each discussion will be advertised before each meeting to give the public the opportunity to comment and ask questions. Meanwhile, voter outreach and education efforts will resume. Ms. Grovner was allowed additional comment that the public would like to hear news updates, even if that information is simply the Board will be training and plans to share information as it is learned. Ms. Dean responded the Board is eager to work with and educate the public.

Executive Session

There was no motion for Executive Session.

Adjournment

Mr. Clark made the motion to adjourn, Ms. Featherstone seconded. The motion was approved 5-0.

Patricia Gibson, Chairman

Keith Rustin, Secretary