

DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections

Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2023

Start Time: 4:40 p.m.

End Time: 5:37 p.m.

Board Attendees: Chair Dele Lowman
Vice-Chair Nancy Jester
Anthony Lewis
Susan Motter
Karli Swift

Other Attendees: Julietta Henry, Deputy Director
Terry Phillips, Deputy County Attorney
Irene Vander Els, Senior Assistant County Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Lowman called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m. Mr. Catherwood read the roll by calling each board member by name. Chair Lowman, Vice-Chair Jester, and Ms. Motter were in attendance. Mr. Lewis and Ms. Swift joined later in the meeting.

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Ms. Motter, to approve the agenda. The motion carried by a vote of 3-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Ms. Motter, to approve the minutes of the March 1 special called meeting subject to one modification. The motion carried by a vote of 3-0.

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Ms. Motter, to approve the minutes of the March 9 meeting. The motion carried by a vote of 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Catherwood read the rules for public comment:

Public comments may be made in person or submitted by sending an email of one page or less to electionspubliccmnt@dekalbcountyga.gov which must be received between 4:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. The body of your email must include your first and last name. Abusive, profane, or derogatory language will not be permitted. By submitting an email for public comment, you agree to have your name and the email broadcast on the UStream and entered into the record and minutes. The DeKalb Board of Registration and Elections reserves the right, at the DeKalb Board of Registration and Elections' sole discretion, to (1) add your email to the record/minutes without reading any of it into the broadcast or (2) read all or a portion of your email into the record/minutes.

There were no comments in person or by email.

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ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A) Director's Report

Deputy Director Henry updated the Board on department registration activities, the status of the state's GARViS registration system, scanning of election records, restructuring of the warehouse, cellular poll pads, mailing of polling place contracts, destruction of expired records, election outreach, new hires, ADA surveys of polling places, and the budget.

Vice-Chair Jester asked who makes the Poll Pad systems. The Deputy Director responded that they were made by KnowInk.

Ms. Motter explained to the public that Executive Director Smith was on vacation.

Mr. Lewis asked for more information about the outreach at Beulah Baptist Church. The Deputy Director responded that it was being held in partnership with Delta Sigma Theta sorority on Saturday, April 29 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

B) Amendment of Bylaws

Ms. Motter resumed the Board's discussion of remote attendance and electronic public comments. She outlined changes to the bylaws that had been proposed by the Law Department. She made her own suggestion to provide for "electronically submitted" comments instead of specifying email, in anticipation of the possibility of a web form.

Other items from the Law Department's recommendation included clarifying the time limit for the reading of electronic comments and the incorporation of the Open Meetings Act.

Ms. Swift asked if there should be procedures for remote attendance. Chair Lowman responded that the Board could work with the Director to document those procedures, but that she didn't think they needed to be expressed in the bylaws. Ms. Motter agreed.

Chair Lowman asked if the Board could vote on the bylaws at the next meeting. Ms. Vander Els responded that they could.

C) Legislative Update

Ms. Vander Els reported on SB 129, HB 254, HB 572, and SB 222, all of which were passed and awaiting the Governor's signature.

Ms. Swift asked if SB 222's ban on election funding to counties was made retroactive. Ms. Vander Els responded that it was not.

In relation to HB 572, Chair Lowman asked who the law considered to be the "superintendent." Ms. Vander Els responded that in DeKalb County it was the Board of Registration and Elections. The Chair asked if that remained true for municipal elections. Ms. Vander Els responded that in that case it would refer to the municipal superintendent, but there could be relevant details in each municipality's Intergovernmental Agreement with the county.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

A) Legislative Action

Chair Lowman reintroduced the suggestion of communicating legislative ideas to the state and asked for the Board's input.

Vice-Chair Jester asked if there was a specific legislative proposal. The Chair responded that there was not. The Vice-Chair stated that there may be technical issues that the Board could unanimously agree on, but that she would like to take more time to think about the issues and see a concrete proposal. She also commented that in some cases, items could be brought through the Board of Commissioners as the department's source of funding.

Ms. Swift raised the possibility of engaging the county's lobbyist or hiring another lobbyist. Ms. Motter and Mr. Lewis agreed with the Vice-Chair and Ms. Swift.

Vice-Chair Jester opposed engaging the county's lobbyist, stating that this was a political appointment and that she would prefer to have a separate lobbyist for the Board.

Chair Lowman commented that the item had begun as an effort to communicate the Board's priorities to the County Board of Commissioners in an attempt to inform their legislative agenda. She stated that it was a common practice in her experience with local governments for departmental subject matter experts to do this and did not agree with the characterization of that process as lobbying. She believed that the Board had reached a consensus on identifying what some relevant areas might be to address and who the appropriate recipient might be of the Board's feedback: in some cases the General Assembly, and in other cases the Board of Commissioners or the State Elections Board.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Lewis apologized for having been late, stating that there had been accidents on the road.

Ms. Motter commented that a delegation from DeKalb County had visited Cobb County to see their election space and their voting hubs. She had been impressed with their setup and hoped that DeKalb could have the funding to do something similar.

Vice-Chair Jester had no comments.

Ms. Swift echoed Mr. Lewis's apology.

Chair Lowman agreed with Ms. Motter and commented that she had been impressed by their warehouse. She thanked the Law Department for their help with the bylaws.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Swift, to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m.