



## APPROVED MINUTES

### BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 12, 2020

The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections met in Regular Session on Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 10:00 a.m., in Assembly Hall of the The Government Center Building, 141 Pryor Street, SW, Atlanta, Georgia 30303.

**Presiding:** Ms. Mary Carole Cooney, Chairperson

**Other Board Members Present:**  
Mr. Mark Wingate, Vice Chairperson  
Mr. Aaron V. Johnson  
Dr. Kathleen Ruth

**Absent Board Member:**  
Ms. Vernetta Keith Nuriddin

**Staff Attending:** Mr. Richard Barron, Director; Mr. Ralph Jones, Registration Chief; Mr. Blake Evans, Elections Chief; Mrs. Pamela Coman, Registration Manager; Ms. Brenda McCloud, Administrative Manager; Mr. Kelvin Jones, VEO Coordinator, Lead; Patrice Perkins-Hooker, County Attorney; Mrs. Cheryl Ringer, County Attorney; Mr. David Lowman, County Attorney;

**Guests Attending:** Penn Payne (Democratic Party of Georgia), Patty Nathan, Ben Brasch (AJC), Garland Favorito (VoterGA), Nina Braziel (Democratic Party of Georgia), Marilyn Marks (Coalition for Good Governance), Rhonda J. Martin (Coalition for Good Governance),

#### #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 4-0.

#### #2– COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RESPONSE

**Garland Favorito** expressed concerns of the new voting system, the inability to verify votes, and the overall integrity of the new system. **Mr. Favorito** urges Fulton/ Georgia voters to vote by mail.

**Rhonda Martin** referenced her experience as a poll watcher and expressed that **SOS's** preferred layout does not guarantee voter secrecy. **Ms. Martin** is advocating for voting secrecy.

**Marilyn Marks** referenced her experience as a poll watcher and the lack of ballot secrecy. **Ms. Marks** urged to the Board not to neglect their responsibility to guarantee ballot secrecy.

#### OLD BUSINESS

#### #3– APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting- February 13, 2020
- Executive Session Meeting- February 13, 2020

**Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Regular Meeting and Executive Session Meeting on February 13, 2020. The motion was made by Mr. Wingate, seconded by Mr. Johnson and carried by a unanimous vote of 4-0.**

#### **#4- MONTHLY OPERATIONS REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2020:**

- 93% of the Poll Workers are trained
- Department's Mock Election was held February 18<sup>th</sup>
- SOS's Mock Election was held February 26<sup>th</sup>
- Renovations at the EPC are completed
- A legal hold remains on the **DRE** voting units from the April 18, 2017 and June 20, 2017 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional Special Election and Runoff Special Election (**Relocated to offsite facility**)
- Early Voting- ongoing
- Total voter registration applications received in 2020: **55,477**
- **35,310** voter registration applications received in February
- As of March 1<sup>st</sup>, **809,993** (761,290 active and 48,703 inactive) registered voters reside in Fulton County
- Total New Applications in 2020 – **28,351**
- Total Applications processed in 2020 – **63,033**
- Felons Letters Mailed- **236**
- Voter Education and Outreach Demonstrations- ongoing

**Chairperson Cooney** inquired about the voters that were removed in December

**Mr. Barron** explained that of the voters removed from rolls in December, the **DRE** has no knowledge that these voters have reregistered.

#### **#5- MOCK ELECTION UPDATE, FEBRUARY 18<sup>TH</sup>**

- 13 locations
  - February 18<sup>th</sup>, 10am-4pm
  - Votes Cast - 692
  - Counted Ballots - 688 (4 Ballots were blank)

**Mr. Barron** referenced the mock election as a successful exercise. During the **DRE's** mock election the staff delivered, set up equipment, retrieved equipment, and quickly tabulated the results. Fulton County was the only county in the state to complete a mock election separate from SOS.

**Mr. Barron** mentioned the Secretary of State's Mock Election as a successful exercise as well. This exercise was completed at the EPC, tabulated and uploaded to the State.

#### **#6- UPDATE ON EARLY VOTING (EV)**

- **21 Permanent Locations**
- **13 Outreach Locations**

- March 2-7<sup>th</sup>, 8:30am -6pm
- March 9<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>, 8:30am -6pm
- March 15<sup>th</sup>, 12-5pm
- March 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, 8:30am -6p

- **As of March 11, 2020:**

- Votes Cast: 24,254
- Turnout: 3.9%
- Absentee by Mail: 3,560

**Mr. Barron** updated **BRE** on early voting going well. There were a few issues with the EasyVote software a couple days at the beginning of early voting. Since then, those issues have been addressed. The department has actively prepared cleaning kits for each **EV** location with cleaning instructions due to the concern of Coronavirus.

**Mr. Wingate** asked if **Mr. Barron** heard anything regarding the scanners malfunctioning while scanning ballots to cast your votes

**Mr. Barron** stated No

## NEW BUSINESS

### #7- ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE VIRUS ISSUES

**Mr. Barron** mentioned the department has actively prepared cleaning kits for each **EV** location with cleaning instructions due to the concern of Coronavirus (**COVID-19**). **External Affairs** has prepared large signs to be placed at all **EV** locations and county facilities. **Mr. Barron** mentioned speaking with the **SOS** and Legal counsels. However, due to the evolving seriousness of the virus, changes are anticipated. **Mr. Barron** referenced **Dr. Ruth's** concerns with regards to the vulnerable population (elderly) and advised that the department is currently reviewing alternatives.

**Dr. Ruth** referenced the new guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Georgia Department of Public Health. **Dr. Ruth** referenced the vulnerable populations regarding polling facilities in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. **Dr. Ruth also** referenced her efforts in contacting the **SOS** with regards to moving or suspending voting at certain polling facilities.

