



## BOARD OF ELECTIONS MINUTES

Thursday, January 9, 2020, 11:00 A.M.

Willowbank Office Building  
420 Holmes Street, Room 146  
Bellefonte, PA 16823

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### I. CALL TO ORDER

The public meeting of the Centre County Board of Elections was convened at 11:05 AM by Administrator Margaret Gray.

### II. PUBLIC COMMENT

In attendance were Commissioner Chair Michael Pipe, Commissioner Mark Higgins, Commissioner Steven Dershem, Administrator Margaret Gray, Solicitor Elizabeth Dupuis, Director of Elections Joyce McKinley, and Executive Office Supervisor Natalie Smith.

County personnel present included Chad Joyce and Nate Smitchko.

There were no guests present.

### III. RE-ORGANIZE

#### A. Election of Chair

*Commissioner Pipe made a motion to appoint Commissioner Dershem as Chair of the Centre County Board of Elections. Commissioner Higgins seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.*

#### B. Election of Vice-Chair

*Commissioner Higgins made a motion to appoint Commissioner Pipe as Vice Chair of the Centre County Board of Elections. Commissioner Dershem seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.*

### IV. MINUTES

Board will consider approving the Minutes of the Board of Elections Meeting held on Tuesday, November 11, 2019.

*On a motion by Commissioner Higgins, seconded by Commissioner Pipe, the Board acknowledged the meeting minutes of November 11, 2019.*

### V. NEW BUSINESS

#### A. Director of Elections Joyce McKinley reviewed Act 77 of 2019 changes to the Election Code.

The voter registration deadline is now 15 days prior to an election, rather than 30 days. With the 2020 Budget, Joyce requested a part time staff person for the

Election's Office. Commissioner Dershem asked if additional staff were needed, would they require a special certification or approval by the Department of State (DOS). Joyce explained that while there would be no requirements of the sort, the Elections' Office would need to have the Sure Portal installed on additional devices. The County currently has five devices with the Portal and there is no limit on how many requests the DOS will approve. Joyce can also request to have the Portal installed with limited access for just clerical entries.

Pennsylvania has added a new, no-excuse-needed means for voting by mail. Applications for mail-in or absentee ballots must still be received by the County no later than 5 PM on the Tuesday before the election however, the deadline to submit the ballot has been extended to 8 PM on Election Day. The County is now required to immediately process walk-in applications for both mail-in and civilian absentee ballots. A process that Joyce said was previously in place for Centre County. Commissioner Pipe and Commissioner Dershem suggested the County purchase a safe or secure storage for the ballots received. When the ballots are transported for counting, a Sheriff's Deputy should then escort them through the Willowbank Building.

Mail-in and absentee ballots must now be counted centrally at the County Board of Elections' Office. The counting may begin no earlier than the closing of the polls (8:00 PM) on Election Day and must be completed no later than the eighth day after the election. The Board discussed the process for validating, opening, and counting each ballot. New machines have been ordered from Elections Systems and Software (ES&S) to be kept at the Willowbank Building for the count. Betsy recommended that the Board consider appointing an Absentee Ballot Board and a Mail-in Ballot Board similar to the County's Provisional Ballot Board and Official Return Board. Commissioner Dershem requested a work session to draft a policy and procedure for the handling and processing of mail-in and absentee ballots.

Following the General Primary on April 28, voters will no longer have the option to vote straight party. They must individually select each candidate.

The Act alters the compensation structure for poll workers with paid compensation fixed by the Board of Elections of at least \$75 and no more than \$200. Centre County's compensation is already within this range and it was the consensus of the Board not to make any changes to the County's current structure.

The DOS is authorized to apply to the Pennsylvania Economic Development Financing Authority (PEDFA) for bond issuance up to \$90 million. The funds will be used to reimburse counties for up to 60 % of allowable costs for replacing old voting machines. Centre County purchased a new system from ES&S in 2019 that meets the current security and accessibility standards. The County's Office of Financial Management submitted the required documents for reimbursement.

