

**BOARD MEETING**  
**BALTIMORE CITY BOARD OF ELECTIONS**  
**OCTOBER 23, 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 IN FULL ATTENDANCE**

Scherod Barnes, Board President  
Sam Novey, Board Secretary  
Terrence Thrweatt, Vice President  
Maria Vismale, Board Member  
Hope Williams, Board Member

**STAFF**

Cliff Tatum, Election Director  
Abigail Goldman, Deputy Director  
Shawn Larson, Baltimore City Board of Elections Staff  
Sabrina Graves, Baltimore City Board of Elections Staff

**GUESTS**

D Dante Anthony Hayes, Baltimore City Republican Central Committee  
Emily Opilo, Baltimore Banner  
Heather Diehl, Baltimore Banner  
Richard Collins, 3rd Vice Chair, Maryland GOP  
Steve Ward, Grove Park Improvement Association  
Christopher Anderson, Maryland Black GOP Council  
Craig Kelly  
LaShandra Hart  
Joselin Martin, League of Women Voters of Baltimore City  
Marvin Briscoe  
Tasmin Swanson, Baltimore Votes Coalition and Center for Civic Design

Mr. Barnes declared a quorum at 4:00 pm with all members present.

Mr. Novey moved to accept the agenda. Mr. Thrweatt requested to add Vice President's Comments, an item on strategic planning to new business, a space for public comments in new business, and a closed session for management expectations to the agenda.

Mr. Barnes said the Vice President could speak in the part of the agenda already allocated for board member comments. Mr. Barnes also clarified that an executive

session to discuss personnel matters was already part of this agenda. Mr. Novey requested that the board vote on each of Mr. Threweatt's suggestions separately. Ms. Williams agreed that this was a good approach.

Mr. Novey moved to amend the agenda to include a discussion of the agency's strategic plan to old business as Mr. Threweatt has suggested. Mr. Threweatt seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The board agreed that Mr. Threweatt's suggestion about the closed session was already included in the agenda as written.

Mr. Threweatt requested that public comment be added to the agenda. Mr. Barnes reminded the board that the bylaws require anybody who wishes to speak providing 24 hours notice to the board president and no one had requested to speak.

Mr. Threweatt noted that the bylaws don't require president's remarks. Mr. Barnes reminded Mr. Threweatt that he had a full month in between meetings when he could request that new items be added to the agenda. He also reminded the board that they are a non-partisan body and that the president's remarks have historically been a part of the motion.

Ms. Goldman requested that board members speak more loudly and clearly so that people viewing the livestream could hear the meeting.

Mr. Novey noted that the board votes to approve the agenda, including President's remarks each month, and shared his feeling that he was comfortable continuing to do so especially since there is an agenda item in new business for board member comments.

Ms. Williams shared her belief that president's remarks are appropriate because the President officiates and guides the meeting.

Mr. Barnes asked guests to introduce themselves. They are listed above.

Mr. Novey moved to accept the agenda with the two additions already approved (for discussion of strategic planning during old business and for the inclusion of an executive session in new business). Ms. Vismale seconded the motion.

Mr. Novey, Ms. Vismale, Ms. Williams, and Mr. Barnes voted to accept the agenda. Mr. Threweatt voted no.

Mr. Novey moved to accept the revised minutes of the September 18 agenda. Mr. Threweatt seconded the motion. The motion passed.

### **PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

Mr. Barnes thanked everyone who participated in welcoming Mr. Tatum, Baltimore City's new election director, at our September 18 meeting. Mr. Barnes reiterated

the board commitment to working with Mr. Tatum and partners to support a great election.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Tatum shared that the board packet included an approved budget memorandum and updated voter registration numbers for Baltimore City.

Mr. Tatum also provided a high level overview of activities and strategic direction during his first thirty days.

The first priority activity he pursued was onboarding and orientation. He asked staff to brief him on the agency's current programs and who was responsible and accountable for those programs. He also reviewed agency workflows and asked whether there was documentation for those workflows. He also reviewed stakeholder engagement and assessed election judge recruitment and operational readiness for the 2026 election cycle.

Under stakeholder engagement, Mr. Tatum reported that he had been introduced to a number of elected officials and other community partners and had begun meeting with Department Heads throughout city government. He also reported good meetings with Comptroller Henry and his team as well as with Deputy Mayor for Operations Khalil Zaied. Mr. Tatum also mentioned meeting with the State Board of Elections Director, the Baltimore City Democratic State Central Committee (at the invitation of their chair), Baltimore Votes Coalition, and Center for Civic Design with the goal of having meetings with all stakeholders who wish to connect with the agency.

Mr. Tatum has also been doing a leadership assessment with all agency department heads and communicating leadership values and commitment to transparency, equity, service, and a focus on communications and collaboration.

