

DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections

Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2025

Start Time: 4:48 p.m.

End Time: 7:05 p.m.

Board Attendees: Karli Swift, Chair
Vasu Abhiraman, Vice-Chair
Nancy Jester
Anthony Lewis

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Swift called the Board of Registration and Elections meeting to order at 4:48 p.m. Ms. Austin read the roll by calling each board member by name. A quorum was met.

Motion by Ms. Jester, seconded by Vice-Chair Abhiraman, to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Vice-Chair Abhiraman, to approve the minutes of the March 13 scheduled meeting. Chair Swift and Ms. Jester abstained as they were not present for that meeting. The motion failed as there was not a quorum for it to pass.

Motion by Ms. Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis to defer approval of the March 13 minutes to the next 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:

- Victoria Webb
- Elizabeth Shackelford
- Jean Lewis Sankale
- Marla Tepper
- Cheryl Dudley
- Chris Rodgers
- Spencer Hostetter
- Darlene Peterson
- Susan McWethy
- Bethann Frillman
- Victor Tripp
- Andrew Bell
- Bill Henderson
- Online Comment- Don Hackney

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A) Director's Report

Director Smith reported on registration and election activities for the PSC election in June including registration processing, absentee ballots received, polling place changes and the approval of the precinct boundary changes by the DeKalb Board of Commissioners. She also reported on the budget and personnel updates stating that the Deputy Director of Communications and Public Affairs, Tonza Clark, would be leaving the department at the end of the month to lend her talents in another department. Director Smith went on to mention that the department recently welcomed Charlotte Sosebee as the Registration and Elections Manager. Director Smith continued to report on ongoing outreach, communications, and website updates.

Mr. Lewis asked if information on the Vote Safe program could be added to the website and outreach communications. Director Smith replied affirmatively. Mr. Lewis asked if the procedures for unhoused voters had been finalized. Director Smith replied that the department would follow the statute provided on unhoused voters and that those individuals would use the department address as their mailing address.

Ms. Jester asked about the budget. Director Smith responded that the department had been working closely with their budget analyst to drill down to see if any expenses would be charged back to 2024 because of timing. She said that the budget would continue to be monitored to ensure the department operates within the budget.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman asked for further details on the returned mail that the department was processing. Director Smith expounded on the procedures that are a standard part of the department's normal list maintenance. She highlighted that if no contact is made before a voter is designated inactive, as part of the list maintenance, inactive does not mean ineligible. She further stated that in addition to voting, there are other methods of contact that would put eligible voters in an active status again. She stated that the returned mail was expected to be complete by the middle of May.

Chair Swift confirmed with Director Smith that all 2024 registration applications had been processed. Director Smith replied affirmatively.

B) Legislative Updates

Mr. Petty advised that the legislative session ended, and the Governor had until May 14th to sign or veto the bills that had been passed. He stated that the following bills had passed: HB 426- provided for nonpartisan elections of judicial officers, HR 885- created a House study committee on election procedures, SB 199- State Ethics Commission revision to candidate reporting and disclosures, and HB 296- related to digital IDs.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

A) Profile PR Contract

Director Smith presented the draft contract for Profile PR and Marketing and requested the Board's approval to enter into an agreement with Profile and execute any documents necessary as approved by the County Attorney.

Mr. Lewis brought a revision to the agreement that the Board members present were made aware of on page 21 to which Mr. Phillips replied would be included in the final document.

Motion by Ms. Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis to approve the Profile PR contract. The motion passed unanimously.

B) Polling Place Changes

Director Smith provided an overview of the recommended polling place changes and stated that these locations informed the department that they would not be able to serve as polling locations for various reasons. She reiterated that the recommendations stemmed from due diligence and researching locations that centered around improving accessibility for voters and enhancing the overall voter experience while addressing other issues. She then asked the Elections Supervisor, Jay Catherwood, to provide further information on the selection of the proposed locations.

Ms. Jester asked Mr. Catherwood for further details on the change from All Saints Catholic Church.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman expressed concern relating to the distance from the former polling location at Smoke Rise Baptist Church to the proposed new location at Smoke Rise Elementary School. He also asked the department to get community feedback when polling place changes are being considered. Director Smith stated that public feedback was welcome at any time and that the department would endeavor to receive community input when possible. She further stated that one of the changes occurred that day so it would not have been feasible to solicit public feedback.

Chair Swift requested a map of the polling place changes going forward.

Motion by Ms. Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis to approve the polling place changes as listed. The motion passed unanimously.

C) Approval of Poll Managers

The lists of Early Voting and Election Day managers were presented to the Board for their approval.

Motion by Vice-Chair Abhiraman, seconded by Mr. Lewis to approve the lists of early voting and election day managers. The motion passed unanimously.

D) Bill Henderson Challenges Submitted on March 6, 2025

Chair Swift began by stating that on March 6, 2025 Bill Henderson submitted an O.C.G.A. § 21-2-229 challenge regarding the status of 134 electors. She noted that on April 8, 2025, Mr. Henderson formally withdrew the challenge of 6 electors so a new total of 128 electors were being challenged.

Motion by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Vice-Chair Abhiraman to dismiss the challenges of the 6 electors that were withdrawn. The motion passed unanimously.

Bill Henderson offered testimony and evidence related to the 128 challenges he submitted on March 6th.

After Mr. Henderson presented and the Board deliberated on the evidence.

Motion by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Jester, to remove the 6 electors that updated their registrations and to defer deciding on the remaining electors to the next scheduled meeting. The motion failed 2-2 with Chair Swift and Vice-Chair Abhiraman voting nay.

Motion by Ms. Jester to sustain the challenge with the exception of the 3 electors that updated their registrations. The motion failed 2-2 with Chair Swift and Vice-Chair Abhiraman voting nay.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Lewis thanked the staff and Director Smith. He expressed concerns about not delaying action on the challenges that were submitted. He went on to thank the public for coming and making public comment and the legal team.

Ms. Jester thanked the public and those that made comments. She thanked Mr. Phillips and Director Smith.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman thanked everyone who made public comment.

Chair Swift thanked the public, the staff, legal team, and Board.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.