

The regular monthly meeting of the Erie County Board of Elections was called to order by Chairman Ferrell at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, June 29, 2020.

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: Caleb Stidham, Amy Grubbe, Tim Jonovich

Motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Krabill. Motion carried.

Ms. Salyers, director, stated that she included an email from Diane Grosso at the Secretary of State's Office in all the board members' packets. Ms. Grosso asked Ms. Salyers how we were doing with finding I.T. support. Ms. Salyers stated that we had talked about it at board meetings, but nothing had been voted on. Ms. Grosso replied that it needed to get done ASAP. According to Ms. Grosso, it cannot just be someone who likes to work on computers; it must be a company that is familiar with the SOS security agreement. The four companies recommended by Ms. Grosso were Meyer-Hill Lynch, Net Point Consulting, Meta Solutions, and Dayton Technology Group, Inc (DTGi). Ms. Salyers stated that she invited Tim Jonovich, head of the county I.T. department, to the meeting to provide further insight. While waiting for Mr. Jonovich to arrive, Ms. Salyers moved onto the next item on the agenda.

Ms. Salyers stated that the SOS office has been having weekly task force meetings about the November election. In the task force, BOE staff learned that the SOS office is going to mail out courtesy absentee ballot request forms to all registered voters after Labor Day. The office has been telling this to voters who are calling now for request forms, but will still mail the request forms out if the voters want to get it done now. Also, mailing some request forms now will help prevent getting bombarded with requests closer to the election.

Ms. Salyers also stated that according to the task force meetings, boards cannot have any polling locations in nursing homes for this election. Ms. Salyers stated that she would like to make an exception for the OVH, because the only people who vote there are the people who live there, but she doesn't think the SOS will budge on that. Mr. Monaghan suggested having someone from the board call the SOS to explain the situation. Mr. Krabill stated that his concern with moving the OVH precinct was the problems this would cause residents with mobility issues. He stated that that might dissuade some residents from voting, and that's not right. Mr. Ferrell stated that he would call the director at the OVH. Mr. Krabill asked if Mr. Ferrell's conversation with the director could result in a letter to the SOS. Ms. Salyers stated that if we could get residents or nurses to work that precinct, it would be good. It is more of a hassle and more dangerous to move the residents to a different voting location as opposed to staying at the OVH.

Mr. Krabill inquired about the next item on the agenda "polling place in Vermilion." Ms. Salyers asked if we needed to move some of the precincts out of Ritter Public Library. The board members did not think that was necessary because the five precincts there were scheduled to be there in March, and the old union hall next door can be used for additional parking. Mr. Krabill stated that he hated to see it changed unless it was absolutely necessary, because then that would mean re-educating those voters. Ms. Salyers stated that she would speak with Ritter Library, and if they were okay with the five precincts being there, then we would leave it as is.

By this time, Mr. Jonovich had arrived, and further explained the situation with I.T. He stated that the guidelines set by the state are quite strict. He also stated that the board was still working with Cyber Defenses to figure out the slowness with the computers. The board is going back and forth with Cyber Defenses and Triad to try to figure it out. Of the four companies recommended by Ms. Grosso, Mr. Jonovich surmised that most of them would just give the board block hours. Whatever company the board decides to go with would do preventative and mandated updates, reboots, maintenance, and any other troubleshooting. Mr. Jonovich stated that the price point would likely be based on how many terminals you have.

Mr. Krabill asked if this was a budgeted item, or if this would be new money. Ms. Salyers responded new money. She stated that county I.T. was taking care of it, but that the commissioners want the board to stop using county I.T. and use outside help. Mr. Jonovich stated that the county I.T. department hasn't had to do much, but pointed out that the board now has a firewall and three separate servers.

Next, Ms. Salyers brought up concerns about the internet. She stated that desk computers in the office are not connected to the internet in any way, shape, or form. According to Triad, though, having all these cyber safeguards on the computers is like having car insurance. If you don't have a car, why have insurance? Mr. Jonovich stated that he wanted to make a slight correction to that. Board staff is getting windows and Microsoft updates through the web, so they do have internet in that sense; they just don't have it for web surfing.

Ms. Salyers stated that the problem was that, when other Boards of Elections have issues, one of the I.T. companies remotely taps into the computers. Whichever company the board decides to go with would not be able to do that in Erie County, because of the office not having internet. Mr. Jonovich replied that they could tap in with the firewall and a v.p.n., or virtual private network. Mr. Jonovich also explained that that was how Cyber Defenses and Triad gets in now.

Ms. Salyers stated okay, and that that was the main concern she had. Without the companies being able to tap in, the board would have to pay people to travel here, fix the computers, and then travel back, and that would get very expensive. Mr. Jonovich reiterated that most things could be done remotely, but that some things would have to be done on sight. Mr. Ferrell then recommended that Ms. Salyers speak with other, similarly sized counties to see what companies they ended up choosing.

