

The regular meeting of the Erie County Board of Elections was called to order by Chairman Ferrell at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, February 5, 2021.

Roll Call:	(D) Thomas M. Ferrell, Chairman	Present
	(D) William J. Monaghan, Member	Present
	(R) Nicholas J. Smith, Member	Present
	(R) Jeffrey N. Krabill, Member	Present

Guests in attendance: Shomore Deniro (listened via teleconference), Amy Grubbe, and Melissa Tomaro

Motion to approve the minutes from the previous board meetings (November 16, November 18, December 3, and January 15), was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Krabill. Motion carried.

Motion to pay the bills was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Krabill. Motion carried.

Ms. James, Deputy Director, stated that the deadline for turning in petitions and issues for the upcoming election was February 3. The office received one petition for Huron Municipal Court Judge from William Steuk. Mr. Steuk had more than enough signatures, and he also filled out paperwork for a name change, to go on the ballot as Bill Steuk. The board took a few moments to review the petitions and the name change paperwork. Motion to certify the petitions and to accept the name change was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Ms. James stated that there were a few schools who filed paperwork to put a school levy on the ballot: Huron, Margaretta, and Monroeville. She also stated that three people filed petitions for Vermilion City Mayor at the Lorain County Board of Elections. Assuming the Lorain County Board approves all three petitions, there will also be an election in Vermilion City this May. Mr. Smith asked who the three filers were. Ms. Link, clerk, said that she would get those names.

Ms. James then stated that the office was thinking of moving a couple of precincts, just for this upcoming election. According to Ohio Revised Code 3503.01, a precinct can be moved for one election if fewer than 200 voters are affected by the change. She stated that in Berlin Township 1, Huron Schools, there are only 16 voters, and in Milan Township 2, Huron Schools, there are only 99 voters. The staff was thinking of moving those people to the Huron Library this election, which is what was done two years ago. Ms. James also stated that in Oxford Township, Monroeville Schools, there are 168 voters. The staff wanted to move those voters to the Groton Township Hall for this upcoming election.

Mr. Krabill stated that first, we would need to make motions for the school levies. Motion to approve the Huron School Levy was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried. Motion to approve the Margaretta School Levy was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Krabill. Motion carried. Motion to approve the Monroeville School Levy was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Ms. Link then stated that the three people who filed petitions for Vermilion City Mayor are Daniel Roth, Gerry Kyle, and James Forthofer. Mr. Krabill asked if we needed to approve those petitions. Mr. Smith responded that Lorain County does that.

Mr. Smith asked, regarding moving the precincts, if we needed to decide that next month because it wasn't formally on the agenda. Mr. Krabill asked if we needed to inform the people this would affect. Ms. Link responded yes, that we would send postcards to those voters. Mr. Krabill asked how much that would cost. Mr. Smith said he figured 50 cents a postcard, but Ms. James stated postcards were about 40 cents each. Mr. Krabill stated he was just trying to figure out if there was a cost benefit to moving the locations. Mr. Smith responded that there was, which Ms. James confirmed. Mr. Krabill asked if Mr. Ferrell would like a motion for moving those precincts, and Mr. Ferrell stated yes. Motion to move these three precincts just for this upcoming election was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Next on the agenda was discussing the budget with Melissa Tomaro from the county finance department. Ms. Tomaro stated that both Mr. Krabill and Ms. James had been at the commissioners' budget meeting on February 3 and asked if they wanted to say anything about that. Mr. Krabill stated that the meeting was pretty straight forward. There were a couple of questions from the commissioners that he and Ms. James answered. Mr. Krabill stated that Commissioner Old seemed to understand the situation best, but that the other two commissioners got up to speed quickly. The commissioners understood that, at the end of last year, about 23,000 dollars was swept into the county general fund from the Board of Elections budget, which means the county does have the money to do the payout the board is requesting. Mr. Krabill stated that, while nothing was formally voted on, the commissioners indicated they were likely to vote yes on the payout when the time comes. Ms. Tomaro stated that, regarding the remaining comp time on the books, the commissioners would like BOE staff to try to burn that up. However, they understand the circumstances of the past year and the high turnover are what contributed to the high comp hours.

Ms. Tomaro then stated that she went over the line item budget with Ms. James yesterday, and that they would go over it one more time to make sure we have everything in supplies and services the way we want. Ms. James stated that she was a little concerned that the services line item had gone down from 2019 so much. For example, the services line item is where we pay Knowink from, and their prices did go up. However, Ms. James stated that Ms. Tomaro explained that if need be, we could take some money out of supplies and put it into services.

