

The regular meeting of the Erie County Board of Elections was called to order by Chairman Ferrell at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, March 26, 2021.

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

**Guests in attendance: Preston Barnum, Sue Brown, and Amy Grubbe**

**Motion to approve the minutes from the previous three board meetings was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Krabill. Motion carried.**

**Lori Salyers, Director, passed around paperwork for the board members to sign for paying bills. She also stated that she would need the board members' signatures on the letters for the three employees who are being paid out. Mr. Smith inquired if that was all run through the commissioners, and Ms. Salyers responded yes. The payout is being divided out over four pay periods. Motion to pay the bills was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.**

**Adrienne James, Deputy Director, participated in the meeting via teleconference because she was sick. She stated that several weeks ago she and Mr. Krabill visited the Vermilion Veterans Field House, just behind Sailorway Middle School, to see if we could use them as a polling location for the precincts Vermilion 3-A and 3-B. She stated they were very accommodating and that the location was nice and there was plenty of parking. She asked if there was a motion to approve this as a permanent polling location change. Mr. Smith stated that we would need plenty of signage, because it is behind the middle school. Mr. Krabill agreed. Motion to make the Vermilion Veterans Field House a permanent location change for Vermilion 3-A and 3-B was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Krabill. Motion carried.**

**Next, Ms. James stated that she and Mr. Krabill also visited St. Peter Catholic Church in Huron, to potentially use them as a polling location for the precincts Huron A and C. She stated that they were also accommodating, and willing to host us for future elections. Mr. Monaghan asked if Huron A and C were previously at Mesenburg Plaza Place. Ms. James informed him yes. Motion to approve St. Peter Catholic Church as a permanent polling location change for Huron A and C was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Krabill. Motion carried.**

**Mr. Krabill asked if we would send postcards to the voters affected, and Ms. Salyers stated yes. Mr. Smith suggested doing a press release in the Sandusky Register. Mr. Krabill suggested doing a press release in the Lorain Journal, too. Mr. Ferrell asked who would put out the signs early on Election Morning for the Vermilion Field House. Mr. Smith stated that he could do that since he lives close to the Field House.**

**Next, Ms. Salyers gave an update on the camera and dropbox. She stated that she called Accurate Business twice, but she has still not heard back from Tim, the owner. Mr. Ferrell stated that he would contact Tim. Mr. Ferrell also stated that the board would like the dropbox on the north end of the building, but the commissioners want it on the east end, next to the water department box. Mr. Ferrell stated that it would be more convenient and less expensive to put it on the north end. Ms. Salyers stated that in Huron County, the BOE dropbox is next to a UPS box, and even though they are both clearly and differently marked, people put things in the wrong box all the time. Mr. Krabill stated that becomes a chain of custody issue, because unauthorized people might be handling ballots. He also stated that during absentee voting, it is a traffic nightmare.**

Mr. Monaghan asked if the security camera had to be stand-alone, and Ms. Salyers informed him yes. Mr. Ferrell stated that he could meet with Hank Solowiej and Pete Daniel of the commissioners' office one more time to see if we can give them the drawbacks of putting the box next to the water department box. He said I'm sure if they think about it they would understand the problems of that. Mr. Krabill stated that he thinks the north end would be easier for the voters. Sue Brown of the prosecutor's office stated that when we talk to Mr. Solowiej and Mr. Daniel, it might help to focus on the statutory delivery of the ballot. Delivery has to be to the director, but is it to the director if you put the ballot in the water department box? Ms. Brown stated that she doesn't think it is. Mr. Ferrell asked if Ms. Brown could put something in writing, and then he can share that with Mr. Solowiej and Mr. Daniel. Ms. Brown stated that she could do that. She also asked Mr. Ferrell to write out what his concerns are.

Mr. Ferrell then stated that Ms. Grubbe had her hand up, and asked if she had a question. Ms. Grubbe asked where the water department box is located. Eliza Link, clerk, stated that if you go around the brick building, the water department box is there to the left. A door nearby says "Employee entrance only."

