

DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections

Special Called Meeting Minutes

July 16, 2020

*via zoom platform

Start Time: 4:00 p.m.

End Time: 4:30 p.m.

Board Attendees: Chair Samuel Tillman
Vice-Chair Baoky Vu
Dele Lowman Smith
Anthony Lewis
Susan Motter

Other Attendees: Erica Hamilton, Director
Viviane Ernestes, County Attorney
Terry Phillips, Deputy County Attorney
Irene Vander Els, Assistant County Attorney
Shelley Momo, Assistant County Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Tillman called the meeting to order. Mr. Tillman asked if a Board member has any changes to make to the agenda. Hearing none, the agenda is approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Tillman read the rules for public comment.

Public comment may be submitted by sending an email of one page or less to Electionspubliccmnt@dekalbcountyga.gov which must be received between 4:00 PM and 5:00 PM on the day of the meeting. The body of your email must include your first and last name, followed by your address. Abusive, profane, or derogatory language will not be permitted. By submitting an email for public comment, you agree to have your name, address 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. The Public Comments received are attached and hereby incorporated into these minutes by reference. See attachment(s).

OLD BUSINESS

A) Discussion and Adoption of a Resolution for DeKalb County VRE Implementation Plan

Ms. Hamilton provided a strategic staffing plan for how the department can partner with the National Vote At Home Institute and the Center for Technology and Civic Life to support absentee ballot operations and poll worker training.

Motion by Ms. Smith and seconded by Mr. Vu to approve the hiring of an external consulting entity to plan, scale up and manage the end-to-end vote by mail process and operations for the November 3, 2020 General Election, in cooperation with the Director, and an appropriate resource ask from the County Commission. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

B) August Board Meeting

Ms. Hamilton proposed the August board meeting be rescheduled for Friday, August 21. Motion by Mr. Vu and seconded by Ms. Smith to scheduled for August 21. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Ms. Smith and seconded by Mr. Tillman to recess for executive session to discuss personnel. Motion by Mr. Lewis and seconded by Ms. Smith to resume the special called meeting. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Tillman urged all elected officials to use their social media platforms to reach out to constituents to encourage them to vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Smith and seconded by Mr. Lewis to adjourn. This meeting is adjourned.

Public Comment

Public Comment #1

Dear Board of Registration and Elections,

I applaud your efforts to make our elections run as smoothly as possible. Poll workers are on the front lines of those efforts, and I am asking you to consider improved protocols to further facilitate their success.

June 9, 2020 made very clear the need for sufficient, expert poll workers. COVID-19 brought about the perfect storm of challenges for poll workers:

- Experienced poll workers chose not to work in potentially dangerous environments.
- Polling place changes required poll workers to work in precincts and with people they were not familiar with.
- Last-minute hiring of poll workers limited the scope of their expertise.
- New equipment brought with it obvious challenges ranging from glitches to mistakes to lack of knowledge. This was to be expected, but it was made worse by all the other challenges.

The cliché “Two heads were better than one” applies here because it took many people with many different skill sets to resolve issues. I would expand that to “Many heads were better than one.”

The need for flexibility was in high relief on July 9, but it’s needed during all elections. There are situations not included in any job description that need addressing, so someone steps up. As a poll

worker myself, I can attest to the reality of doing what must be done, whether formally trained for it or not.

Training and job descriptions should encourage teamwork, but the current setup does the opposite. Jobs are paid according to some arbitrary understanding of their “worth,” as if Check-In Clerks—who sit all day—are working harder than Administrative Clerks on their feet all day.

I propose that training be expanded and that more be expected of each poll worker. Instead of discreet jobs, each poll worker should be adept in at least two areas. For example, Assistant Manager could be combined with Administrative Clerk and Check-In Clerk could be combined with Monitor Clerk.

Election days are long days. Workers would benefit from some variety; switching tasks throughout the day gives them a chance to refresh and re-set.

Pay should be equitable across jobs, with the exception of the Poll Manager.

