

DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections

Meeting Minutes

October 13, 2022

*via zoom platform

Start Time: 4:30 p.m.

End Time: 5:21 p.m.

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

Other Attendees: Keisha Smith, Executive Director
Mereda Davis Johnson, County Commissioner
Terry Phillips, Deputy County Attorney
Irene Vander Els, Assistant County Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Lowman Smith called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. Ms. Austin read the roll by calling each board member by name. All members were in attendance.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Ms. Motter, seconded by Ms. Swift, to approve the minutes of the September 8 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following citizens provided public comment:

- Judy Sophianopoulos

The board also received the following from Dr. Anna Ziering, who was unable to comment due to technical difficulties:

The burden of proof must be on the challengers—registering to vote is intimidating enough for so many of our young voters, and extra, unnecessary challenges are likely to make them give up. I would also ask that the BOE should also continue to do everything that they can to make VBM processing efficient and timely—processing ballots on Oct. 24, as allowed by GA law, will keep things running smoothly as votes continue to come in. The BOE's work is so important, particularly to facilitating and encouraging the participation of young citizens and new voters. Thanks again for your work to make voting accessible to us all.

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ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A) Director's Report

Director Smith highlighted some of the recent activities of the department. She announced the county had met its goal of maintaining 500,000 active registrations in order to continue deploying six absentee ballot drop boxes as it had in the past.

The Director presented a brief overview of Logic and Accuracy testing and announced that updates on the test results would be posted on the department's website every Monday.

The Director also presented statistics on absentee ballots and outreach efforts and an update on communications.

Mr. Lewis asked the Director to expand on a comment made about an outreach partnership with the ACLU. The Director responded that the effort had been expanded but was not new. The partnership focused on registering high school students and recruiting them to work at the polls.

Mr. Lewis asked if the events were organized by the ACLU or by the department. The Director responded that it was a coordinated effort.

Ms. Motter requested for the department to share its schedule for the Vote Review Panels as soon as possible. The Director responded that the schedule would be sent no later than Monday.

Ms. Motter asked for an update on advance voting times and locations for a potential December runoff. The Director responded that all November locations had been confirmed to return in December if necessary and that the times would be discussed at the November meeting.

Ms. Motter asked for the name of a Department contact for election day.

Ms. Motter also thanked the Director for the information the board had received regarding poll workers and training. She asked for an update poll worker recruitment. The Director responded that a sufficient number of poll workers had been recruited but that a reserve was still being accepted.

Ms. Swift asked for information about the vote by mail lead time; whether there was any registration processing left to do; and whether there were any plans in place to mitigate long lines during the first week of early voting. The Director responded that she would send mail lead statistics to the board; that there were less than 4,000 registration changes to process; and that the department felt it had an adequate staffing model for advance voting, but that additional staff would also be available for deployment if necessary.

Chair Lowman Smith asked when all registrations would be completed. The Director responded that the department would work through the weekend to process the applications currently in the queue, but that new applications would also arrive. Additional staff had been brought in to handle those applications.

B) Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Mereda Davis Johnson was glad to hear of the department's efforts to ensure that people in DeKalb County would be able to vote. She encouraged people to exercise their right to vote.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

A) November Meeting

The Director recommended that the board's next meeting be held in person on November 15 no later than 1 p.m.

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to that effect.

Chair Lowman Smith added that in person meetings could be live streamed but that it would not be possible for viewers to offer comments through the stream. It was being considered to allow the public to submit comments in writing which would be entered into the record.

The motion carried unanimously.

BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Swift thanked the staff for their work preparing for the election and the board for working to ensure that voting was fair, transparent, and accessible.

Mr. Lewis thanked the staff and the public who made comments and hoped that they would be able to attend the next meeting in person.

Ms. Motter thanked the staff and the Director.

Vice-Chair Jester thanked the Director and looked forward to reading the L&A report. She stressed the importance of transparency, stating that everyone should receive information at roughly the same time and that all board deliberations should be done in public. She thanked the Board of Commissioners for its support.

Chair Lowman Smith thanked county partners at the County Attorney's office and the IT Department. She thanked the staff for its hard work behind the scenes.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Ms. Motter, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:21 p.m.