

DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections

Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2023

Start Time: 4:30 p.m.

End Time: 5:45 p.m.

Board Attendees: Chair Dele Lowman
Vice-Chair Nancy Jester
Anthony Lewis
Susan Motter

Other Attendees: Keisha Smith, Executive Director
Terry Phillips, Deputy County Attorney
Shelley Momo, Assistant County Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Lowman called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. Ms. Austin read the roll by calling each board member by name. Vice-Chair Jester, Mr. Lewis, Chair Lowman, and Ms. Motter were in attendance.

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to approve the agenda. The motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to approve the minutes of the April 13 meeting. The motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

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 4:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. The body of your email must include your first and last name. Abusive, profane, or derogatory language will not be permitted. By submitting an email for public comment, you agree to have your name 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.

The following citizens provided public comment:

- Anar Parikh
- Gigi Pedraza
- Luis Zaldivar
- Salik Suhani

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Two comments were also received by email between 4:30 and 5:00 p.m. Their comments are included at the end of the minutes.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A) Director's Report

Director Smith announced an unauthorized entry at the department's satellite facility at the former Sam's Club in Stonecrest and reassured the board and the public that the department had acted swiftly in coordinating with local law enforcement, the Secretary of State's office, and county officials to ensure that no voter information was compromised. She thanked the DeKalb County Police Department for its immediate response and ongoing investigation.

The Director provided an update on registration activities, inventory management, record retention, site assessments, training, and other activities to prepare for the upcoming election. She announced the hiring of two election coordinators and discussed efforts to fill several other positions.

The Director provided an update on the budget. Ms. Motter asked if the voter hubs were included in the budget. The Director responded that funding for the voter hubs had not been approved in the first round of the budget but that the department remained in discussion with the Ops Committee for that item. Vice-Chair Jester asked what the posture of the Ops Committee had been on that request. Director Smith believed that the Committee saw it as a worthwhile investment but that there had not yet been a vote.

The Director announced an upcoming series of training classes for the staff and invited the board to attend.

The Director discussed outreach efforts including demonstrations of the voter hubs and engagement with the YMCA and DeKalb County Schools.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

A) Precinct Boundary Changes

Director Smith introduced twenty-two proposed precinct boundary changes which would affect the polling places of 234 voters and affect another 679 without changing their polling place. She requested for the Board to recommend the changes to the Board of Commissioners for approval.

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to open discussion.

Ms. Motter thanked the Director for the detailed information. She requested for the department to send a second notification to each affected voter before the Presidential Preference Primary next year.

In response to a series of questions from Ms. Motter, Vice-Chair Jester, and Mr. Lewis, Mr. Catherwood stated that the precinct boundaries needed to be drawn around individual houses because municipal annexations were often done on a house-by-house basis; that the changes not stemming from annexations were intended to align the precinct boundaries to the new district boundaries drawn in redistricting last year; and that the number of affected voters given for each change was based on a count of the people registered at each address shown on the map.

Motion by Ms. Motter, seconded by Vice-Chair Jester, to petition the county's governing authority to approve the staff's alterations and changes to precinct boundaries in compliance with the law, noting that any alterations and changes to precincts approved by the governing authority shall not become

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effective for the next election unless approved more than sixty days prior to a general election or thirty days prior to a special election; and to authorize staff to take any other actions to ensure compliance with the law, including publication of the proposed changes and filing any approved changes. The motion carried 4-0.

B) Board Bylaws

Motion by Ms. Motter, seconded by Vice-Chair Jester, to adopt the revisions to the board's bylaws dated May 11, 2023, which revisions were discussed at the board's April 2023 meeting and posted on the website.

Vice-Chair Jester thanked the other board members, the Law Department, and especially Ms. Motter for their work on this change.

The motion carried 4-0.

C) Resolution on Language Access

Director Smith updated the board on the Voting Opportunity and Translation Equity (VOTE) resolution passed by the Board of Commissioners. She recommended deferring action until the board's July meeting, at which time the staff could present research on the county's language needs and propose a plan.

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to defer the item to the July meeting.

Ms. Motter stated that as the daughter of a naturalized citizen, she was proud of what the department had done in this area, noting that Gwinnett County had followed DeKalb's lead and now offered translations into Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, and Vietnamese. She noted the need for detailed statistics on exactly what languages were being spoken in the county and called on the community organizations present for their assistance.

Ms. Motter asked if the resolution applied to the Board of Commissioners or the Board of Registration and Elections, and whether funding had been allocated for the items involved. Ms. Momo responded that this was an urging resolution, meaning that the Board of Commissioners was urging the Board of Registration and Elections to take action. Ms. Motter asked the Law Department to provide more details on the board's obligations before the July meeting.