If poll workers were trained and ready to take on more challenges, absences and breakdowns would not be as problematic. Because not every eventuality can be foreseen, it is more efficient if all workers feel empowered to find solutions.

Establishing new protocols should be achieved only with input from experienced poll workers. They are the boots on the ground, and they can contribute excellent ideas.

Thank you.

Susan McWethy
2852 Delcourt Dr
Decatur 30033

Public Comment #2

Dear Board of Elections members:

I think it's great you're considering hiring a consultant to help you build capacity for all the absentee ballots expected in November. Now is the time to implement most of the recommendations in the consultant's Implementation Plan. Equipment to automate inbound and outbound ballots should speed processing and reduce inquiries about voters' ballot status. When voters do inquire, IMB and solid tracking in the office should give them satisfying answers.

Many have heard about Dominion software failing to count voter marks below a certain threshold, and the problem is alarming. DeKalb needs to figure out settings and assemble vote review panels that ensure every vote is counted, and should find a consultant who can draw on expertise to address this.

However I do not think that, as some are urging, this consultant needs to be a Dominion Voting expert, per se. Whoever takes the job should be able to carry out the Implementation Plan, or come up with better solutions to problems the plan addresses. His or her tasks include acquiring automated signature verification tools and automated mailing equipment such as Quadient products. In other words, this consultant needs to be able to learn about lots of

different technologies and evaluate them impartially. Including a requirement that a consultant be a Dominion Voting expert could narrow the pool to some weak candidates. It could also look like DeKalb Elections is trying to swing the position toward a particular candidate.

Hiring elections administrators shortly before a big election will be challenge enough. Do bring in help, but don't be pushed into unnecessary constraints.

Liz Throop
612 Clifton Rd, NE
Atlanta, GA 30307

Public Comment #3

Voters need information

Yesterday, Chris Harvey, Director of Elections for the GA Secretary of State, said he had offered Ms. Hamilton help to shore up her weak points. He also said that he was "trying to deal with data." He said he had color-coded maps of DeKalb County polling places indicating how each polling place performed on various measures like opening on time, lines, machine breakdowns, etc. And when asked, he said he knew nothing about the consultants 3-month plan. I found that very hard to believe since he is in frequent communication with Ms. Hamilton.

DeKalb voters (and perhaps the BRE and the BOC) have never been privy to color-coded maps or other useful information about VRE performance like the "weak points Harvey referred to. We have anecdotal information from the media, but it is only anecdotal and doesn't give voters or BOC members any way to get a true picture of what went well and what went poorly. The June vote was approved by the BRE without a single question about election performance across the County. Voters were completely left in the dark regarding criteria or information they used to validate the election.

How do the VRE and the BRE plan to improve election performance in Black communities

Throughout Georgia and in DeKalb, Black communities are said to have been less well-served in the June 9 election in terms of access to voting sites, not enough machines, and long waits, for example. However, DeKalb County residents have no way of validating that or knowing what the County-wide picture looks like.

I would like the BRE to request these kinds of data from the VRE and require they be posted on the VRE website. If the stories of about poor election performance in majority Black precincts are true, I want to know specifically and in detail what is the VRE doing to insure that this does not happen in August. I would also like to know specifically and in detail what the BRE is doing to insure that this doesn't happen in August.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Howze
Indivisible Marching Buddies of Atlanta
3130 Westmart Lane
Tucker

Public Comment #4

The Board of Registration and Elections set a new August meeting date of August 21.

However, no time was set. This seems a shortcoming.

Jonathan Grant
3531 Evans Ridge Drive
Chamblee GA 30341

Public Comment #5

Please share a copy of the organizational chart with the public. You can easily attach a copy to the minutes of today's meeting, and I hope you will do so. This issue has been raised at the last couple of meetings.

Paula Bosworth
2845 Whitby Dr
Doraville GA 30340

Public Comment #6

I'm listening to you talk about the November election, but are you fully ready to "ace" the August 11 runoff? Please assure us that you are fully ready for this imminent election!

Paula Bosworth
2845 Whitby Dr.
Doraville GA 30340