

BOARD MEETING
BALTIMORE CITY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
AUGUST 15, 2024

The meeting of the Baltimore City Board of Elections was held at the Baltimore City Board of Elections Warehouse at 301 North Franklinton Road, Baltimore, MD 21202

IN ATTENDANCE:

BOARD MEMBERS

Terrence Threawt Jr, Board Vice President
Sam Novey, Board Secretary
Hope Williams, Board Member

STAFF

Armstead B.C. Jones, Election Director
Abigail Goldman, Deputy Election Director

ON PHONE

Armstead Jones, Election Director
Thomas Chapman, Counsel
Maria Vismale, Board Member

ABSENT

Scherod Barnes, Board President

GUESTS

James McLaughlin, Baltimore Votes Student Intern
Tasmin Swanson, Baltimore Votes Board member
Lu Pierson, Mt. Washington Improvement Association (and former member of Baltimore City Board of Elections)
Andrea Schedler, Representative of Delegate Embry

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Terrence Threawt, Board Vice President, at 4:01 pm. Mr. Novey moved to approve the minutes of the July 18 meeting. Ms Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Novey thanked Director Jones for sharing written responses to the questions submitted by the board. Mr. Threawt added it to new business. Ms. Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed.

PRESIDENT REMARKS

President not in attendance. Board members recognized the recent birthday of Board President Scherod Barnes and congratulated him on this milestone.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Mr. Jones shared that the team is preparing for the election. He met with the election judge group and ensured that they are notifying judges in a timely manner and having a strong plan for recruitment and training. The team also continues to process petitions and getting to the end of that work.

Ms. Williams asked about outreach and communications related to election judge recruitment. Mr. Jones said there would be outreach through neighborhood associations and the media. Ms. Williams asked for more details about the timeline and asked for copies of communications materials. Mr. Jones mentioned that he met with the election judge team today and that they were preparing these materials.

ATTORNEY GENERAL REMARKS

Mr. Chapman shared that he is working his way through litigation related to the Baby Bonus and Renew Baltimore petitions. That case will be argued at the Maryland Supreme Court on August 28.

Mr. Novey asked when ballot question language would be finalized. Mr. Chapman shared that the city law department had drafted language already and that he was optimistic that the September 6 deadline for printing ballots would be met.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. James McLaughlin, a student intern with Baltimore Votes made a presentation to the board on behalf of the Baltimore Votes Student Election Judge program. He shared that in May the program had recruited 135 students who were interested in being election judges (but not all trained and served). He also shared that there are 15 students on the Baltimore Votes student advisory board working to recruit 90 students who are eligible, interested, and able to serve in November.

Mr. McLaughlin shared that 20 of the 135 students who expressed interest were able to serve in May. He shared those students had challenges communicating with the board of elections in the form including not hearing back when they applied or getting their polling place assignments late. This led to 17 students training but not serving on election day in May. He also shared that some students missed the pre-registration deadline which led to them not being eligible to serve. Mr. McLaughlin shared that the Baltimore Votes student board and Baltimore City Board of Elections have set up weekend trainings where students can get trained outside of school hours, are making sure students are pre-registered before being sent to board of elections, will help communicate with students about polling place assignments on election day, and will do some parent outreach.

Ms. Williams commended Mr. McLaughlin on his presentation and on the engagement of young people in the whole program.

Ms. Goldman presented proposed polling places changes to the board.

- Mt Washington Upper school #221, 1801 Sulgrave Avenue, (Site 170) to move back to Mt. Washington Lower School #221, 5800 Smith Avenue (Site 170). Precinct: 24049 – The upper building is not handicapped accessible and cannot be made so)
 - Ms. Goldman shared that they had tried to make the upper school accessible in the primary and that it was not possible. Ms. Pierson shared her concern that there are several locations people associate with the name “Mt. Washington Lower School” and there may be confusion. Ms. Goldman shared that she would add the term “Church School Building” to the announcement to address confusion. Ms. Pierson shared that she would help with outreach in the community to address confusion
 - Ms. Williams made a motion to approve this change that was seconded by Mr. Novey. The motion passed.
- Pennsylvania Branch Library, 1531 W North Avenue (Was site 64) to move to Sandtown Winchester Academy 701 Gold Street. (Site #78) (Library is not handicapped accessible and cannot be made so. It's a historical building so its grandfathered in) (.4 miles) Precinct: 14005 and 15009
 - Ms. Williams made a motion to approve this change that was seconded by Mr. Novey. The motion passed.
- James McHenry Recreation Center, 911 Hollins Street (was site # 89) to move into the James McHenry School, 31 S Schroeder Street, (Site #87) just for election day. Precincts: 19002, 19003, 20002 and 18002 - Early Voting will still be in the Recreation center for this year.
 - Ms. Williams made a motion to approve this change that was seconded by Mr. Novey. The motion passed.
- Brooklyn Branch Library, 300 E Patapsco St. (was site # 115) move into Marie Farring Elem School 300 Pontiac Street (Site #114). (temporary move due to renovations) (.1 mile) Precincts: 25013, 25011 and 25012
 - Ms. Williams made a motion to approve this change that was seconded by Mr. Novey. The motion passed.
- Herring Branch Library, 3801 Erdman Avenue (was site 134) move to Catholic High School, 2800 Edison Hwy. (Site 019) (temporary move due to renovations) (.4 miles) Precincts: 26019 and 08003
 - Ms. Williams made a motion to approve this change that was seconded by Mr. Novey. The motion passed.
- Frederick Douglas #450, 2301 Gwynn Falls Pkwy. (was site 56) move to Robert W. Coleman Elem Sch #142 (will become site 56) 2400 Windsor Avenue, 21216 (.5 miles) Precincts: 13007 and 15020