Ms. Tomaro explained that one of the reasons they put so much more money in supplies is because we have a lot more people voting absentee now. She reiterated that we could always move money around if there was a need. She also stated that the overall money allocation from 2019 to 2021 increased by about 6,000 dollars.

Mr. Monaghan then remarked on the salary and benefits line item, and how that only went up about 5,000 dollars from 2019 to 2021. Ms. Tomaro explained that that line item is calculated based on rate of pay, OPERS, Medicare, and health insurance. She also stated to keep in mind that for 2021, the county is not asking individual departments to pay for workers comp and is instead using its reserve funds. Ms. Tomaro said that she could get Mr. Monaghan a detailed report on the salary line item.

Mr. Krabill asked if the salary line item was just for the four full time staff members. Ms. Tomaro stated yes, it is only for the four full time staff members and the board. It does not include salaries for part time workers.

Ms. Salyers, Director, asked if the salary line item includes money for a comp time payout. Ms. Tomaro stated that it does not include additional money for comp time, because the intent is that you burn that up. If we get into a situation where a comp time payout is needed, then we'll have to put in a request. It's not part of normal budget policy. Ms. Tomaro also asked if Ms. Salyers could figure out in October or November what the potential payout would be, and said that at that point, we could make a supplemental request to the commissioners. Ms. Salyers responded that she could do that.

Mr. Smith stated that our goal for this year, since it's not a presidential election year, should be to use that comp time and not accrue so much. Ms. Salyers responded that we would still accrue some comp time because of the demands of the Secretary of State's Office. For example, early voting starts 30 days before an election, plus there is mail-in voting. Mr. Ferrell agreed. He stated that we should use up comp time, but that it's not always possible.

Ms. James stated that she and the two clerks were taking time off right now, about one day off a week for each of them for the next month or so. However, they are using personal time and vacation time first, because, unlike comp time, those are "use it or lose it." Mr. Krabill stated that the commissioners are asking for a good faith effort to burn the time when you can, and what he's hearing from staff is that that's their intent.

Ms. James then stated that she put an updated meeting schedule in everyone's folder. According to the Secretary of State, the reorganizational meeting must take place between March 2 and March 6. Ms. James scheduled the reorganization for Wednesday, March 3 at 9 a.m., and asked if everyone was okay with that. Motion to approve that time for the reorganizational meeting was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Next, Ms. Salyers stated that she received a phone call from Pitney Bowes, who handles our postage machine. It has been approximately 11 years since our postage machine has been replaced, and the lease is up on the current one, so we must get a new one. Ms. Salyers explained that she put all the paperwork into everyone's folders. It will cost us more. We currently pay \$621.00 per quarter for the rental of the postage meter. For the new one, it is going to go up to \$254.86 a month, or \$764.58 a quarter. She informed Pitney Bowes that she would have to present it to the board, because it involves entering a contract, but that we don't have much choice.

Mr. Smith inquired if we had talked to any other companies. Ms. Salyers stated no, that Pitney Bowes was the only one she was aware of. She stated that Pitney Bowes does give us a break of about a nickel per letter, and that all the money that is on our current machine will transfer to the new one. She also stated that the new machine will have certain beneficial software, such as a program that will allow us to track how many absentee ballot request forms we are mailing, as opposed to staff making little hash marks on post it notes. Mr. Monaghan remarked that he's only ever heard of Pitney Bowes, and that most departments in the county use them. Motion to go ahead with the new Pitney Bowes postage machine was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Next, Ms. Salyers gave an update on the MFD replacement, or multi functioning device. This device would provide black and white copies, color copies, scanning capabilities, and fax capabilities. She received one quote from Flex Technology Group (FTG), one quote from Accurate Business, and two quotes from Blue Technologies. She included the paperwork for all four in the board members' folders, plus a spreadsheet comparison for all four.

Mr. Smith asked how long the lease would be. Ms. Salyers responded that all of them are for 60 months. Mr. Smith asked Ms. Salyers what her recommendation would be, and she replied Blue Technologies. Mr. Smith asked which one, and Ms. Salyers stated the cheaper one, which would get us 45 copies per minute. Mr. Smith asked what we were paying right now. Ms. Salyers stated 190 dollars a month. The lease that she is recommending from Blue Technologies is 128 dollars a month, so this would save us money, and it would probably offset the price increase from Pitney Bowes.

