

**Minutes of the Richland County Board of Elections and Voter Registration
Wednesday, March 11, 2015
4:00pm, County Council Chambers**

Board Members in Attendance

Ms. Marjorie Johnson, Chair
Ms. Adell Adams, Vice-Chair
Ms. Sylvia Holley
Mr. E. Peter Kennedy

Staff in Attendance

Mr. Samuel Selph, Director
Ms. Lillian McBride, Deputy Director of Elections & Voter Registration
Ms. Chelle Epps, Manager of Voter Registration
Ms. Cheryl Goodwin, Election Systems Coordinator
Ms. Turquoise Hayes, Absentee Representative
Ms. Sheron Harris, Absentee Coordinator
Ms. Yonita Simmons, Outreach Coordinator

Others in Attendance

Media

Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 4:09 p.m. It was noted that a quorum was present to allow the meeting to proceed and that the meeting had been properly posted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act requirements.

Adoption of Agenda

- A motion was made to adopt the meeting's agenda.

Approval of Board Meeting Minutes

- The Board Members reviewed the minutes from February 11, 2015. A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes. Seconded.

Board Chair Comments

- Department Relocation
 - Ms. Johnson informed the Board of the meeting with Councilman Chair Torrey Rush and Councilman Vice- Chair Greg Pearce on the Consolidation & Relocation of the office. She stated that their comments were that the county has one pot of money and that it has to be divided between different departments. She stated that it appears that DSS was top priority with the county at this time. Councilman Pearce advised the Board to contact the Richland County Delegation to discuss funding the project.

SCARE Conference

- Ms. Johnson commented on how informative the SCARE conference was and that she would like to have staff attend the conference next year.

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- Ms. Johnson also made some comments regarding her recent appearance before the Annual Legislative Delegation's Agency Affairs Hearing in reviewing its relationship with the Department of Elections and Voter Registration.
- Ms. Johnson informed the Board of the meeting with the County Administrator's office in regard to the office's legal representation. This matter will require continued discussion.
- Mr. Kennedy asked Ms. Johnson to discuss the SCARE Legislative priorities; A list of those priorities (described below) were then shared by the director Samuel Selph.

Board Discussion

Director's Comments & Updates

Absentee Voting/Early Voting:

The argument for absentee voting/early voting has been made time and time again. As you well know, there are seventeen (17) reasons different reasons one can give for Absentee/Early voting. If one of the seventeen (17) does not fit into your particular situation, you can always tell a lie! Let's consider passing legislation for Early Voting.

End Absentee Voting Three Days Before Election:

As it is currently constituted, Absentee/Early voting ends the day before the election. This presents a challenge to our many loyal and dutiful poll workers. The voters casting their ballots on the last three (3) days before the election must have this information transferred to the precinct before voting starts on Election Day. For smaller counties, this may be manageable, but for larger counties like Richland, with more than one-hundred-fifty (150) precincts, this is a challenge. Let's stop Absentee voting three (3) days before Election Day.

Eliminate Witness Signature on Absentee Ballot:

Based on everything we know most people who vote absentee are either elderly, disabled or live alone. It presents a challenge for these groups to obtain a witness signature. Just like the military absentee ballot, let's do away with witness signature. This negates the Board of Canvassers from having to reject many ballots for lack of the witness signature.

Make all Public School Polling Sites In-Service Day for Teachers:

On every Election Day, we experience things that we've never experienced before. While attending the recent SCARE Conference, I got a chance to talk to other Directors from around the state. During one of those conversations, I was informed that two counties experienced a lockdown at two school locations. These are situations that we can't predict nor control. Needless to say, voting was curtailed during this period.

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Allow Counties to Maintain Permanent Absentee Mailing List:

Again most people who vote absentee are either elderly and/or disabled. Mostly the same individuals request an application for absentee ballots each year; we can be proactive and mail them an application. Additionally, just because a person gets/requests an application does not mean they automatically get a ballot; the application must be returned to the local election office requesting the ballot for one to be issued.

Allow Local Counties' Offices to Start Opening Absentee Ballots on Monday Before Election:

In the 2014 General Election, Richland County recorded more than eighteen-thousand (18,000) absentee ballots. In the 2012 General Election, there were more than forty-thousand (40,000) absentee ballots cast. It would benefit the larger counties immensely if the opening process could begin on the Monday before Election Day.

In addition, the director also shared with the Board the staff's current preparation status for the various upcoming elections later this year. Based upon notifications received, it appears that the Forest Acres municipal election will not take place if no write-in candidate signs up to run against the incumbent.

Call for Executive Session to Discuss the Director's hiring

- A motion was made to proceed into Executive Session to discuss
- A motion was made to come out of Executive Session at 5:23pm. Seconded. Approved 4-0.
- The session involved development of goals and objectives for the Director. There was no Motion or Vote resulting from this session.

Public Comments & Questions

Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:29pm.

Recorded by: Mrs. Lillian McBride & Mr. Samuel Selph