

DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections

Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2025
Start Time: 4:37 p.m.
End Time: 6:14 p.m.

Board Attendees: Vasu Abhiraman, Vice-Chair
Anthony Lewis
Susan Motter

Other Attendees: Keisha Smith, Executive Director
Terry Phillips, Deputy County Attorney
Michael Petty, Assistant County Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice-Chair Abhiraman called the Board of Registration and Elections meeting to order at 4:37 p.m. Ms. Austin read the roll by calling each board member by name. A quorum was met.

Motion by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Motter, to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Motter, to approve the minutes of the February 13 scheduled meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Austin read the rules for public comment:

Public comments may be made in person or submitted by sending an email of one printed page or less at a minimum font of 12 to electionspubliccmnt@dekalbcountyga.gov which must be received between 35 and 5 minutes before the scheduled start of the meeting. The body of your email must include your first and last name. 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. All public comments will be limited to 2 minutes. Abusive, profane, or derogatory language, holding up signs, clapping, yelling, standing or laying in the aisles to show support for or opposition to a speaker will not be permitted, but a show of hands or quietly standing in place will be permitted to show support for or opposition to a speaker's position.

The following citizens provided public comment:

- Elizabeth Shackelford
- Liz Throop
- Janet Grant

- Michael Beach
- Cheryl Dudley
- Elizabeth Levine
- Amy Leventhal

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A) Proclamation for Odessa Ngoto

Director Smith expounded on Odessa Ngoto's contributions to the department and spoke to her warm and graceful character stating that to know Odessa was to know kindness in its purest form. Vice-Chair Abhiraman proceeded to read the proclamation from the office of CEO Lorraine Cochran-Johnson naming March 13, 2025 Odessa Minter Ngoto Day in DeKalb County. The proclamation and a memorial plaque were presented to the family of Odessa.

B) Director's Report

Director Smith reported on registration activities and statistics, and stated that the hearing for the voter challenges submitted by Bill Henderson on March 6th would be held at the next regular Board meeting. She went on to report on election activities including polling place changes and poll worker recruitment efforts for the PSC election in June, and ongoing outreach, website, training, and budget updates. She stated that the FY2025 budget of \$14.6M was approved by the Board of Commissioners at the end of February and it included the requested 6 new full-time positions. She further stated that the department had been authorized to use FY2024 surplus funds for the purchase of the mobile unit which should be ready for use in 2026.

Ms. Motter asked for further details on the remaining 2024 registration applications. Director Smith replied that those applications were escalated due to various issues and Registration Supervisor Holly Smith provided additional details. Ms. Motter requested changes to the formatting of the registration statistics on the Director's Report.

Mr. Lewis asked Director Smith to provide details on the hiring process for poll workers. Director Smith replied and proceeded to outline the complete process of poll worker recruitment and hiring.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman elaborated on the frequently used acronyms GAVREO, DDS, OLVR, and MVP for the benefit of the public.

C) Legislative Updates

Mr. Petty advised that a number of bills did not make it through crossover day, therefore the bills would not move forward, however the issues themselves could be added to other bills as the session continued. He noted that HB 215, the Voter List Integrity Act which he previously reported on, HB 480, HB 502, and SB 274 did not make it through crossover day. Mr. Petty further advised that bills to note that did make it through crossover day were: HB 355 which had to do with how the City of Doraville filled vacancies on their City Council, HB 426 which was about the nonpartisan election of certain judicial officers, and HB 397 which had some revisions including the addition of language about the Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House replacing an SEB member when the legislative session was not in session.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman reiterated that even if a bill did not make it over before crossover day, the text could still be added to bills that did make it over, as long as they relate to the same code section.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

A) Proposed Polling Place Changes Due to School Renovations

Director Smith reported that the department was notified that multiple DeKalb County schools would be unavailable for the special elections in the summer due to school renovations. She stated that 6 of the proposed changes were temporary, however, Dresden Elementary was being torn down so a permanent change was needed. The change from Dresden Elementary to John Robert Lewis Elementary would be temporary until a permanent facility was identified.

Motion by Ms. Motter, seconded by Mr. Lewis to approve the proposed polling place changes as specified by the Executive Director.

Ms. Motter stated for the public that changes to the naming convention of the precincts would have to go before the Board of Commissioners for approval.

The motion passed unanimously.

B) Profile PR Contract

Director Smith presented the scope of services for Profile Marketing and Public Relations. She stated that in November the new scope of services was advanced to the procurement department and had since cycled through various channels. She further stated that the department had been prompted to present the item to the Board for final approval and to enter into a formal contract in a form acceptable by the County Attorney. Director Smith noted that in addition to the municipal elections, the precinct boundary and polling place changes would require ample voter engagement and communications which would be led by Profile.

Motion by Ms. Motter, seconded by Mr. Lewis to approve the scope of work for Profile Marketing and Public Relations as presented by the Executive Director.

Ms. Motter asked if Profile was associated with creating the signage collateral. Director Smith replied that what touched the signage was the overall communications plan. She expounded by stating that while large signage is still outsourced, the department was building its internal capacity to print collateral with the addition of the print shop. Ms. Motter confirmed with Director Smith that funding for Profile was included in the FY2025 budget. Director Smith further stated that the communications and public affairs division was established last year and several critical items including training fell under that division. She advised that the Deputy Director, Tonza Clark, was leading essential training efforts at the time, however communications still needed just as much attention and Profile filled in the gaps.

Mr. Lewis asked for details on what had been added to this scope of work from the prior year's scope. Director Smith replied that it was more centered around communication and outreach. Deputy Director Clark stated that there would also be additional consulting and that Profile brought a level of expertise that is currently unavailable in house. Mr. Lewis asked for further details on the scope of work and the process of drafting and executing the final contract. Director Smith expounded on both topics and further discussion ensued.

Ms. Motter withdrew her previous motion and made a substitute motion, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to defer this item until the next scheduled Board meeting subject to having a contract to review. The motion passed unanimously.

C) 2025 Early Voting Locations, Dates, and Times

Director Smith presented the proposed early voting locations, dates, and times for the June special election and potential runoff. She noted that 10 locations strategically distributed throughout the county were proposed for the upcoming election and that the first day of early voting would be on a Tuesday due to the state-observed holiday on the preceding Monday.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman confirmed with Director Smith that the department was requesting the Board's approval for the June election and potential runoff in July. Director Smith replied that the department would present any modifications for early voting for the runoff during the scheduled certification meeting so the Board could vote just on June's election. She also noted that the proposed early voting dates for the November and December elections were included in the presentation, however, the final proposal for the Board's approval would take place closer to the fall election cycle. Further discussion on the early voting proposal took place.

Motion by Ms. Motter, seconded by Mr. Lewis to approve the early voting locations, dates, and times which also includes the dropbox locations as proposed by the Executive Director for the June special primary. The motion passed unanimously.

BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Motter thanked the law department, the Executive Director and staff, and the public for their attendance.

Mr. Lewis thanked the staff for making the Board materials available sooner, as it provided him more time to review them. He also stated that a member of the public and spoken to him several meetings prior expressing that they felt only one Board member listened during public comments. Mr. Lewis further noted that during the meeting, both Ms. Motter and Vice-Chair Abhiraman either spoke to items addressed during public comment or specifically provided information for the benefit of the public. He closed by expressing his appreciation for the public's attendance and comments.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman said that he appreciated Mr. Lewis' comment and that he listens closely during public comments and often researches items. He thanked everyone for coming out on Odessa Minter Ngoto Day and said that the success of the department depended on public engagement, and hard work from Director Smith, the staff, the county attorneys, and his fellow Board members.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Motter, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m.