Mr. Tatum shared that he had engaged in 1 on 1 meetings with staff and was proud to report that the Baltimore City Board of Elections has great competent informed and dedicated staff who needs resources to enhance election operations within Baltimore City. Mr. Tatum shared his feeling that the budget proposed by the budget director was taking us in that direction and that through discussion with city administrator and mayor we would be able to provide great service to the city of Baltimore.

Mr. Tatum has several top goals. One goal is reaffirming the mission statement for the agency - this includes developing objectives and a strategic plan. Another is identifying operational shortfalls and filling key gaps. Lastly, he wants to expand civic engagement and implement an effective ongoing communications strategy with stakeholders.

Mr. Tatum's immediate recommendation is to fill vacant positions including for a communications director and warehouse manager. The communications effort would not displace current staff but would add and enhance their efforts with focused staff

leadership. The warehouse manager will support relocation efforts and current operation. Mr. Tatum shared that the city has approved funding for relocation of the warehouse. Mr. Tatum again emphasized that the warehouse manager would be in addition to the current staffing efforts for 2026 election operations.

Mr. Tatum also expressed his intention to launch a comprehensive civic education campaign through collaborations with Baltimore City government-wide communications efforts.

Mr. Tatum closed by reaffirming his belief in communication, collaboration, and teamwork and suggested that the board and staff have a retreat in the coming months to co-create a shared vision for great election operations in Baltimore City.

Mr. Tatum briefly reviewed staff work in October. This included attendance at a recent MAEO meeting, 6 outreach events, preparation of the election plan for early voting sites / dropboxes / polling sites, and the launch of election judge outreach for 2026. Mr. Tatum reminded the board that the city election plan is due to the state on November 24 and that they would need to vote on changes at the November 24 meeting.

Ms. Vismale asking about whether Mr. Tatum would be making an internal hire for the warehouse manager role. Mr. Tatum confirmed that for both vacant roles he would be posting a job advertisement and both internal and external candidates would be encouraged to apply.

Mr. Novey expressed his excitement about this report and his feeling that many concerns of the board have been about capacity. Mr. Novey expressed his excitement that Mr. Tatum is taking steps quickly to expand capacity and offered the support of the board in publicizing job ads to talented people.

Ms. Williams expressed her enthusiasm for the report as well her willingness to be a part of a team retreat. She mentioned her interest in learning about recruitment and training for election judges and thanked the teams doing that work. Ms. Williams asked about the new election judge management system and marketing efforts related to that effort. Ms. Williams asked for an update on the new system in November and thanked Mr. Tatum and Ms. Goldman for their support of this effort.

Mr. Threweatt asked about election judge recruitment and community partnerships especially with regards to ensuring minority party representation. Mr. Tatum clarified that the first part of the election judge process was reaching out to past judges to see who could still serve and working with the Republican and Democratic State Central Committees to identify party members who are willing and able to serve as election judges. Mr. Tatum said he would be sharing a plan for election judge recruitment at a future meeting.

Mr. Threweatt asked about agency partnership with community groups like Baltimore Votes and the League of Women Voters to enable young adults and teenagers to serve as election judges.

Mr. Threweatt also asked to review the election plan before it goes to the state. Ms. Goldman said that she would be providing a comprehensive spreadsheet with all the data going to the state board of elections regarding polling locations, early vote locations, and drop box locations.

Mr. Threweatt asked about public comment for the election plan. Mr. Tatum clarified if Mr. Threweatt was asking about providing public notice of changes to polling sites. Mr. Novey expressed his confidence in Mr. Tatum's vision for expanding communications capacity to address this issue.

Mr. Threweatt asked if we are providing support to staff working on polling place relocations. Mr. Tatum assured Mr. Threweatt that the staff doing that work are getting appropriate support. Mr. Tatum expressed confidence that the list would be ready ahead of the state deadline. Ms. Goldman shared that there were still some polling site owners she had not heard from.

Mr. Tatum expressed his intention to help staff achieve work/life balance and get sufficient surge / temp staffing to avoid excessive overtime. Mr. Threweatt also expressed the willingness of himself and other board members to support staff.

Mr. Barnes asked if it would be helpful to move up the November meeting to ensure staff meet the 11/24 deadline for submitting the election plan. Ms. Goldman and Mr. Tatum assured him this was not necessary. Mr. Tatum clarified that all polling sites that are moving are moving because the site that had been used is shutting down or because a location that had been used in the past is reopening.

Mr. Novey clarified that a lot of the changing of polling sites is the result of investment in Baltimore City to build new schools, rec centers, and libraries.

Mr. Barnes thanked Mr. Tatum for his report.

## **ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL'S REPORT**

No report at this time.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Novey asked to give some remarks about the agency's strategic plan. He began by recognizing the incredible public servants involved in the Baltimore City Board of Elections as both staff and board members and acknowledged that several board members are directly impacted by the federal government shutdown. He particularly thanked Mr. Threweatt and Ms. Williams for their service to their country in federal roles. He also thanked Ms. Goldman for her many years of extraordinary service to Baltimore City and reminisced about how when he first started voting and working on campaigns in Baltimore City 20 years ago she was already well established as the go to person to anything challenging about elections in Baltimore City. Lastly, he recognized Mr. Tatum decades of service and expertise in election administration

including in Washington DC, Harris County Texas, and with the federal government. Mr. Novey expressed his confidence in all the great people and expertise in the room that can contribute to the strategic plan.