Mr. Krabill asked again if it was a 60-month contract, and Ms. Salyers confirmed that it was. Mr. Krabill stated that if we did the math for a 60-month lease, then that's more than an outright purchase. Ms. Salyers responded that at a previous board meeting, the board members indicated they did not want to buy, because once five years is up, the machine would be outdated, and we would be responsible for selling it or getting rid of it. Mr. Smith agreed, and stated that as soon as you buy a machine it's outdated.

Mr. Krabill stated that there's no question Blue Technologies is cheaper for a lease than Accurate but stated that FTG is less expensive than Blue. Ms. Salyers responded that from a lease standpoint that's true, but FTG is more expensive on copies, and we do a lot of copying during election time.

Mr. Monaghan remarked that Ms. Salyers had a lot of experience with Blue Technologies and asked if she has ever had an experience of the current machine breaking down and them not coming right away to fix it. Ms. Salyers responded absolutely not. She stated that whenever she calls them about a problem, they are there that same day. With Accurate Business Machines, she has a little more trouble getting ahold of them, and she has no experience with FTG.

Mr. Monaghan responded that based on that, he would recommend Blue Technologies. Mr. Krabill stated he was not arguing one way or the other; he was just trying to understand all sides before he votes on the issue. Ms. Salyers reiterated all the copies the office makes during election time and stated it would look nice and more professional if some of those copies could be made in color. Motion to go with the less expensive Blue Technologies lease was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Smith. Motion carried.

Next, Ms. Salyers gave an update on the dropbox and security camera. She included paperwork in the board members' folders with a quote from Budget Mailboxes. This is the same company that the Huron County Board of Elections uses for their dropbox, and it would cost \$397.97. It would be up on a pedestal and have a single lock, but that is okay per the Secretary of State. Ms. Salyers did call Sandusky Steel, but they stated that they rarely get post office boxes anymore, and when they do get them, they're so beaten up that they can't be used. Ms. Salyers also stated that she received and included a quote from Netpoint Consulting in the board members' folders for the security camera. The cost of that would be \$752.98 and would include installation. Both the box and the camera would go at the north end of the building, per the suggestion of Gary Weilnau in facilities. If it were out on the island in the parking lot, that would bog down traffic, and it would be more difficult to get a security camera out there. Ms. Salyers also stated that the box that we are using currently as a dropbox would not go to waste. The SOS office has given us the okay to use that box to store our three back up servers in the basement.

Mr. Smith asked if we needed to get the commissioners' approval. Mr. Ferrell responded that he got the feeling Gary Weilnau was in favor of it, and if he's in favor, then the commissioners probably will be, too. Also, there's not much traffic at the north end. Mr. Smith responded that he gets that; he just doesn't want to vote to approve it, and then have the commissioners say no. Motion to approve the dropbox and camera installation conditional on the commissioners' approval was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Mr. Ferrell stated that to get the dropbox and the security camera would be a little over a grand, and Ms. Salyers confirmed that was correct. Ms. James also pointed out that the office was thinking of using some of the HAVA grant money for this project. Ms. Salyers stated yes, and that the SOS office has given us an extension on the grant. She also stated that she had been in contact with Brett Harbage, the SOS ADA coordinator, to make sure the project was ADA compliant.

Next, Ms. Salyers talked about the possibility of doing online training classes for poll workers. She stated that she spoke with Lorain County Board of Elections, which does online training, and both the staff and the poll workers there love it. It would cost between 600 to 1,000 dollars to do these classes. Firelands Photography would film them and put them on our website. They would be filmed in modules, so poll workers can view videos on their cell phone at the polling location, if necessary.

Ms. Salyers explained that doing these videos would free up our time tremendously. She stated that we would still have new VLMs who would want hands on training, so we can schedule some in person training for that, but those classes would only take about half an hour. She also stated that the poll workers in Lorain County love the online classes, because they can take them whenever is convenient for them.

Mr. Smith asked what the additional cost for the software is to make sure the poll workers complete the training. We don't have that built in now, do we? Ms. Salyers stated that we would probably have to go through Triad, and that she could talk with them. She also stated that we already did online courses during the last election, where the poll workers took a little test. She said that Ms. Link could explain it further. Ms. Link explained that we had online documents that corresponded to each position, as well as a test that the poll workers took. They didn't even have to create an account or password. We just got a verification after they took the test that they took it and what their score was.

