

Board of Civil Authority Meeting - 9/17/2020
7 pm - Approved Minutes

BCA Present: via Zoom - Nora Rubinstein, Pat Hemenway, Leslie Silver, Heather Grier, Patty Kenyon. At the town office - Terry Redfield, Neil Russell, Laura Castle, Carl Haynes

Public Present: Herb Childress - EMD, Bill Reed - Road Foreman dropped in to talk to Terry for a minute about road business - Left at 7:05pm.

Terry called to order at 7:05pm

Pat H thanked Terry and Patty and the rest of the Selectboard for the extra work they have been doing recently with facilities, elections, and regular Selectboard duties, specifically recognizing the Chair and Clerk because their jobs don't end at the close of the meetings.

AUGUST 17, 2020 - EXPLANATION / DISCUSSION: Terry offered to give explanation or answer questions about the ballot bag opening incident on 8/17. He reported that the Secretary of State's office has not been overly concerned about the mistake and so far we have not heard any specific feedback from them.

Pat talked about the fact that poll workers did not count write-ins per the state's COVID-19 guidelines and that when she went back and read those guidelines they stated that they applied to "municipal elections" and since this was a State primary election and not a local election that the rules did not apply and we should have counted and recorded the write-ins. BCA members thought to some degree that this language did not make logical sense, since there is no local election in front of us until March 2021. All agreed that we should ask for a clarification from the Secretary of State's office on the intent of their guidance.

Carl talked about the fact that the paper tabulator tape was not in the ballot bag. The BCA is responsible for that. We need to make sure that does not happen again.

Do we now know what the parameters are on the process of opening up ballot bags? This is also something we should ask for clarification on with the Secretary of State.

Pat brought up the fact that there is no state level training offered for BCA officials and that is something we could advocate for in the future.

All agreed the folks involved in the incident had no mal-intent and when they discovered their mistake, took the proper steps in notifying the Secretary of State to provide details and their apologies for the error.

NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION PREPARATIONS:

a. Scheduling/Staffing/Procedures Management

- Ballots will start to be mailed on Sept 21 directly from the state. They will go out in batches and everyone should have their ballot by October 1.
- Voted ballots should be entered into the system as soon as they arrive back in the town office.
- The State's online voter list is a comprehensive live document, so there should be no need for a double entry system.
- There are very specific guidelines on how voted ballots should be handled.
- Ballots sent from the Town Clerk's office need to be recorded on the state's website when sent out.
- Nora is willing to take on the task to schedule poll workers for election day. She will add backup people as well.
- There will be a need for extra help in processing ballots - from entering on the State's website to recording the votes.

Discussion on how the overall process would work best. Also talked about taking work off of Laura's plate so that she can focus on her regular work and not get overwhelmed with ballots and the myriad of responsibilities required by the Secretary of State's office.

BCA members directly asked Laura if she would be open to letting a BCA member take the lead as presiding officer as a way to ensure that reporting happens promptly so information is up to date as soon as possible on the State's website? Laura will allow BCA members to record and process received mail-in ballots.

BCA discussed who might take on the lead for this role. Patty is willing, Heather is willing to be her backup, both under the supervision of Laura and in concert with another BCA member to assist when mail is opened and entered on the state's website.

Nora moved to have Patty Kenyon and Heather Grier act as the lead assistants to register ballots on the state website for the November election with BCA members acting in supporting roles for Patty and Heather. Pat H 2nd. Ayes - Patty K, Nora, Laura, Pat H, Leslie, Heather, Neil, Terry. Opposed - Carl.

Also discussed that we will need teams of BCA members (ideally a Republican and a Democrat) that can pick up ballots at people's houses if need be. All members were willing to be on call for those duties.

There was discussion about tabulating absentee ballots the day prior to the election to have our lists completely up to date with absentee votes recorded at the opening of in-person voting on November 3. Some members were hesitant to commit to this process, Heather assured them that many other towns are planning to do this and that this is the recommendation of the Secretary of State. The consensus was to revisit this topic at the next BCA meeting so members can research the expectations and when we know more about the volume we may be dealing with.

Item of note: the State's my voter page will have live up-to-date information for voters to track their ballots throughout the process.

BCA talked about the timing to do the tabulator test. It was questioned whether or not the test should be part of a warned BCA meeting. Herb stated that has not been the case in the past since it was generally done by just a few members, but he would check with the Secretary of State on that. In order to complete the testing we will need ballot blanks for testing (we have them now - 200 pcs) and the ballot program card for the tabulator to recognize and tabulate the ballots (we haven't received this yet).

Herb agreed to check with the Secretary of State on the logistics of getting the program cards, and whether they are providing them to towns or if we need to order them directly. He will also ask if we can get additional packs of ballots to ensure we have enough for in-person voting.

- b. Ballot tracking spreadsheet - Development and Updating** - In the discussion above.
- c. Undeliverable Ballots - Documentation & Delivering (if appropriate)** - TBD.
- d. Delivery Options for Returned (Voted) Ballots** - In discussion above.

WORK ON VOTER CHECKLIST FOR TOWN MEETING 2021 UPDATES - BCA would like to make sure our checklist is up to date prior to Town Meeting 2021. Patty will keep this on the list of to do's based on our list review back in July and try to accomplish this task within the state's online voter system soon after the November 3 election.

OTHER LAWFUL BUSINESS

Minutes of prior meeting: 7/30/2020 BCA meeting.

Leslie moved to approve the minutes of 7/30/2020 as presented. Heather 2nd. Motion carried.

Nora had another item to discuss. She brought up potential space issues at the current polling place if we have people asking to observe the election process in person. Is our space large enough to accommodate that? We think we have room for that in our current space. But Herb will inquire with the Secretary of State as to our ability to set up parameters due to space limitations for potential election observers.

Next BCA meeting to be scheduled by Selectboard - goal is to have another meeting in early October and potentially another late in October just prior to the election.

ADJOURN

Neil moved to adjourn at 9:02pm, Heather 2nd. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted
Patty Kenyon, Clerk