



## APPROVED MINUTES

### BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS SPECIAL MEETING – AUGUST 23, 2019

The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections met in Special Session on Friday, August 23, 2019 at 11:00 a.m. in the Public Safety Building, 130 Peachtree Street, S.W., Atlanta, Georgia.

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

**Other Board Members Present:** Mr. Aaron Johnson  
Dr. Kathleen Ruth  
Ms. Vernetta K. Nuriddin

**Board Member(s) Absent:** Mr. Mark Wingate, Vice-Chairperson

**Staff Attending:** Mr. Richard Barron, Director; Mr. Ralph Jones, Registration Chief; Mr. Blake Evans, Elections Chief; Mrs. Sharon Benjamin, Deputy Elections Chief; Mr. Johnny Harris, Elections Officer; Mrs. Pamela Coman, Registration Manager; Ms. Breauna Jenkins, Administrative Coordinator I; Ms. Jessica Corbitt, PIO & Director of External Affairs; Ms. April Majors, Public Affairs Manager

**Guests Attending:** Chairman Robb L. Pitts (BOC), Commissioner Natalie Hall (BOC), Foris Webb III (City of Atlanta), Joe Carn (BOC, D6 Candidate) Furpan Muhammad, Brenda Colbert, Khadijah A. Rahman (BOC, D6 Candidate), Sharon Matthews, Chris Brown (BOE,D2 Candidate) James Davenport, Linda Pritchett, Ron Shakir, Artis Hill, A.B. Madyun, Ask Muhammad, Karim Shadid, Kennedy Toliver, Jamila Jones, Cory Ruth, Harriet Thomas (BOC staff) Emily Pfiesser (BOC staff), Akram S. AL-Uqudah, Madinah D. AL-Uqudah, Sharon Matthews, Renee Staryk, Michael A. Williamson, Denise Fraser (BOC staff), Reverend Billy Honor (New Georgia Project), Shawna Hayes Tavres

#### **#1– APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Dr. Ruth and carried by a unanimous vote of 4-0.**

#### **#2– COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RESPONSE**

**Joe Carn (BOC, D6 Candidate)** advocating for additional early voting locations for the upcoming Special Election and eliminating the feeling of voter suppression

**Furpan Muhammad** appalled that the C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center is closed as an early voting location and expressed that this decision is a form of voter suppression

**Foris Webb, III** acknowledged the concerns of the citizens and informed the **BRE** that the City of Atlanta stands ready to assist in any manner needed

**Brenda Colbert** appalled that the C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center is closed as an early voting location

**Khadijah A. Rahman (BOC, D6 Candidate)** advocating for C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center to be open as an early voting location for the upcoming Special Election

**Sharon Matthews** advocating for C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center to be open as an early voting location for the upcoming Special Election

**Chris Brown (BOE, D2 Candidate)** advocating for C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center to be open as an early voting location for the upcoming Special Election

**Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to waive the normal rules to allow additional public comments after the meeting began. The motion was made by Ms. Nuriddin, seconded by Mr. Johnson and carried by a unanimous vote of 4-0.**

**Commissioner Natalie Hall (District 4)** acknowledged that C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center resides in her Commission District. **Commissioner Hall** mentioned a discussion that she was not privy to regarding closing CT Martin and suggested any conversation about this location should have included her. **Commissioner Hall** expressed that there will be voters disenfranchised if this location does not open. **Commissioner Hall** explained that voters from District 6 will travel to CT Martin due to accessibility. **Commissioner Hall** implored **BRE** and **DRE** to reconsider their decision to allow early voting at CT Martin

**Shawna Hayes Tarves** advocating for C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center to be open as an early voting location for the upcoming Special Election, and to consider opening early voting locations in the respective district that has a special election

**James Davenport** frustrated with the election voting process throughout this country (USA) imploring **DRE** to get it right

**Linda Pritchett** acknowledged Fulton County's past efforts with opening and maintaining early voting locations and implored **DRE** to consider opening more locations to appease all the citizens in District 6

**Ron Shakir** advocating for C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center to be open as an early voting location for the upcoming Special Election

**Artis Hill** advocating for C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center to be open as an early voting location for the upcoming Special Election

**A.B. Madyun** expressed concerns regarding the chosen locations and the cost voters would incur for parking by voting at the Government Center

