



APPROVED MINUTES

BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS REGULAR MEETING – AUGUST 13, 2020

The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections met in Regular Session on Thursday, August 13, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

VIRTUAL MEETING

Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

FGTV YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYH7E0jH6HxE-3KTRluH8SQ>

Presiding: Ms. Mary Carole Cooney, Chairperson

Other Board Members Present:

Ms. Vernetta Keith Nuriddin, Vice Chairperson

Mr. Mark Wingate

Mr. Aaron V. Johnson

Dr. Kathleen Ruth

Staff Attending: Mr. Richard Barron, Director; Mr. Ralph Jones, Registration Chief; Mr. Dwight Brower, Interim Elections Chief; Ms. Sharon Benjamin, Deputy Elections Chief; Ms. Nadine Williams, Elections Equipment Manager; Mrs. Pamela Coman, Registration Manager; Ms. Brenda McCloud, Administrative Manager; Mrs. Cheryl Ringer, County Attorney; Mr. David Lowman, County Attorney; Mr. James Reese, Production Manager; Mr. Rico Dollar, Senior Graphics Designer, Jessica Corbitt, PIO; Regina Waller, Senior Public Affairs Officer

Guest Attending: Aileen Nakamura (Coalition of Good Governance), Rhonda Martin (Coalition of Good Governance), Kali Walker, Milia Akkouris, Michalle Arkin

Chairperson Cooney announced that this teleconferenced meeting is authorized pursuant to §50-14-1(g) of the Official Code of Georgia because of the Public Health State of Emergency declared by Governor Kemp on March 14, 2020, and renewed most recently on June 29, 2020, pursuant to which public meeting spaces in state and local Government have been closed due to COVID-19, and because means have been afforded for the public to have simultaneous access to this teleconference.

#1– APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was made by Mr. Wingate, seconded by Dr. Ruth and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

#2– COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RESPONSE

Aileen Nakamura, Member of Coalition of Good Governance, expressed her appreciation to the BRE and the DRE on their improvements. **Ms. Nakamura** expressed concerns of issues witnessed throughout the counties: under-qualified technicians, inadequate poll worker training, and lack of ballot secrecy

Kali Walker (New Poll worker) expressed concerns with inadequate poll worker training, poll worker testing, and assigned managers and assistant managers needing additional training.

Milia Akkouris (New Poll worker) expressed concerns with inadequate poll worker training, poll worker testing, and assigned managers and assistant managers needing additional training. **Ms. Akkouris** implored **DRE** to ensure **that** the managers assigned to these polling locations are proficient in all aspects of the voting process (from the voting units to paperwork)

Rhonda Martin, Member of Coalition of Good Governance, expressed **approval of** the improvements made in this voting cycle; however, ballot secrecy is still a major concern. **Ms. Martin** outlined her concerns submitting a request for absentee by mail, that ballot was not received. There were issues at her assigned precinct that needs to be **addressed**: voter certificates given to every voter and incomplete affidavit process.

OLD BUSINESS

#3– APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting- July 9, 2020
- Special Meeting- July 20, 2020

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Regular and Special Meetings on July 9th and 20th, 2020. The motion was made by Ms. Nuriddin, seconded by Mr. Johnson and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

#4– MONTHLY OPERATIONS REPORT FOR JULY 2020:

- Preparation for August 11th Runoff
- Early Voting (EV) began July 20th – August 7th: **20** Locations including State Farm (Mega Site)
- Partnering with State Farm Arena, the largest EV site in the country
 - Multiple voting areas for voters
- **EV Allocations:**
 - 348 BMDs; 100 BMDs located at State Farm
 - 58 Scanners
- **175** polling locations; increased locations from June
- **Election Day Allocations:**
 - 2,022 BMDs
 - 625 Poll Pads
 - 250 Scanners
- All Training was in-person
- Hired & Trained **211** Technicians; **204** **were** in the field on Election Day at 3am
- A legal hold remains on the **DRE** voting units from the April 18, 2017 and June 20, 2017 6th Congressional Special Election and Runoff Special Election (**Relocated to offsite facility**)
- Total voter registration applications received in 2020: **165,715**
- **27,260** voter registration applications received in July
- As of August 1st, **823,940** (779,546 active and 44,394 inactive) registered voters reside in Fulton County
- Total New Applications: **19,141**

- Felon Hearings: 0
- Felon Letters Mailed-247
- Early Scanning of Absentee Ballots until January 2021
- 20 Ballot Boxes installed throughout the county
 - Daily removal no longer mandatory

<https://fultoncountyga.gov/inside-fulton-county/fulton-county-departments/registration-and-elections/absentee-ballot-box>
<https://gismaps.fultoncountyga.gov/portalpub/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=96c3363d99f74ed0bb38f53099e6b350>
- VEO scheduling Virtual Demonstrations

Dr. Ruth suggested **DRE** complete an assessment **of** some **of** their polling **locations**. SC04, Fire Station in South Fulton was an uncomfortable temperature for staff.

