

DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections

Meeting Minutes

October 14, 2021
*via zoom platform
Start Time: 4:30 p.m.
End Time: 6:30 p.m.

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

Other Attendees: Twyla Hart, Interim Director
Terry Phillips, Deputy County Attorney
Shelley Momo, Senior Assistant County Attorney
Irene Vander Els, Senior Assistant County Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Ms. Motter and seconded by Ms. Jester to call this meeting to order.

Ms. Smith would like to remove items A and B under “Items for Decision by the Board” and add item C to “Items for Discussion.” Motion by Ms. Jester and seconded by Ms. Motter to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A) September 9, 2021
- B) September 27, 2021 Special Called
- C) October 7, 2021 Special Called

Motion by Mr. Lewis and seconded by Ms. Jester to adopt the minutes from the September and October regular and special called meetings. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Baker read the rules for public comment.

Public comments of two minutes or less may be made live via the teleconference. For those joining the meeting by telephone, please be aware that your phone number may be displayed to the public viewing or participating in the online meeting. Citizens who attend the meeting via the Zoom link above may join the public comment queue by raising their hand in the Zoom application, while citizens who attend the meeting via telephone may join the comment queue by pressing # followed by 2. There will be no comment cards, so when you are called upon, please state your name and address for the record. Also, please be conscious of speaking time so that everyone has an opportunity to provide input in the allotted time. Abusive, profane, or derogatory language will not be permitted.

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The following citizens provided public comment:

- Jan Appling
- Sonya C. Frix

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Commissioner Mereda Davis Johnson addressed the Board and thanked all the members for their hard work.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A) Election Preparation & Updates

Ms. Hart provided an update on status of Logistics & Accuracy (“L&A”) Testing, which calibrates the voting equipment to ensure the information the voter views while voting is correct. The target date for completion is October 26.

Ms. Hart announced that the advanced voting precincts are all up and running. These were the first precincts to receive equipment and we are currently in the third day of L&A Testing.

Ms. Hart provided an update on absentee ballots and explained that the first day absentee ballots could be mailed was October 12, as established by the State. Furthermore, Ms. Motter addressed concerns about absentee ballots that was expressed during the public comment portion of this meeting.

Ms. Hart announced that voter registration is current. Yesterday the department received 600 applications from the Secretary of State and those applications will be completed today. Also, the Secretary of State has produced the electors list, which will likely be received in the office on October 22.

Mr. Lewis addressed a public comment about assistance for disabled voters and announced that disabled voters are allowed to move to the front of the line when voting. Mr. Lewis suggested implementing a system that alerts voters of this assistance as they enter the polling places.

B) Update on Publication of North Hairston Polling Place Change

Ms. Hart confirmed the notice of this change was published in the legal organ on October 7 and October 14. The next step is for the department to mail letters to the effected voters of this change.

C) Appointment for Voter Review Panel

Ms. Jester presented this item and explained the process for nominating participants for the Voter Review Panel for nonpartisan elections. Ms. Jester is concerned about the conflict of interests that could arise from municipalities submitting names of individuals to be appointed to serve on the panel. Ms. Jester is proposing that the Board submit its own list of names, separate from the names provided by the municipalities.

Ms. Swift proposes the Board still solicit a list of names from the municipalities, but create a framework to screen for individuals that are affiliated and/or working closely on any candidate’s campaign. This oversight allows the Board to review and vet names provided by the municipalities before submitting the list to the Chief Judge.

Ms. Hart explained that historically, the department has reached out to the municipalities to solicit names. The department has received names from all but four municipalities so far.

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Mr. Lewis is concerned with the position that the Board would be selecting individuals to be on the vote review panels for the municipal elections and is more secure with nominations coming from the municipalities and agrees there should be a process for screening conflicts of interest.

Each Board member presented their thoughts on how to approach this process based on the discussion and the responses received from the municipalities. Mr. Lewis suggested staff contact the municipalities that have not submitted names. Board members also considered the number of individuals needed to participate on the panels.

Motion by Ms. Swift and seconded by Ms. Jester to review the list of names provided by the municipalities; to send supplemental questions to the municipalities that have already submitted names to confirm whether anyone is currently employed by a campaign or a candidate, subject to review by the law department; and for the Board to provide a list of additional names to be considered for the vote review panels. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

ITEMS FOR DECISION BY THE BOARD

C) Leadership Transition Plan

Ms. Smith hopes to start advertising for the new positions as early as tomorrow and opened the floor for discussion of the documents provided for the Board's consideration of this item.

Ms. Swift commented on the education requirements listed in the application and is concerned that candidates who do not have a bachelor's degree in the areas listed will not apply and/or will not be considered for the position.

Ms. Jester suggested guidance for HR and that the Board have an opportunity to review the pool of applicants.

Mr. Lewis asked if the salary was based on market value and suggested revising the language so candidates that do not have a masters' degree also feel welcome to apply.

Motion by Ms. Jester and seconded by Mr. Lewis for the Chair to work with HR to revise the documents according to today's discussion and start advertising for position as soon as possible. Motion carries by unanimous vote.

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Mr. Burton provided an update on the Brookhaven road closure and detour for accessing the Lynwood Recreation Center early voting location. Also, Mr. Burton discussed the paid campaign, translation of voting materials, City of Atlanta voting, and absentee ballot tracking via the VRE website.

Ms. Motter commented on the banner on the VRE website regarding the detour for the Lynwood Recreation Center.

Ms. Swift asked about signage for individuals with disabilities. Mr. Burton will ensure the signs are accurate and Ms. Hart provided suggestions for how to improve current measures in place for assisting voters with disabilities.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Hart does not have any additional updates.

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Ms. Motter requested a list of poll monitors. Ms. Hart has received this information and will forward to the Board.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Lewis commented on the interim positions and is interested in seeing an expenditure from HR.

Ms. Smith responded to Mr. Lewis's comments about an interim director and deputy director as the Board moves forward with the leadership transition.

ADJOURNMENT

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