Mr. Novey asked that all board members share their ideas for the agency strategic plan and committed to working with members to articulate those ideas and communicate clearly to the new director about where the board is united as well as ideas that individual members have that should still be expressed even if there is disagreement between members.

Mr. Barnes expressed his commitment to working with board members to submit recommendations to the director for his consideration.

Ms. Williams expressed her feeling that strategic planning takes time especially in this situation where the board hopes to transform and improve and elevate the service of the agency. She said she hopes that many of these conversations can move forward through a retreat where feedback from both staff and community can be heard and explored. Ms. Williams said she hoped to discuss the timeline for this strategic planning work at a future board meeting.

Mr. Threweatt spoke to express his sense of disagreement with Mr. Barnes, Mr. Novey, and Ms. Williams. He shared his concern that other peer agencies (i.e. SBE, OAG at state levels) have strategic plans on the books. Mr. Threweatt shared that he wanted the Baltimore City Board of Elections Strategic Plan to include in-housing warehouse services, reprioritizing funds to hire a dedicated community outreach team, improving website and communications, ensuring election judge team has focused support to recruit Republican Election judges, improving community centric outreach and messaging, and providing first-in-class election services with "everything." Mr. Threweatt shared that he has a "Baltimore vs everybody" mentality and wants to exceed the level of election services provided in every other county in Maryland. Mr. Threweatt closed by expressing his appreciation that things are moving forward to move to new warehouse facility.

Mr. Novey asked Mr. Threweatt to clarify where he felt he disagreed with the other board members since the agenda Mr. Threweatt laid out for the strategic plan seemed to be generally aligned with both the report given by Mr. Tatum and the prior statements by other board members. Mr. Threweatt clarified that his point of disagreement is about the timeline and that he feels Mr. Tatum should present a strategic plan immediately (or as quickly as possible) upon start work.

Mr. Barnes expressed his feeling that the board should defer to the director regarding the timeline and content for the strategic plan and provide suggestions and recommendations along the way. He also expressed his confidence that Mr. Tatum is on track to produce a plan that meets the needs of all stakeholders.

Mr Novey clarified that the board was planning to meet in executive session momentarily and during that meeting they could discuss personnel issues such as expectations regarding when Mr. Tatum should submit the strategic plan.

Mr. Threweatt expressed his frustration that staff preceding Mr. Tatum had not been working on a strategic plan ahead of his arrival. Ms. Vismale expressed that she was extremely impressed by Mr. Tatum's director's report and the level of strategic direction he is already bringing to the agency even if it is not yet fully documented in an agency strategic plan.

Mr. Tatum spoke to clarify that his current activities talking to staff and stakeholders would inform the goals he includes in a strategic plan. While he could guess and summarily say "we are going to meet these three goals" at the outset of taking the job, his preference is to set those goals in a way that is informed by the work he is doing right now. Mr. Tatum also emphasized that the strategic plan does not take precedence over the work of getting ready for the 2026 election and that he would be taking all necessary steps to ensure the agency was fully "2026 election ready."

Mr. Tatum also announced that the city government had provided updated web design for all city websites including elections. Ms. Goldman clarified that the "beta site" is already available for the public at this link: <https://beta.baltimorecity.gov/boe>. She and Mr. Tatum encouraged board members and guests to look at the beta site and provide any comments or feedback about the experience. Mr. Tatum assured board members that many items that would fall under the strategic plan are already happening.

Mr. Threweatt expressed his feeling that he still wanted a timeline for the strategic plan and that he was frustrated that he asked about a strategic plan in February but hadn't set a deadline. Mr. Novey asked how the staff could have possibly moved that forward given that the prior director died in office and that the agency had been going through a hiring process and leadership transition for much of the time since the February meeting.

Ms. Vismale expressed her feeling that staff should hold board members accountable to doing their roles.

Mr. Barnes clarified that Mr. Tatum is open to meeting with any board members or community stakeholders privately and that people requesting meetings with Mr. Tatum should email Ms. Goldman at [Abigail.Goldman@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Abigail.Goldman@baltimorecity.gov).

Ms. Williams expressed her willingness to help the staff in any way she can.

Mr. Threweatt thanked Ms. Goldman for all her service to the agency and for answering many of his questions.

Mr. Barnes expressed his appreciation for the warehouse staff and the work they are doing to transform the facility.

Ms Williams moved to go into closed session under section 3-305b of the open meetings act to discuss individual performance of the director. The purpose of going

into closed session is to protect the confidentiality of personnel matters. Mr. Threweatt seconded the motion. The motion passed.