

BOARD MEETING
BALTIMORE CITY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
FEBRUARY 20, 2025

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 21223.

IN ATTENDANCE:

BOARD MEMBERS

Sam Novey, Board Secretary
Scherod Barnes, Board President

STAFF

Abigail Goldman, Deputy Election Director
Thomas Chapman, Counsel
Sam McAfee, Contractor

ON PHONE

Hope Williams, Board Member
Terrence Threweatt Jr, Board Vice President

ABSENT

Maria Vismale, Board Member
Armstead B.C. Jones, Election Director

Mr. Barnes called the board meeting to order at 4:00 pm and declared a quorum of himself, Mr. Threweatt, Ms. Williams, and Mr. Novey.

Mr. Novey moved to accept the agenda as written. Mr. Threweatt seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Novey moved to accept the minutes of the General Election canvass. Mr. Threweatt seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Novey moved to accept the minutes of the January 16th, 2024, meeting. Mr. Threweatt seconded the motion. The motion passed.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Mr. Barnes announced that the board would be going into executive session at the end of the meeting to resolve a personnel matter. Mr. Barnes also thanked board members and others in the Baltimore City elections community who reached out to him and kept him in prayers over the last few weeks as he mourned the loss of his sister.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Jones was not present at the meeting, did not present a report, and did not make arrangements with other staff to present a report at this meeting.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- All PEPs have completed and submitted to the state
- Our warehouse move is on hold for right now. SBE will be passing new regulations at their February meeting that requires local jurisdictions to co-locate their warehouse and office locations in order to ensure security.
- There are two petitions that have been submitted. We approved the Baby Bonus petition and are still working on the land development petition from Michael Harrison. We have completed our part of the Working Class Party petition and now are waiting for the rest of the state to finish their part.
- There is lots of legislation proposed in Annapolis. We have offered information on some of these issues. The Deputy Director noted that we will be affected by HB 945 / SB 645 that will move Gubernatorial elections to the 4th Tuesday in June and Presidential elections to the 4th Tuesday in April.
- No updates on election recruitment.
- Scanner and e-poll books have been released; they are currently doing preventive maintenance on those machines. Mr. McAfee is in town to oversee that work.
- MAEO will occur from 5/4 - 5/10 in Ocean City. All board members and their attorneys are required to attend. Board members who cannot come need to send a letter to Jared DeMarinis regarding their reasons for not attending. This is a state biennial meeting and board members are required by law to attend.

Mr. Novey and Ms. Williams expressed appreciation to Ms. Goldman for the very informative written report.

Mr. Threweatt asked about the questions he had submitted regarding the strategic plan, budgeting, and contracts. Mr. Barnes clarified that he had not received any responses to these questions from the director although he and Mr. Novey had been present with the Deputy Director and staff to do a full general election in review.

ATTORNEY GENERAL REMARKS

No remarks.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Barnes shared that he attended the recent funeral of Ms. Goldman's father on behalf of the board.

Mr. Threweatt followed up about the timeline for large upcoming contracts and when staff plans to present contracts to the board. Ms. Goldman said that the staff had not yet begun work on those. Ms. Goldman estimated that the team would start on that

in May and confirmed that she had already communicated with Ms. Stanley to ensure that board members will receive copies before they go to the board of estimates.

Mr. Novey reported back to the board that the debrief session that took place that afternoon was really productive. He shared that the staff provided a very helpful report that included extensive data that can be used to improve election operations in the future. He shared that he will be writing up notes from that session to share with other board members so that all can provide their thoughts and ideas about how to further improve agency performance in 2026 and beyond. Mr. Novey shared his feeling that the General Election went well and that the staff is working hard to address the problem that did come up.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Barnes shared that his new business would be presented in executive session.

Mr. Threweatt asked about the timeline for developing an agency strategic plan and what the board can do to advocate for shifting from election day polling places to vote centers. Mr. Threweatt asked specifically about the potential for consolidating more polling sites to move in this direction. Mr. Novey clarified that lots of consolidations work, and the staff has already made many of those changes. But he also shared a takeaway from the post-election debrief that there are some locations where consolidating precincts is not appropriate for a particular space or creates confusion for voters and election judges. He also clarified that consolidated precincts do not have ballot styles for the whole city and are different from vote centers in keyways that make it problematic to try to use them that way. Mr. Novey expressed his feeling that Baltimore City should continue to focus on excellently implementing the current system and providing helpful information regarding potential changes and should stay in alignment with how counties around Maryland implement voting laws.

Mr. Threweatt asked about developing a plan to do a version of vote centers ahead of a potential change in state policy. He expressed concern about voter impact studies on polling place changes and having not seen them. Mr. Novey expressed concern that voter impact studies will make it harder to consolidate precincts and reiterated his concern that consolidated precincts are not equivalent to vote centers.

Mr. Barnes expressed his support for doing more studies into consolidating polling places. Ms. Williams also expressed her support for doing these studies.

Mr. Novey asked if Baltimore City has consolidated all the precincts that can be consolidated. Ms. Goldman said that much of this consolidation has already occurred but that this has drawbacks because there are so many ballot styles in a single location.

Mr. McAfee suggested that the MAEO convention would be a good time for Baltimore City Board members to connect with board members in other counties about a shift to vote centers. Ms. Goldman also suggested board members connect with state legislators about voter centers as well.

Mr. Barnes suggested that Mr. Threatt work with staff to move a vote center conversation forward. Ms. Goldman said that Guy Mickley would be reaching out to provide Mr. Barnes with a list of board presidents. Ms. Goldman shared her impression that all 24 election boards support vote centers, a majority already consolidate precincts to the extent Baltimore City does, but the legislature is not as aware of benefits. Mr. Threatt suggested that the election subcommittee on the City Council could be a good forum to share some of these ideas.

Mr. Novey moved to go into closed session for personnel matters and legal advice. Mr. Threatt seconded. The motion passed.