Ms. Grubbe asked if it was worth anything to have people write letters to the commissioners, or provide letters for the board to deliver to the commissioners. Mr. Ferrell stated he didn't think that would hurt. He stated that for the commissioners to know there is support for the dropbox on the north side would be good. Mr. Ferrell also mentioned that Gary Weilnau, head of county facilities, suggested putting the box on the north end as well.

Ms. Link commented that by putting the box at the north end, it would be easier to put the camera there. It would also be easier for voters and easier for us if there were inclement weather. She stated that she knows the county commissioners are concerned about county employees parking on the north side, but they're not supposed to be parking there anyways. Ms. Link then asked if we could use HAVA money to pay for signage for the dropbox. Ms. Salyers stated she would contact Brett Harbage of the Secretary of State's Office and ask him. Mr. Ferrell stated that any letters coming from constituents would affect the commissioners' final decision, he would hope.

Next on the agenda was to discuss the opening of the Democratic clerk position. Ms. Brown stated that it is very clear in the statute that public employees in Ohio can live where they want. She mentioned some exceptions for police and fire, and for director and deputy director of the Board of Elections, but she recommends that for the clerk position, we do not put a residency requirement in the advertisement.

Ms. Salyers stated that she contacted Matt Wilson of the county Human Resources department regarding pay. According to Mr. Wilson, employees of other offices in the county get a 4% raise when they pass probation. She stated that other county offices also get longevity raises. After five years, you get 15 cents per hour, and after 10 years, you get 25 cents per hour. Ms. Salyers stated that this was something the Board of Elections office does not do.

Mr. Ferrell stated that sometimes other departments ask H.R. to come to their office and evaluate their positions, and then contrast that with similar positions throughout Erie County and other counties.

Mr. Monaghan stated that regarding poll worker pay, our PEOs are among the lowest paid in the state, according to the survey that Mr. Krabill conducted last year. If we want to raise poll worker pay, we need to discuss that with the commissioners by October.

Ms. Salyers stated that she was looking at our budget, and she let Melissa Tomaro from Finance know that we are lacking in certain areas. For example, we have a \$10,000 budget for part-time employees for the entire year, but that will not be enough. We have to start our part-timers the week after next for early voting. Ms. Salyers also mentioned that we brought in one part-timer early due to clerk Libby Grant leaving.

Mr. Ferrell stated the county adjusted budgets for other departments. He also stated that we have to perform certain responsibilities by statute. For example, we have to be open a certain amount of hours for early voting. Other departments don't have to do that. We may have to go back to the commissioners to let them know we need additional funds. He also stated that when he was on the board of commissioners, they were very acutely aware of what the Board of Elections needed.

Ms. Salyers stated that she knows the commissioners said there would be absolutely no wage increases this year. However, some workers on the third floor received raises. The reasoning for this is that there were additional duties added to their job descriptions. However, that has happened in our office, too. For example, there have been added responsibilities due to Ms. Salyers previously being out on medical leave. Mr. Ferrell responded that he thinks we should contact Mr. Wilson in H.R. to evaluate the BOE clerk position.

Mr. Krabill stated that he would point out that the increased duties are temporary in nature. Ms. Salyers responded that some of them were temporary, but not all of them. Since the previous director left last year, responsibilities have increased. Ms. Salyers also stated that she believed hiring the new clerk in at the same rate of pay as Ms. Link was unfair, because Ms. Link has more experience, and she will be training the new person.

Mr. Monaghan stated that we need to look at the job description and maybe revise it. Mr. Krabill stated that we have our own biases, and it would be good to have a third party, H.R., come in to evaluate the position. Mr. Monaghan remarked that the high turnover is costing us more money. Ms. Salyers stated that Ms. Link did tweak the job description, and gave copies to all the board members. She also stated that she put a copy of Ms. Grant's exit survey in the board members' folders.

Next, part-time worker Preston Barnum talked to the board members about obtaining Topaz signature pads for early voting. Triad, our voter registration company, came up with the software and got it approved in June of last year. Early, in-person voters would confirm their name and address on the pads, and then sign the pads. The pads would then capture the voter's signature. This would save us paper, labels, and time. We received a quote from Triad for \$444 for one pad, and we would need two. We could probably get it a bit cheaper from another vendor, though.