**Chairperson Cooney** acknowledged the presence of Commissioner Robb L. Pitts, Chairman

### **#3- CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONAL EARLY VOTING LOCATION(S) FOR SPECIAL ELECTIONS, SEPTEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup>**

- **Board of Commissioner, District 6**
- **Atlanta Board of Education, District 2**

**Ms. Nuriddin** advised **Mr. Barron** to provide clarity to the decision made regarding early locations

**Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to add four mobile (Outreach) Locations. The motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Dr. Ruth.**

- **Mr. Barron** spoke to the citizens and thanked them for attending the meeting
- **Barron** mentioned that prior to 2013, there were no more than six early voting locations for any election
- In the 2016 presidential election, the County opened 37 early voting locations
- Fulton County maintains being the only County that has an expansive early voting program
- When considering early voting locations, by law, **DRE** is required to hold early voting at the Government Center, which resides in Atlanta Board of Education (**BOE**) District 2
- The two other locations were based on the amount of registered voters in particular areas of District 6. The department made every effort to be good stewards of tax dollars. **Mr. Barron** stated there was never any attempt to suppress voters
- The County has displayed a great history of enfranchising voters throughout the County
- **Barron** mentioned an alternative method voters could take advantage of is Absentee by Mail

**County Commission, District 6:**

- North 12, 278
- Central 19,584
- Southeast 31,395

**Mr. Barron** explained the financial aspect that has significantly impacted the department:

- In August 2017, **BOC** passed a cost sharing method
- In August 2019, a new resolution was passed by the BOC that reduced the amount of monies received from the municipalities and schools. During a Special or General Election, municipalities or schools will be required to pay **\$2.96** per registered voter in their jurisdiction and for a runoff election, **\$2.46** per registered voter
- Due to this new resolution, **DRE** has to refund Atlanta **BOE** approximately \$94,000.00
- **DRE** currently will not have enough funds to administer the Runoff Election in October and with nine candidates for each race, it is highly probable there will be a runoff election
- **Barron** mentioned always having the support of the Commissioners and noted that **DRE** will be required to request additional funds
- **Barron** mentioned the calls and messages received regarding opening CT Martin have not gone unnoticed, which is the reason for this Special Meeting
- **Barron** explained that the **DRE** did not consider CT Martin because it is located in Commission District 4 which is not in this Special Election
- Southwest Library has been renovated, recently reopened and can be considered; as it resides in Commission District 6

**Mr. Barron** informed the **BRE** that the **DRE** will adhere to their ruling and use the funding allotted; however, they will go before the BOC to request additional funding for the Runoff elections

**Chairman Pitts** directed the **BRE** and **DRE** to not consider cost, but vote according to their rules and regulations. He will work with his colleagues to get more funding for the **DRE**

**Commissioner Hall** interjected and stated that she has \$25, 000.00 to support opening CT Martin as an early voting location

**Mr. Barron** explained that the \$20,000.00 covers the early voting location cost; however, it does not cover the full amount needed

**Ms. Nuriddin** inquired about the **BOC** cost sharing resolutions for municipalities in 2017 and 2019

**Mr. Barron** stated with the new resolution, especially for this election, the Department will always need to request additional funding

**Ms. Nuriddin** noted that the resolution passed by the **BOC** has negatively impacted the Department and how elections are conducted

**Mr. Barron** informed the **BRE** that this resolution has a higher negative impact on the Special Election in September more than the upcoming General Elections in November

**Dr. Ruth** inquired about the amount of money being refunded to ABOE, District 2 as well as the cost to open CT Martin as an early voting location

**Mr. Barron** stated once the amended contract is signed, they will be refunding over \$94,000.00 and it is approximately \$20,000.00 to open an early voting location for three weeks

**Mr. Johnson** addressed **Commissioner Hall** and **Chairman Pitts** and the concerned citizens of County:

- **Johnson** acknowledged that the County Commission district lines were created by state legislature and **BRE** has no control over boundary lines
- **Johnson** expressed that the **BRE** makes a strong effort to provide all citizens with many early voting locations throughout the County
- In the 2018 General Election, **DRE** opened 24 early voting locations for three weeks, as well as 11 outreach locations
- **Johnson** mentioned neighboring counties that are similar in size opening only one early voting location. **Johnson** provided clarity on his motion to consider outreach (mobile) to ensure that the entire district gets an opportunity to vote, not just one portion of the district, as the **BRE's** main goal is to operate in fairness