Nomination petitions no longer need to be circulated by residents of the election district in which they are circulating petitions. The circulators are no longer required to have a notarized affidavit, they only need to complete a statement under penalty of perjury. Circulators also need not be registered electors in Pennsylvania or even be residents of the state.

The Act requires turnout-based printing for ballots instead of registration based printing. The County must print at least 10% more ballots than the highest number cast during the prior three elections of the same type with the only exception being the presidential election. The County is required to print at least 15% more ballots than the highest number cast in the prior three presidential elections. Joyce explained that she has a method for determining the number of ballots Centre County has printed and it meets or exceeds the requirement of the Act.

The County must also retain additional public records regarding mail-in and absentee ballots including the date an application is received, the date of approval/rejection, the date of mailing, and the date the ballot is postmarked and returned to the County. Joyce assured the Board that the current system retains all of this information and it is available by running a report.

B. Election Reporting

Chief Information and Records Officer Chad Joyce and Nate Smitchko of RBA discussed feedback for election reporting. Commissioner Pipe said the PDF reports generated and published in the November election are not user friendly like the website. Nick Barger, Director of GIS, created the website reporting feature, which failed in November. Chad explained that Nick is working on upgrades and they have asked ES&S for recommendations of best practices or avenues that the County may be missing.

In regards to the time required to generate reports, Nate explained that most time is consumed generating the precinct level files and he suggests doing those at the end of the night if possible. He reported that with the previous system, it took nine mouse clicks to generate the file and it now takes 831.

Commissioner Dershem asked how the precinct and absentee/mail-in tabulations will be merged to create a report. This will be further discussed at the requested work session. Another item to consider is how late will Election night staff work? Is there a point when they are sent home to resume operations the next day?

On January 24, a meeting is scheduled with ES&S to review the reporting process and discuss improvements that can be made.

C. Penn State University Precincts – Redistricting

In October 2019, the Board of Elections consisting of Chuck Witmer, Chair; Suzette Sims, Vice Chair, and Mary Vollero voted to move forward with efforts to consolidate precincts in the HUB (24, 25, 27, and 33). Following their direction, Betsy submitted a petition in December for redistricting to alter boundaries of election precincts in State College Borough and Penn State Campus. Judge Grine will hear the case on Wednesday, January 29 at 1:30 PM. As Chair of the Board, Commissioner Dershem will attend the hearing.

Betsy explained that if approved the change would most likely go into effect immediately. The Election's Office would then mail new voter registration cards. Commissioner Dershem suggested advertising a notice in the Collegian and

Commissioner Pipe suggested posting a notice throughout campus as well. If Judge Grine grants approval, Commissioner Dershem said the Board will need to work on a path to move forward.

D. Polling Location(s)

Joyce reported a potential need for a new polling location in Coleville while the Spring Township Bridge is under construction. The Bellefonte Chamber of Commerce has offered use of the Train Station however; Joyce needs to visit to confirm it meets the requirements.

Margaret added that Peg Hambrick attended a Board of Elections meeting last fall to express concern about Precinct #26 located at the Friends Meeting House in State College. She felt there is inadequate space and it becomes over crowded in the facility.

E. Campaign Finance Reports – Pat Romano

Commissioner candidate Pat Romano and the campaign treasurer failed to file the 30-day post primary finance report, which was due on June 20, 2019. Following direction of the previous Board of Elections, Betsy Dupuis forwarded the matter to District Attorney Bernie Cantorna. The case is assigned to an Assistant District Attorney.

VI. DISCUSSION

Commissioner Pipe made a recommendation to post the Board of Elections' meeting agendas and minutes on the Centre County website. It was the consensus of the Board to post the agendas and minutes going forward.

VII. ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tuesday, January 28, 2020 - First day to circulate and file nomination petitions.

Tuesday, February 18, 2020 - Last day to circulate and file nomination petitions.

Wednesday, February 19, 2020 - First day to circulate and file nomination petitions.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Commissioner Higgins, seconded by Commissioner Dershem, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 12:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Natalie Smith  
Executive Office Supervisor