- Ms. Williams made a motion to approve this change that was seconded by Mr. Novey. The motion passed.
- Mary Rodman Rec Center, 3600 W. Mulberry Street, (Site #093) move to Mary Rodman Elementary School #204, 3510 W. Mulberry Street. Right next door. Closed due to renovations Precinct: 20006
 - Ms. Williams made a motion to approve this change that was seconded by Mr. Novey. The motion passed.

Mr. Threawt disclosed that he made a \$25 campaign donation to Charles Sydnor. Mr. Novey disclosed that made a \$50 campaign donation to Odette Ramos and a \$25 campaign donation to Kamala Harris.

Questions about the Directors Response to the Board's questions:

Mr. Novey asked to confirm that everything is on track to upgrade the design of sample ballots to reduce confusion. Ms. Goldman confirmed that the staff has a meeting set up with the Center for Civic Design to discuss this matter. Ms. Goldman confirmed that they will use this design for the November 2024 election.

Mr. Novey asked if it would be possible to see precinct level data regarding which precincts were the source of the largest numbers of provisional ballots submitted without applications. Ms. Goldman confirmed that the paper version of the precinct level data provided at the June meeting was the only way to look at this data.

Mr. Novey asked about whether the board would be rehiring the 23 Chief Judges who did not show up during the primary. Mr. Jones said it is very hard to get judges in and they cannot start eliminating people because they do not come for an election. Mr. Novey followed up to reiterate that his question is specifically regarding the chief judges and expressed his observation that polls opened late because of chief judges not showing up. Mr. Jones said he makes the best decision he can make about certain individuals.

Ms. Williams asked a follow up about whether it might be strategic to do some specific recruitment for the chief judge roles that would focus a bit more on candidate quality. Mr. Jones says this is something he has been dealing with for 20 years and that trainers look for chief judges during training.

Mr. Novey brought up the case of the Beth Am precinct as an example of the challenge with chief judges. He shared that Beth Am had opened late in the 2016 general, 2018 general, 2022 primary and 2024 primary. Mr. Jones asked if it was the same chief judge. Mr. Novey mentioned that the synagogue leadership recruited a

chief judge but that she experienced the pathway to being a chief judge not working well. Mr. Novey expressed his feeling that there needs to be a clearer pathway to becoming a chief judge for high quality candidates. Mr. Jones expressed his feeling that it is very hard to find thousands of people to do a one-day job.

Mr. Thre watt asked if it would be possible to target recruitment to key locations with chronic issues. Ms. Williams expressed her observation that she saw people during the primary who were associated with key locations and she thought there would be benefit to strategic recruitment of judges.

Mr. Novey thanked Mr. Jones for the complete response regarding the challenge with the unofficial results during the primary. Mr. Jones said there are issues that happen in every election around this country.

Ms. Williams asked about the Baltimore Banner article regarding McAfee Election Solutions. Mr. Thre watt clarified that the article had already come out. Ms. Goldman clarified that the Banner did not accurately characterize the residency issues in the 1990s. Mr. Jones shared that there are very few people in the country who run elections as well as Mr. McAfee. Mr. Novey shared his concern that outsourcing warehouse management in this way may create challenges if McAfee Election Solutions is not available for a future election.

Mr. Jones said that we as board members need to be conscious of our connections and what we are telling people so this can stop. Mr. Jones said there are connections to a lot of this stuff that is being done. Mr. Thre watt and Ms. Williams shared that the whole board stands by Mr. McAfee's work and the work of the Board of Elections staff. Mr. Thre watt shared his feeling that this article did not start with the board. Ms. Williams shared that she has no agenda, and she raised the question because she was concerned about being blindsided by the article.

Mr. Jones shared his feeling that one thing we need to be cautious of is putting too many things in writing because it comes back to haunt you. Mr. Jones said that we get in trouble when the board starts putting and requesting too many things in writing.

Mr. Jones shared that he was interviewed for a media story about the lack of election administrators and people leaving the profession. Mr. Thre watt shared that the next meeting would be at 4 pm on September 19, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thre watt adjourned the meeting at 5:11 pm.

Board minutes approved at the 9/19/2024 board meeting.