**Mr. Barron** mentioned that after speaking with the Secretary of State's office, their office did not oppose the **DRE** relocating polling locations

**Mr. Evans** provided **BRE** with an overview of the report the **DRE** received from **SOS** regarding all polling locations and their electrical capacity, **SOS's** contracted vendor visited and tested all locations. This means that **DRE** may need to do additional verification if changes occur as to moving the locations.

**Mr. Johnson** inquired about **DRE's** communication with the nursing homes and assisted living locations and whether they have expressed concerns. **Mr. Johnson** also agreed with **Dr. Ruth's** assessment; however, cautioned the **DRE** about making changes before fully assessing the locations in questioned.

**Mr. Evans** explained that the correspondence has been normal with regards to set up and delivery and none of the listed locations have expressed concerns at this time

**Dr. Ruth** gave an example of her current polling place location, Brighton Gardens Buckhead, where voting occurs in the dining room of the facility. **Dr. Ruth** implored **DRE** and **BRE** to not take unnecessary risks regarding the use of certain facilities where the vulnerable population resides.

**Mr. Barron** mentioned that if these proposed changes occur, voters assigned to those locations will need to be notified immediately. **Mr. Barron** asked **Mr. Jones**' action plan of notifying voters.

**Mr. Johnson** expressed that was part of his concerns and how soon does a decision need to be made.

**Mr. R. Jones** informed the **BRE** of his plan to contact **SOS** to request expedited service for precinct cards for the affected voters.

**Mr. Barron** suggested mailers to be completed in office and sent to all affected voters because there may be an issue with precinct cards reaching voters timely.

**Mr. Evans** asked if the **BRE** wanted to relocate polling operations from senior centers as well.

**Dr. Ruth** expressed not moving out of Senior Centers; however, on Election Day, the DRE should request the centers to suspend activity and thoroughly clean the facilities to mitigate the spread of the virus.

**Mr. Evans** and **Mr. Barron** informed the Board of the five proposed polling location changes and provided the miles of the nearest location.

Polling Name	Assigned Registered Voters	Miles to Nearest Polling Locations
04K, Abernathy Towers	2,537	1.3
07M, Brighton Gardens Buckhead	2,189	2.7
08G, The Cathedral Towers	2894	1.8
11P, Asbury Harris Epworth Towers	2,009	2
SS22, Hellenic Towers	2,660	1.7

**Chairperson Cooney** acknowledged the attendance of the County Attorney, **Mrs. Patrice Perkins-Hooker**, and asked if she had any legal information that she wanted to share.

**Mrs. Perkins-Hooker** spoke to the Board with regards to how making changes so close to an election would be perceived by the public, as well as the adverse litigation that would ensue. The public will think that the **DRE** is attempting to disenfranchise the voters. **Mrs. Perkins-Hooker** suggested several alternatives for voting at the same locations. Instead of making changes, partitions can be used or request for senior center activities to be suspended during polling operations to prevent further election challenges.

**Mr. Barron** informed the Board that he will send staff to the polling locations in question to provide the **BRE** with a full assessment.

**Dr. Ruth** asked if the **DRE** is encouraging Absentee by Mail voting.

**Mr. Barron** stated yes and added that in a recent interview, he expressed that he is advocating for voters to vote Absentee By Mail

**Mr. Wingate** expressed liability and litigation concerns. **Mr. Wingate** also asked if a temporary polling area can be used outside of the facilities in question.

**Mr. Barron** said yes; however, the weather may be an issue.

**Mr. Barron** recommended **DRE** and **BRE** take a 15 minute break to discuss alternatives.

**Dr. Ruth** implored **DRE** and **BRE** of the Coronavirus being an evolving concern for everyone and quoted Dr. Fauci regarding the elderly/ vulnerable population.

Collectively, the Board agreed to take a fifteen minute break. **The Department and the County Attorneys recessed to discuss safety concerns for staff and Fulton County voters.**

Upon resumption of the meeting, **Chairperson Cooney** requested an update from **Mr. Barron** on information collected during the break

**Mr. Barron** informed the **BRE** that **Ms. Williams** is contacting the polling locations to make an assessment and seeking alternatives to mitigate risks. **Mr. Barron** mentioned that **DRE** will encourage Absentee by Mail, and that the Department of Real Estate & Asset Management (**DREAM**) can assist the department by building partitions to protect residents, if needed.

**Mr. Johnson** requested the **DRE** to coordinate with the Director of Public Health to ensure proper protocols.

**Mr. Barron** mentioned that he will be attending another meeting with County Executives and the Director of Public Health to discuss measures taken by the County to mitigate risks.

## **#8- UPDATE ON ELECTION EQUIPMENT AND ACCESSORIES**

**Mr. Barron** informed the Board of equipment received and the shortage of seals. The majority of the equipment was received.

## **#9- SPECIAL CALLED MEETING RQUIRED FOR POLLING PLACE CHANGES, MARCH 18, 2020**

**Mr. Barron** requested a special called meeting to change three polling locations. Two changes are due to upcoming renovations and one is a name change. All polling locations have agreed to host polling operations for 2020, however, they are no longer available after the March 24, 2020 Election.

**Chairperson Cooney** asked if the polling location changes could be made today.

**Mr. Barron** informed the Board that due to advertising requirements, the polling place changes cannot be discussed at this meeting.

**Chairperson Cooney** announced the Special Called Meeting to be held on March 18, 2020 in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room to approve the polling place changes.

## **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. Wingate moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Ruth seconded the motion.** Collectively, the Board agreed to adjourn at 11:15 a.m.

The meeting adjourned.

Prepared by,

Mariska Bodison, Board Secretary