Mr. Wingate mentioned that he previously suggested **Mr. Brower** review AP05, Fire Station that appears to have the same or similar conditions

Mr. Barron noted the locations and intends to review

Mr. Johnson inquired about the poll workers recruitment

Mr. Barron mentioned that the applications received exceeded the number of staff needed

Mr. Johnson suggested providing citizens **who** apply, some form of a response.

Mr. Barron mentioned discussing further to see if a response can be provided to applicants

Mr. Johnson inquired about poll pads during the check in process on Election Day

Mr. Barron mentioned the department just purchased and received 200 Poll pads recently. The **DRE** intends to purchase at least 200 more. **Mr. Barron** expressed concerns for uploading the bulk file to the poll pads each election. **Mr. Barron** mentioned that the counties did not receive the specifications for the required bandwidth until after the June Election. The **DRE** is scheduled for upgrades to the EPC's bandwidth

Mr. Johnson inquired about the portal

Mr. Barron mentioned the **DRE** has a meeting with U.S. Digital Response, at the conclusion of this meeting to review some of the plans for the county's portal. **Mr. Barron** mentioned Secretary of State's (**SOS**) office intend to have their portal for all Georgia counties operational very soon

Dr. Ruth inquired about the vendor of the poll pads, **Knowink**, and any resolutions to resolve the concerns of the poll pads

Mr. Barron mentioned **that** concerns with the poll pads are not unique to Fulton County, many of the counties in Georgia experience the same issues with the uploads. **Mr. Barron** suggested the upgrading the bandwidth should resolve or at least reduce the length of time required to upload the file. **Mr. Barron** reiterated that all counties should have received the specs for the poll pads last year.

Ms. Nuriddin commended the efforts made by the Department during the August 11th Election. **Ms. Nuriddin** asked **Mr. Barron** to talk more about the portal being created for the **DRE**. **Ms. Nuriddin** asked will **DRE** have the ability to integrate their portal with the **SOS**

Mr. Barron informed the **BRE** the portal being created will be a standalone portal and it is not integrated into **SOS** Election software.

Ms. Nuriddin inquired about security and maintenance of the portal

Mr. Barron mentioned the **IT** Department will have the ability to maintain the portal. **Mr. Barron** mentioned **that** **SOS** suggested **that** the **DRE** create the portal and the portal created will be a back-up to the **SOS** portal. All voters will be encouraged to use the State's portal.

Mr. Wingate implored **DRE** to ensure all checks and balances are completed to ensure one ballot one vote

Mr. Barron mentioned procedures to reconcile the Absentee by Mailrequest. The **DRE** will complete continual audits of this process to ensure **that** every **voter who requests** a ballot receive their ballot. The **DRE** discovered during the Runoff Election **that of the** voters listed on the Roll-Over List, a listing mailed by the Secretary of State's Office (**SOS**) **667** Voters received the wrong ballot and **404** Voters were not mailed a ballot

Mr. Wingate asked if the county could assigned a drop dead date on Absentee Request

Mr. Barron suggested the drop dead date to request an absentee ballot be reduced a week. **Mr. Barron** suggested the Legislature review the dates set to request a ballot. **Mr. Barron** mentioned a discussion with the **SOS** to have the ability to collect Absentee Ballot at the polls on Election Day and that remains to be unresolved, at this time. **Mr. Barron** mentioned the grant that he applied for on behalf of the **DRE**, if approved, **Mr. Barron** intends to use the funds for the listed items:

- 35-50 Drop Boxes: 20-30 Additional boxes
- Cameras & Monitoring
- COVID Pay
- Staffing

Mr. Johnson informed the **BRE** that there are **safeguards** in place to prevent voters from voting multiple times. **Mr. Johnson** inquired about the process of receiving cancelled ballots and re-issued ballots

Mr. Barron explained the process using **SOS's** database capabilities

Mr. Johnson expressed that he is a proponent of sending **All** registered voters an Absentee by Mail Application and he agrees that there needs to be a mechanism in place. **Mr. Johnson** expressed seeking a good method for processing the request. **Mr. Johnson** requested clarity on the portal

Mr. Barron explained the portal is supplemental and the county will encourage voters to use **SOS's** portal. **Mr. Barron** mentioned that several groups intend to mail voters absentee applications but he did not know the specific names.