**Mr. Johnson** asked about cost and notification to the public regarding the location updates

**Mr. Barron** stated that Southwest Library can be ready to start at the beginning of early voting. However, all other locations are either unavailable due to renovations, or require an assessment by the IT Department before a decision to utilize the facility can be determined

**Ms. Benjamin** stated she sent IT staff out to do an assessment of College Park Historical Building and College Park Library is closed due to renovation

**Ms. Corbitt** communicated that External Affairs is on standby upon a decision being made by **BRE** to update the public

**Ms. Nuriddin** mentioned a conversation with **Andrea L. Boone (Atlanta City Council Member, District 10)**, that stated CT Martin is available to be an early voting location. **Ms. Nuriddin** supports opening two

more locations for early voting; however, expressed disapproval of outreach locations. **Ms. Nuriddin** expressed concerns regarding outreach locations being too confusing for voters in the short timeframe

**Mr. Evans** explained that the **DRE** contacted CT Martin on several occasions. During the initial conversation, CT Martin was unavailable. After hearing rumors of it being available, a call was made to confirm availability and the Department was told that it would be available. Although the location is now available, there is uncertainty regarding if it will be available for the first day of early voting.

**Mr. Johnson** expressed concerns of the entire Commission District 6 being represented

**Chairperson Cooney** asked has the discussion yield an amendment or a vote

**Mr. Johnson** expressed supporting Southwest Library

**Mr. Johnson** explained that if we are looking at neighborhoods, CT Martin is an excellent location; however, **BRE** is charged with providing services to the entire District, not just one portion

**Mr. Barron** suggested possibly getting East Point Library and/ or College Park Historical Building for a limited time

**Mr. Johnson** stated he supports **Mr. Barron's** suggestion

**Dr. Ruth** requested clarity on the suggested locations

**Ms. Benjamin** reiterated that adding early voting locations requires the IT Department to do an assessment

**Ms. Nuriddin** requested a recommendation from **Mr. Barron**

**Mr. Barron** explained that with five early voting locations, **DRE** will incur a deficit of \$150,000.00

**Mr. Barron** addressed the voter turnout rate; however, there needs to be a balance throughout the Commission District. **Mr. Barron** expressed that the **BRE** must consider cost in this decision and the shortage **DRE** is currently experiencing

**Mr. Barron** stated two, anything more would be excessive. **Mr. Barron** also proposed one permanent and two outreach locations, to split the time

**A motion was made to open two permanent locations on Monday, August 26, 2019; C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center and one other location in the southern portion of the district. The motion was made by Ms. Nuriddin.**

**Chairperson Cooney** recognized **Foris Webb, III** (City of Atlanta Municipal Clerk) with regards to being able to gain access to the building and coordinating between Fulton County and City of Atlanta's IT Department

**Mr. Webb** addressed the Board and the citizens. **Mr. Webb** expressed that the City of Atlanta will be placed on notice with regards to Fulton County utilizing their facility, if that is the determination of the Board. Although CT Martin is a normal early voting location, **COA** and **DRE** must do their due diligence to ensure staff and technical support is in place. **Mr. Webb** explained that he will do what is necessary to accommodate the Board on any decision made.

**A motion was made to withdraw the previous motion. The motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Dr. Ruth.**

**Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to add two permanent early voting locations: C. T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center with Southwest Library as a contingency location, and an additional location to be determined by staff based on logistics. The motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Dr. Ruth and carried by a unanimous vote of 4-0.**

**Mr. Jones** updated the Board on misinformation in recent letters sent out to residents in **Precinct UC031**. Voter Registration is currently in the process of re-sending letters to correct the error. This letter informed voters in Union City that their new polling precinct will be Southwest Library. The correct polling location for approximately 1300 voters is Christian City Welcome Center. Mr. Jones stated that any questions can be directed to the Voter Registration Division.

## **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. Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Nuriddin seconded the motion.**

The meeting adjourned at 12:18pm.

Prepared by,

Mariska Bodison, Board Secretary