Mr. Monaghan asked what other Boards of Elections in Ohio are using the Topaz signature pads. Mr. Barnum stated that he could double check with Triad and let him know. Mr. Monaghan suggested contacting other counties who have rolled out the Topaz pads to ask about their experiences with them before we order the pads for ourselves.

Mr. Krabill asked what the total cost would be. Mr. Barnum reiterated that each pad would cost \$444, and we would need two. We could also buy ten extra pens for \$10, so all together, it would be about \$900. Ms. Link suggested that perhaps we could use HAVA money for the pads. Mr. Barnum stated that we are getting some money for this election, as well. Ms. Link suggested buying the pads from Triad, and Ms. Salyers agreed.

Mr. Ferrell stated that he thinks the Topaz signature pads are a good idea. He then asked about how much time the Topaz pads would cut down on early voting. Mr. Barnum estimated that it would cut down by about 30 to 40 seconds per person. Ms. Link estimated that it would shorten it by a minute or two.

Mr. Krabill expressed his support for anything we can do to make the early voting process better for the voters. He stated that the Topaz pads would make things faster and save us some labor. He also agreed with Mr. Monaghan that we should talk to other counties who have implemented them.

Mr. Smith stated that he didn't think we could implement the pads this election, but maybe we could do so in the fall. Mr. Ferrell agreed. Mr. Smith also stated that he thinks we should go with Triad for the pads, because they could provide support.

Mr. Ferrell stated that he heard many complaints from last election about how long it took the ballots to be printed. He then asked what printers we would be using this year. Ms. Link responded the same ones.

Mr. Smith asked if we should consider a new location for early voting, such as at the fairgrounds, where we would have more space. Ms. Salyers stated that she wasn't sure what that would all entail. Mr. Krabill suggested that there could be some physical changes made to the early voting area and that we could talk to facilities about that. Mr. Ferrell suggested doing early voting at the county building downtown, whereas Mr. Monaghan suggested a new building at the fairgrounds. However, Mr. Krabill pointed out that remote locations for the board functions are either discouraged or prohibited by the SOS office. Mr. Smith asked if Sandusky County used tents for early voting. Ms. Salyers stated that other counties used tents as shelters for people waiting in line, but not for actual early voting. She also pointed out that we considered tents for shelter last fall. Mr. Krabill responded that he thought moving the line inside was a better solution. He also reiterated the need to look at all the possibilities for how we can improve the experience for our voters.

Getting back to the Topaz signature pads, Ms. Salyers stated that she was grateful for Mr. Barnum's work on researching them. Mr. Ferrell asked if the Topaz pads would compare signatures for us. Mr. Barnum responded that the workers would still be doing that, but the Topaz pad captures the signature forever, which we could then use in the future for comparing signatures. Mr. Smith inquired if the Topaz software was going to be updated soon, and whether it was better for us to hold off on getting the pads. Ms. Salyers responded that we pay an annual fee for the Triad software, and anytime they do updates, that is included in the annual fee.

Mr. Ferrell then inquired about the speed of the ballot printers. Mr. Barnum stated it took about three minutes. Ms. Salyers confirmed that the printers were slow. She also stated that the company that makes them, Oki, went out of business in October, and that in response, last year she ordered many toner cartridges. Mr. Smith inquired how bigger counties handled this problem. Mr. Barnum responded that some bigger counties use Expressvotes for early voting, but we only use those for ADA compatibility. Mr. Smith iterated the need to develop an overall strategy for improving our early voting process in terms of location, speed, and convenience. Mr. Ferrell agreed. He also said that in the past, we had in-person conferences where we could talk to other counties about this, but we didn't have that last year. Mr. Krabill then commented on the slowness of the printers, and stated that if something in his office took three minutes to print, he would consider it broken. Ms. Link reminded him that the Topaz signature pads would cut down on a lot of time.

Next, Ms. Salyers talked about a possible software upgrade that Election Systems and Software is pitching to us. She received a handout from Heather Scott from ES&S, and she put that in all the board members' folders. This upgrade would improve the Expressvotes, with the ability to make the text on them bigger or bolder. It would also upgrade our back computers to a Windows 10 operating system, and require us to use bitlockers on those computers. Altogether, it would be about \$8,000. Ms. Scott also said that the problem with the current Expressvote batteries is that they only last about a year. If we were to replace them, they would last about four years. Ms. Scott thinks this upgrade is covered with our silver maintenance plan with the Expressvotes, but if not, it would cost \$12 per Expressvote unit.