Mr. Lewis asked for statistics on voter participation rates among language groups. He asked for information about the potential cost. He also asked the Law Department for information about the board's obligations under federal law.

Vice-Chair Jester also asked the Law Department to provide information on the legal force of the resolution and the relevant federal and state laws. She asked Director Smith for a breakdown of the costs of each individual item requested.

Director Smith stated that federal law requires translations for language groups if the number of voting age citizens with limited English proficiency is greater than 10,000 or greater than 5% of the voting age citizens in the county. Hispanics were currently the largest such group in DeKalb County with 3,099. She stressed the need for an objective methodology for selecting the languages to be translated.

Vice-Chair Jester asked how limited English proficiency was defined. The Director responded that it was self-reported to the Census.

Mr. Lewis commented on the resolution's request for bilingual poll workers and asked the Director to consider that in her breakdown of the potential costs.

Ms. Motter noted the difficulty in retaining poll workers and stated that hiring bilingual poll workers would require strong partnerships with community organizations. She asked whether the resolution's items should be considered aspirational. She cautioned the board to set goals that it could successfully achieve.

Chair Lowman gave her impression that the resolution was a recommended policy if the board should choose to move forward. She stated that the board had demonstrated its commitment to ensuring accessibility for every citizen with the right to vote; and that because of that commitment, a fair and consistent policy was needed. She noted that recruiting poll workers for each precinct would likely be impossible until the community grew to the point that it met the federal threshold. She suggested investigating a telephone translation service. She stated that the Board of Commissioners had demonstrated its commitment to funding this initiative and that they would benefit from receiving a line-item summary of the costs.

Vice-Chair Jester acknowledged the large amount of work involved in preparing this information and requested the Director to inform the board if July was too early.

The motion to defer the item to July carried 4-0.

BOARD COMMENTS

Vice-Chair Jester thanked members of the community for attending the meeting.

Ms. Motter asked to acknowledge staff members who had recently retired.

Mr. Lewis thanked the public for attending the meeting and the staff for the detailed budget and boundary change reports.

Chair Lowman thanked the staff and the Director.

Director Smith commemorated the retirements of Glenda Woods, Deborah Christian, Renata Fleming, and Wanda Drake and acknowledged their contributions to the office and community.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

EMAILED COMMENTS

A) Joy Wasson

I'm Joy Wasson, a DeKalb County voter living at 1200 Ponce De Leon Ave NE, Atlanta GA 30306. Some proposed rules have been submitted for consideration by the State Election Board that are common sense actions to help safeguard our voting system. It has been widely reported that in early 2021, unauthorized persons accessed Georgia's election software and components for days on end, copying them and then sharing them with other unauthorized individuals.

What you may not know is that no actual mitigation has been done. In a recent court hearing, representatives of the state indicated that the problem won't be addressed until 2025, well after a consequential national election. Georgians deserve to have confidence in their votes and for there not to be the threat of the election

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being won based on the best hacks. Please contact the State Election Board to support the rules proposed by Coalition for Good Governance and the Morgan County Democratic Committee. The breach of our statewide system is not being treated as the emergency that it is. The proposed rules call for emergency paper balloting which sets aside the electronic ballot markers, in addition to other provisions. I have attached the rules petition to my email. Feel free to contact me for further information. Thank you for your consideration and for your service.

B) Glory Kilanko

Women Watch Afrika, Inc. brings you greetings from the many languages from the 23 African countries that we currently serve. We are humbled and happy that you are considering language access/ language justice for inclusion in your celebrations today, and we write in support of the following refugee languages being suggested because of the diversity in Clarkston which today is home for all of us displaced global refugees and immigrants. We write in support of the following languages Chinese, Vietnamese, and French, and Arabic.

Women Watch Afrika, Inc. (WWA) is a non-profit, International, National, and local grassroots, social justice Black women lead organization whose primary goals are the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, the promotion of social and economic development and health equity of women and girls, and the acculturation of immigrants and refugees (both men and women) arriving to the United States from 23 African nations. In line with its goal, Women Watch Afrika provides culturally appropriate comprehensive Social Services; Civic Engagement; Voter Education and Voter Registration; Advocacy; Safe Birth and Reproductive Justice; Health and Legal Education; Know Your Rights workshops; Citizenship Preparation; Legal Services; Domestic Violence/FGM Prevention; Environmental and Climate Justice; Language Justice/Access; and Advocates against unjust, discriminatory laws that affect our community.