Mr. Johnson implored the **DRE** to be prepared for the amount of requests **ts** that will be submitted as a result of various groups sending these forms out

Mr. Barron mentioned that Fulton County resident can submit their ballot, an application for absentee by mail and voter registration applications **via the drop box**

Ms. Nuriddin expressed concerns in the Absentee by Mail process with regards to several elections timeframe being close together.

Mr. Barron mentioned that during this special Election there will be no ballots mailed to any voter from the Roll-Over Listing

Chairperson Cooney inquired about technicians being assigned to each polling location

Mr. Barron answered yes, technicians were assigned; however, of the 174 locations seven technicians were No-Shows. Technicians were later **dispatched** to the locations that **were** missing techs, once the call center was notified. **Mr. Barron** and **Mr. Brower** intend to do a post-mortem with regards to this overall election cycle process

Chairperson Cooney suggested the **DRE** publicly encourage early request of absentee ballot and contacting the U.S.P.S.

Mr. Barron discussed being able to process Absentee by Mail and a meeting with the U.S.P.S. is pending

NEW BUSINESS

#5- OVERVIEW OF AUGUST 11, 2020, GENERAL PRIMARY RUNOFF ELECTION

Mr. Barron informed the Board:

- **33,077** Votes cast during Early Voting
- **36,236** Absentee by Mail (**ABM**) counted
- **33,177** Votes cast on Election Day, according to Non-partisan race

Four Locations with Poll Pad Issues:

- Buckhead Library
- Messiah Lutheran Church
- Helene E. Mills Senior Ctr.
- FanPlex

Chairperson Cooney inquired about locations that had long lines

Mr. Barron mentioned that the only location that he recalled was the Buckhead Library; although, upon the Chairperson arrival no line existed. **Mr. Barron** noted that the location had Poll Pad issues that occurred around 8:05am

Mr. Wingate addressed an issue at Peachtree Presbyterian Church; voters were being directed to go to Buckhead Library. The misunderstanding occurred when this involved two family members in the same household, at different times of the day

Mr. Barron explained that the polling locations had combined a couple of precincts together while the library was being renovated. The precincts were recently changed due to the completion of renovations. **Mr. Barron** stated more training will be provided to staff to ensure voters are given accurate information

Mr. Wingate inquired about Election Day Polling locations that are used for Early Voting, do they have the same staff assigned

Mr. Barron said no, EV staffs are supplemental employees for five weeks per election and most polling locations are one day workers

Mr. Johnson expressed gratitude to the **DRE, Chairman Pitts**, and the **County Manager’s Executive Team** on a job well done during this election. **Mr. Johnson** suggested reviewing a mechanism to register organizations during the November Election that are seeking to “Adopt a Poll”. **Mr. Johnson** requested clarity on the title of the ballot Absentee/ Provisional/ Emergency

Mr. Barron mentioned that all Georgia Counties Election Day Ballots **have the same title**, but when a person is required to vote **by** one of these methods the Poll worker should clearly state how and why you are voting by paper ballot:

- **Emergency Ballot** to combat long lines or equipment malfunctioning; Counties are required to stock each polling locations with ballots that equate to 10% of the assigned registered voters
- **Provisional Ballots** cast when you **are** voting without identification or in the wrong precinct **requiring** additional paper work, placing in an envelope, and dropping in an orange bag

Ms. Nuriddin asked about the **404** ballots that **were** not mailed by the Secretary of **State and** the procedures that are being implemented to catch errors sooner

Mr. Barron mentioned **that** auditing on a regular basis will be added to the procedures to ensure that every voter **who requests one** will receive a ballot. **Mr. Barron** mentioned that the Election Group professionals assigned to the Department and Voter Registration Management are reviewing procedures and making changes for the **DRE’s** procedures

Ms. Nuriddin asked **Mr. Barron** to briefly explained his decision to not accept emailed Absentee by Mail **requests.**

Mr. Barron informed the **BRE** the decision to not accept emailed applications was to reduce email issues from the June Election; however, every application received via email was processed. The **DRE** reconsidered the decision to decline email applications and included parameters for acceptable application via email.