Mr. Krabill asked what the reasoning for the upgrade was. Ms. Salyers responded that the SOS really wants our back computers to be upgraded to Windows 10. However, Ms. Salyers also said that Ms. Scott informed her that ES&S is already working on another upgrade for next year. Her thought is that we should wait until next year for that upgrade. Mr. Krabill agreed. Mr. Smith asked if there was money in our budget for this, and Ms. Salyers responded that the budget was tight.

Mr. Monaghan asked if there was any money coming from the SOS office. Ms. Salyers replied that we would be getting \$552 for PPE. She thinks we are pretty set with PPE, but we are thinking about buying some hands free mist sanitizer dispensers. Mr. Smith asked what the expiration date was on the PPE, and Ms. Salyers said that she wasn't sure. Mr. Smith encouraged the board staff to use it up and not to let it expire.

Mr. Krabill stated that, regarding the software, he recommended pushing it to next year, especially since they are already working on another software upgrade. In addition, if we make this a 2022 expenditure, it can be more readily accommodated in that year's budget.

Ms. Salyers then stated that she spoke with Ms. Brown, who stated that the board members would need to make a motion and vote on the outside receptacle. Ms. Salyers then asked the board if they wanted to wait to do that until they got the okay from the commissioners on where the box is going to be. The board members stated yes.

Next, Ms. Salyers asked the board members what they wanted her to do regarding the open clerk position. Mr. Ferrell asked how long we were going to run the ad. Ms. Salyers replied five days, Wednesday through Sunday. Mr. Monaghan asked what was going to be in the ad, and Ms. Salyers replied that's what I need to know. Mr. Monaghan iterated the need for the ad to say that the candidate must be a registered voter, must have a high school diploma, and must pass a criminal background check.

Mr. Krabill pointed out that Ms. Brown gave us an opinion on the criminal background check. Ms. Brown then took some time to explain her reasoning. She stated that we have a responsibility to let the candidate know that the criminal background check is a condition of final employment. She stated that when we find a candidate whom we think is worthy, to go to the sheriff's office for the check. She said that in 2006, former Senator George Voinovich stated that criminals can't be isolated from society when they come out, and the worst way to isolate them from society is to avoid jobs. Unless there is a federal statute that excludes them, you have to be very careful. There is a state statute that says a felony of fraud, theft, or acts of deception excludes people from the office. The board *can* look at other convictions, as long as you make that nexus of that particular crime has a deep connection to the work—for example, cyber-crimes. For other crimes, you have to look at them and decide what you want to do. You can't just automatically exclude someone without some discretion and deliberation.

Next, Mr. Ferrell asked if the job would be posted on our website. Ms. Salyers stated yes. Mr. Ferrell asked if that would cost us anything, and Ms. Salyers responded no. Mr. Monaghan then talked about how expensive it was to put the ad in the Register, and how we could eliminate some of the wording from that ad, and say that the full description is on our website. Ms. Salyers stated that she would get something written up for the ad in the Register, and then send it to the board members to okay.

Mr. Ferrell asked if there were any questions from the audience. Ms. Grubbe mentioned that there were currently three Republicans in the office and no Democrats, and asked if there was going to be a balance of employees. Mr. Ferrell asked Ms. Grubbe what her suggestion would be, and she said part timers. Ms. Salyers stated that she could call a Democratic part-timer to come in to the office. Mr. Krabill questioned if there was a requirement for a D and R balance since there are currently no ballots in the office. Ms. Grubbe stated that it's not a matter of trust; it's a matter of perception. Mr. Ferrell commented that he hadn't heard any complaints, but that we could bring in a part-timer. Ms. Grubbe said thank you, and asked to be included on the email list for when special meetings are going to be held, and what their agendas are. Ms. Salyers stated that she could post the agenda on the website, but Ms. Grubbe stated she still wanted to be emailed. Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Krabill. Motion carried. Board adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Lori J. Salyers, Director

Attest:

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Thomas M. Ferrell, Chairman