Mr. Krabill pointed out that the Secretary of State's office uses online training videos, and a phone call to them might be able to get us access to the software that they use. He also stated that he thinks online training is a great idea. He has witnessed the challenges that result in the office when staff is trying to run an election and train people at the same time. It takes a considerable amount of time from our staff to do in person training. Motion to move forward with the online training as presented was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Next, Ms. Salyers spoke on an issue with Bay Breeze Drive in Sandusky. She and a part time worker were looking at the auditor's website, and found that in our system, we had coded Bay Breeze Drive incorrectly. According to the auditor's website, Bay Breeze is in the precinct San M, but we have them coded as San O. Therefore, some of those people have been voting in the wrong location. The good news is that the San M and San O ballots are the same, so no one has been voting on things they shouldn't be voting on, but it does need to be corrected. Motion to make the correction was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Then, Ms. Salyers spoke on a potential policy change regarding public records requests. She mentioned someone who made a public records request for security camera footage, and how it cost us over 200 dollars. We informed the person that the footage was ready for them and what the bill was, but they never contacted us again. Ms. Salyers thought there should be a policy in place because requests like this could eat into our budget. The potential policy change reads as follows:

"If anyone requests footage from the security cameras, there will be a charge incurred. The fee depends on the amount of time that a business would charge us to pull that feed. In order for us to grant that records request we would need payment in full at the time the cost is determined and before it can be picked up at the office. The request would be made with specific dates and times along with which camera footage is being requested so we can obtain an estimate of cost for pulling this footage. This would be made payable to the Erie County Board of Elections, by cashier check or cash. The board does not accept credit or debit cards at this time, nor personal or business checks for this type of transaction."

Ms. Salyers stated that she shared the potential policy change with both the Secretary of State's office and Gery Gross, our county legal counsel. The SOS office stated that they would defer to our county legal counsel, and Mr. Gross stated he was fine with the change. Motion to accept the policy change was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Krabill. Motion carried.

Next, Ms. Salyers acknowledged that she was not able to be there due to being on medical leave, and that she had been participating in the meeting via teleconference. She stated that she could continue to do some of her work though (i.e., payroll and bills) from home. Ms. Link stated that we don't know that for sure. Ms. James stated that we have to contact the auditor's office and make sure Ms. Salyers can get the Harris accounting system at home.

Mr. Smith asked if there was a reason someone in the office can't do that. Are we not cross trained? Ms. Salyers responded not in that regard and asked how the board wanted to handle this. Mr. Krabill stated that we could look at this as an opportunity to cross train. Ms. Salyers can do some of the work, and then walk the staff through how to do it. Ms. James stated that she did speak with the auditor's office and got her own Harris login. She stated she was having a bit of trouble with it, because it keeps saying her password is incorrect, but she did get the ball rolling so that she can start to learn payroll and bills. Mr. Monaghan reiterated that everyone should be cross trained. Ms. Salyers stated that we were cross training on a lot of tasks, just not on payroll and bills yet.

Mr. Krabill asked if there was anything staff needed them to do today. Ms. Link responded she didn't think so; we just wanted to bring it to the board's attention that Ms. Salyers may be doing some work from home if she's able.

Ms. Salyers asked the board if they wanted to go into executive session to discuss the 6-month performance evaluation for the new clerk, Libby Grant. Mr. Ferrell stated that we have some people here for open session and they may have questions. He also stated that he would like to read Ms. Grant evaluation first, and that they could go over it during next month's meeting.

Ms. Grubbe then stated that she had a couple of questions. She stated that according to the treasurer of the Democratic Party, candidates and committees can now file campaign finance reports online, and she wanted to know how that works. Ms. Link stated that the process is still the same, and that Democrats would still audit Republicans and Republicans would still audit Democrats. The only difference is that now people have the option to file online if they would like. She also stated that everyone in the office has access to the log-in to review online campaign finance reports.

Ms. Grubbe then asked about the policy for getting PEOs for the upcoming election. She asked if the policy would be to try to get Democrats and Republicans before getting unaffiliated workers, and also asked if we had reached out to the workers who have already worked. Mr. Ferrell confirmed that that would still be the policy. Ms. Link stated that we would start calling workers in the next couple of weeks.

Ms. Grubbe also mentioned that at the executive committee meeting last night for the Democratic Party, Mr. Ferrell was re-nominated for his board seat, so the party would be submitting the paperwork to the SOS office for that.

Mr. Ferrell asked if Ms. Grubbe had any further questions, and she stated no. Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried. Board adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Lori J. Salyers, Director

Attest:

Thomas M. Ferrell, Chairman