



APPROVED MINUTES

BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS SPECIAL MEETING – MAY 19, 2020

The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections met in Special Session on Wednesday, May 19, 2020 at 11:30AM.

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:

Mr. Mark Wingate, Vice Chairperson

Ms. Vernetta Keith Nuriddin

Dr. Kathleen Ruth

Mr. Aaron Johnson

Staff Attending: Mr. Richard Barron, Director; Mr. Ralph Jones, Registration Chief; Mr. Blake Evans, Elections Chief; Ms. Sharon Benjamin, Deputy Elections Chief; Ms. Brenda McCloud, Administrative Manager; Ms. Cheryl Ringer, County Attorney; David Lowman, County Attorney; Mr. Rico Dollar, Senior Graphics Designer & Moderator; Mr. James Reese, Production Manager; Ms. Jessica Corbitt; PIO & Director of External Affairs

Chairperson Cooney announced that this teleconferenced meeting is authorized pursuant to O.C.G.A. §50-14-1(g) because of the State of Emergency declared by Governor Kemp which resulted in state and local Government closures 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 announced due to the emergency nature of the meeting, no agenda was available.

#2– DISCUSSION OF EARLY VOTING LOCATIONS

Chairperson Cooney asked Mr. Barron how the BRE can assist DRE

Mr. Barron informed the Board of the first day of Early Voting (turnouts and complaints). The Sandy Springs and Garden Hills Elementary locations did not experience long lines. Mr. Barron stated the DRE discussed with County Manager and the City of Atlanta regarding expanding in those sites, if possible. Plans are currently being reviewed. Mr. Barron expressed the support the DRE is receiving from the County Manager and BOC Chairman. The DRE has made every effort to mitigate the risk by supplying EV staff with Mask, Face Shields, Sanitizers, Gloves, Sneeze Guards, and sufficient styluses for voters.

Mr. Barron requested some insight from **Dr. Ruth** due to her epidemiological background and experience with the **CDC** (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention). **Mr. Barron** is concerned by the increased political pressure during a Global Pandemic, which can easily affect how elections are executed. **Mr. Barron** do not want voters or staff impacted in the same manner that occurred in Wisconsin during their primary election where staff and voters contracted COVID-19.

Concerns:

- Staff Health and Safety (COVID-19)
- In-Person Voters Health and Safety
- Losing Poll Workers

Solutions:

- Extend the hours of operation
- Expanding into other spaces in the same facility

Mr. Wingate inquired about the use of Alpharetta City Hall instead of using the library due to the size of the Alpharetta

Mr. Barron explained that the preference is to always use the county facilities for EV sites to lower security risk

Dr. Ruth asked **Mr. Barron** can the **DRE** use multiple rooms at **CT Martin**

Mr. Evans explained that Mr. Foris Webb, III (City of Atlanta Municipal Clerk) suggested some large rooms and how to best utilize the additional space and that those suggestions are being taken into consideration.

Chairperson Cooney inquired about the process of printing your ballot and then walking to the scanner to cast your ballot

Mr. Evans expressed that the voter experience will remain the same

Mr. Barron mentioned Fulton County is currently using multiple scanners assigned to specific precincts due to multiple elections, political parties and the lengthy ballot causing low memory on the scanners. The department was informed that this was the only option from Dominion Voting and **SOS** to resolve the issues **DRE** was experiencing.

Mr. Barron also mentioned that there is still some confusion with regards to the election date, some voters believe that today, May19th, is Election Day. The department responded to numerous calls regarding this matter.

Mr. Barron asked about adding 32 BMDs and snaking the lines inside of CT Martin

Dr. Ruth responded by saying yes by maintaining social distancing and face covering

Mr. Wingate explained due to the size of the ballot he calculated in Alpharetta each ballot cast takes about twelve minutes. **Ms. Wingate** also mentioned hearing from a candidate who discussed their voting experience and utilizing the Emergency Bin for their ballot.

Ms. Nuriddin inquired about the procedures for utilizing the Emergency Bin

Mr. Evans explained the procedures and the voter's options; place in the bin or wait for the scanner to become operational.

Ms. Benjamin mentioned that when the EV staff begins scanning those ballots in they are required to announce in the polls that they are scanning Emergency ballots. **Ms. Benjamin** implored the **BRE** to consider health and safety when making decisions regarding Early Voting.

Mr. Barron asked **Ms. Benjamin** about staffing needs due to expansions of two early voting locations

Dr. Ruth asked about the possibility of moving staff from low volume locations to assist busy sites

Ms. Benjamin responded not at this time, she intends to complete an assessment of allocations and staffing

Mr. Johnson addressed the **DRE's** concern that the Board does take into consideration the health and safety of the staff. The Board also must be mindful of their responsibility to voters. **Mr. Johnson** mentioned the complaints received and witnessed by voters and himself, the long lines at South Annex. **Mr. Johnson** expressed that the **DRE** cannot look at the response they received on the request for an absentee ballot because the process was different. The voters who are showing up to the EV locations with their ballots do not trust the process, **Mr. Johnson** implored **DRE** to do better.

Suggestions:

- Larger facilities/ Expansion
- Extended Hours
- Chairs
- Water
- Better Line Management

Mr. Johnson expressed historically there will always be political pressure and unfortunately there are certain areas that are known for receiving less and that's what this looks like. **Mr. Johnson** expressed that he does not believe there was ill-intent; however, we need to work very hard to ensure voters can vote in a timely manner.

Mr. Evans mentioned some of the issues the **DRE** is experiencing are causing a delay in the overall voting experience.

Mr. Wingate requested an update from **Mr. Barron** with regards to the EV locations this morning.

Mr. Barron stated the additional equipment and personnel will be finalized today

Ms. Corbitt mentioned to the Board their effort to get in contact with personnel at the Health Department but to no avail. **Ms. Corbitt** expressed her willingness to contact the Health Department on their behalf. **Ms. Corbitt** communicated the efforts of External Affairs supporting the **DRE** regarding disseminating timely information of everything concerning Elections.

Mr. Johnson expressed gratitude to **Ms. Corbitt** and the **External Affairs** team. **Mr. Johnson** suggested **External Affairs** send the information formulated to the candidates as well. Also, **Mr. Johnson** reiterated the **DRE** needs to ask for what's needed from the County Manager and the BOC Chairman because they expressed their willingness to assist the department.

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. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion.** Collectively, the Board agreed to adjourn at 11:19 a.m.

The meeting adjourned.

Prepared by,

Mariska Bodison, Board Secretary