

DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections

Meeting Minutes

January 27, 2023

Start Time: 1:00 p.m.

End Time: 1:57 p.m.

Board Attendees: Chair Dele Lowman Smith
Vice Chair Nancy Jester
Anthony Lewis
Susan Motter
Karli Swift

Other Attendees: Keisha Smith, Executive Director
Irene Vander Els, Assistant County Attorney
Shelley Momo, Assistant County Attorney
Tristen Waite, Assistant County Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Lowman Smith called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Ms. Austin read the roll by calling each board member by name. All members were in attendance.

Motion by Vice Chair Jester, seconded by Ms. Motter, to approve the agenda subject to two modifications. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Motter, to approve the minutes of the December 12 meeting. The motion carried by a vote of 4-0-1. Vice Chair Jester abstained because she had not attended the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Austin read the rules for public comment:

Public comments may be made in person or submitted by sending an email of one page or less to electionspubliccmnt@dekalbcountyga.gov which must be received between 1:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. on the day of the meeting. The body of your email must include your first and last name, followed by your address. Abusive, profane, or derogatory language will not be permitted. By submitting an email for public comment, you agree to have your name, address and the email broadcast on the UStream and entered into the record and minutes. The DeKalb Board of Registration and Elections reserves the right, at the DeKalb Board of Registration and Elections' sole discretion, to (1) add your email to the record/minutes without reading any of it into the broadcast or (2) read all or a portion of your email into the record/minutes.

No comments were received in person or by email.

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ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A) Remote Engagement Options

Ms. Swift suggested collecting emailed public comments prior to the meeting so that they could be read during the meeting. Ms. Vander Els responded that she was not aware of a legal requirement for public comments to arrive during the meeting but would confirm that. Vice Chair Jester supported the idea. Chair Lowman Smith recommended working out the details once the Law Department had provided further input.

Mr. Lewis suggested allowing Board members to attend meetings remotely two or three times a year when they would otherwise be unavailable. Ms. Motter stated that according to her understanding of the law, it would be permissible for members to attend remotely if they were ill or out of the jurisdiction as long as a quorum was physically present at the meeting. She asked the Law Department to research the issue. Ms. Vander Els responded that they would. Vice Chair Jester recommended considering the request in a broader light, commenting that participation had been high when the public had also been allowed to attend virtually.

B) Director's Report

Director Smith informed the Board of several events relating to debriefing from the 2022 election cycle and staff training and development opportunities. In addition, she shared staffing and budget updates and discussed plans for expanded voter education.

C) Legislative Update

Ms. Vander Els reported on several bills affecting elections: HB 17, HB 48, HR 18, HR 42, HB 2, and HB 10. The Assembly was also expected to address redistricting of the City of Decatur Board of Education at some point in this cycle.

Ms. Swift asked if the Department would lobby for or against any current bills. Chair Lowman Smith responded that the Board could identify issues to put forward to the Assembly. In response to a comment from Vice Chair Jester regarding the engagement with the Commissioners and county lobbyist, Ms. Vander Els offered to determine what type of engagement the Board could have with the county's lobbyist. The Vice Chair offered her opinion that the Board should weigh in on issues related to election administration but not on political issues. Ms. Motter and Mr. Lewis agreed. Ms. Swift also agreed and posed a question on what the Board could be thinking of and asking of legislators this cycle. The Chair stated that items relating to administration, operations, and voter access were under the Board's purview and added that the Board's insight, combined with feedback from staff and stakeholders, is important to be shared with legislators in ways deemed appropriate by the Law Department. She went on to state that the State Elections Board is the Board of Registration and Elections' counterpart and asked that the Board consider ways to engage with them on legislative agenda items.

D) Election Cycle Debrief

Vice Chair Jester asked for the parties to be present at a debrief session. Ms. Swift responded that she imagined it would be held at a public meeting. The meeting date will be shared with the public once the Board confirms the debrief date.

E) Center for Election Excellence

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Director Smith announced that the County Board of Commissioners had voted to accept a \$2 million grant from the Center for Tech and Civic Life and approve membership in the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence. DeKalb County was one of 16 jurisdictions selected out of more than 90 applicants and the only one in Georgia. Membership would provide access to election tools, resources, and training.

Chair Lowman Smith thanked the Administration and Department of Finance for leading the due diligence and application process. She went on to state that the designation was in line with the Board's vision for the Elections Department to ensure voter-centric operations.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Lewis wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Ms. Motter congratulated the Department on the Center for Election Excellence designation.

Vice Chair Jester also wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Chair Lowman Smith welcomed the Department's new employees.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Motter, seconded by Vice Chair Jester, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m.