To submit an absentee ballot application via email:

- attach the application as a Pdf or Jpeg
- Between 1 MB and 5 MB.
- Only one application may be attached per email.

#6- REVIEW OF UNOFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS

Mr. Barron informed the Board:

- **94,578** Votes cast
- **33,077** Votes cast during Early Voting
- **33,177** Votes cast on Election Day
- **36,236** Absentee by Mail (**ABM**) counted

- **31,362** Democratic Votes Cast
- **860** Non-Partisan Votes Cast
- **3,994** Republican Votes Cast

- **57,740** Issued Ballots to Democratic
- **3,089** Issued Ballots to Nonpartisan
- **11,075** Issued Ballots to Republican

- **37,000** Approximate Rollover List mailed by **SOS**
- **Turnout Statistic** 14.1%

Mr. Wingate requested clarity of the results on Election Day versus the unofficial Election Results report

Mr. Barron explained that those are estimated figures generated by personnel through a phone call to each polling locations. **Mr. Barron** mentioned that this new system does not allow reports to be generated the **same way as** ES&S System reports provided. **Mr. Barron** stated that **Mr. Gilstrap** will provide the **BRE** with a report for under votes before Certification

Ms. Nuriddin encouraged **Mr. Barron** to utilize a report writer

Mr. Barron agreed with the suggestion from **Ms. Nuriddin**

#7- APPROVAL OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTION ACTION PLAN

Dr. Ruth expressed that the August 11th Election went smoothly; however, this does not indicate to the **BRE** and **DRE** the impact of the volume for November but it does allow the **DRE** to implement corrective measures

The challenges of the June 9th Election are responsible for the implementation of this plan, which was drafted by a consortium of groups and individuals (Board of Registration and Elections (**BRE**), Chairman Pitts' Task Force (Citizen's Task Force), Internal Working Group, Board of Commissioners, Local Delegation of the General Assembly, and South Fulton Municipal Association)

Goals:

Identify challenges → Provide and Implement Solutions= Ensure an Efficient and Enhanced Voter Experience

Challenges:

- Absentee by mail (ABM) ballot process didn't work.
- Too few polling places were available, inadequately staffed, and staff were inadequately trained
- Voting machines could not be made functional timely and there were an inadequate number of technicians
- There were excessively long lines and long wait times.

Action Plan

- Increase capacity to process large numbers of absentee by mail applications and ballots
- Improve poll worker training
- Improve communication with voters
- Improve voter education
- Ensure efficient in-person voting experience on election day
- Increase poll worker staff
- Change Departmental Infrastructure to meet systemic issues
- Remediate Coronavirus-related issues

BRE Action Plan available on the website:

<https://fultonelections.com/-/media/BRE-Voting-and-Elections-Action.ashx>

Chairperson Cooney implored the **DRE** to address the systemic issues. Chairperson Cooney expressed the

DRE needs to devote more resources to Absentee by Mail. **Chairperson Cooney** implored the **DRE** to secure managerial positions for Absentee by Mail, Early Voting, and Training

Mr. Johnson thanked the listed groups for their input in drafting this plan. This plan was drawn to be functional for the **DRE** and framed within the law. **Mr. Johnson** mention the action plan will continue to make improvements where needed

Chairperson Cooney announced upon approval, the submission of this Action Plan will be disseminated to the Board of Commissioners for consideration.

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the Action Plan for the Board of Registration and Election presented by Dr. Ruth and Mr. Johnson. The motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Ms. Nuriddin and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

#8-CONFIRM DATE AND TIME OF CERTIFICATION OF ELECTION RESULTS

Mr. Barron recommended Certifying the Election Results on August 21, 2020 at 10am

Mr. Wingate inquired if the meeting will be in-person

Secretary Bodison expressed limited facilities available for in-person meetings; however, she will check on locations to facilitate an in-person meeting while maintaining social distancing

Mr. Barron suggested an alternative for meeting in-person but will confirm following the meeting

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board did not convene into executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other items requiring the Board's action, **Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to adjourn. Mr. Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Wingate seconded the motion.** Collectively, the Board agreed to adjourn at 12:28 p.m.

The meeting adjourned.

Prepared by,

Mariska Bodison, Board Secretary