The next item on the agenda was time off over Christmas. Ms. Salyers was wondering, because the office has so much comp time and also personal time to use, if it would be okay to work until December 23, close the office for Christmas, and then come back on January 4. The board members stated that that would be fine. Motion to approve that time off was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Next Ms. Salyers asked about time off for July 4. The county is making Friday, July 3 a holiday, but according to the Board's furlough schedule, the office will be furloughed on that day. Ms. Salyers was wondering if the office could instead take its furlough day on Monday, July 6, so as not to lose the holiday time given by the county. The board members agreed that that would be fine. Motion to approve closing the office July 6 was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried. Mr. Krabill reminded the staff to update the website and to notify the Sandusky Register and the radio station.

Next Ms. Salyers stated that the meetings in July and September both fall on Fridays when staff would be furloughed, so those would need to be rescheduled. After discussing for a few minutes, the board agreed that the July meeting would be Tuesday, July 21 at 9 a.m., and the September meeting would be Monday, September 28 at 9 a.m. Motion to approve these changes was made by Mr. Krabill, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Next Ms. Salyers talked about the possibility of reducing clerk positions at multi precinct locations and the possibility of using non-affiliated poll workers this election. While nothing in writing has come out saying that boards could reduce clerk positions, it is in the Elections Officials Manual that precincts can have up to two non-affiliated people working in a precinct.

Mr. Krabill stated that he had been in contact with Eric Wobser, city manager for Sandusky, about the possibility of city employees working the polls on Election Day. Mr. Wobser emailed Mr. Krabill and stated that the city was very interested in helping out. Trevor Hayberger, law director for the city of Sandusky, also expressed willingness to help. They will be reaching out to the employees and the unions, and at some point there will be a meeting that Ms. Salyers or Ms. James should probably attend. Ms. Salyers stated to just let her know when, and she could attend. Mr. Krabill stated that without knowing which of our usual poll workers would be working, it was imperative to get as many people trained as we can. He stated that many of the city workers could work in the surrounding areas: Sandusky, Perkins, Huron, or potentially Margaretta. Ms. Link also stated that we should train more people to have on the back burner, because that is something that we never really did before.

Next, Ms. Salyers stated that a poll worker contacted her and was a little upset about poll worker pay last election. The worker wanted to know why she, a VLM who went through three hours of training, received the same pay as clerks and ballot judges, who only went through half an hour of training. Ms. Salyers stated that the board decided on that just to make it easier for everyone involved, including the Auditor's office. She also informed the poll worker that she would make the board aware, and the poll worker said thank you. The board members commented that the pay for this past election was more than many surrounding counties.

Next, Mr. Monaghan stated that he was familiar with everyone in the room except for the young man sitting across from him. He introduced himself as Caleb Stidham, the chair of the Erie County Republican Party.

Next, Mr. Ferrell asked Ms. Grubbe if she had some questions. Ms. Grubbe asked about ballot applications, and if the board was setting up labels now for that. Ms. Link stated she wasn't sure what she meant by "labels" but that staff was starting to apply the applications now. Ms. Grubbe asked what was meant by "apply." Ms. James stated that as the office gets applications, they are inputting them to the computer system, and that they will mail out ballots October 6, the first day ballots are permitted to be mailed. Starting in late September, the office will have the actual ballots, and will start stuffing envelopes and putting labels on envelopes in preparation for that first mailing. Mr. Krabill stated that he thought Ms. Grubbe was asking about ballot applications. Ms. James stated that if someone calls and requests an absentee ballot, that she mails them a request form. Ms. Salyers stated that she was telling people to wait until the Secretary of State mails the request form in September. She stated that she was doing it this way to avoid confusion. She then asked the board how they wanted us to proceed. Mr. Monaghan suggested enclosing a note with the applications, or otherwise letting people know, that they may also get an application from the SOS office closer to the election. The staff members agreed that that was a good idea.

Ms. Grubbe then asked for clarification on ballot applications: If someone calls the office requesting an absentee ballot, will office staff be mailing them a request form? Ms. James stated yes. Ms. Grubbe then asked about labels again. Ms. Link explained that as the office staff applies request forms, that creates a "queue" for the labels to print out. Ms. Grubbe asked if labels would be printed out now. Ms. James stated no, because the labels print out at the same time the ballots print.

Next Ms. Grubbe asked Mr. Ferrell if there were any more plans to consolidate polling locations. Mr. Ferrell responded no. Ms. Grubbe then asked if the current dropbox would be the only one available. Mr. Ferrell responded yes, but Mr. Krabill pointed out that it would now be on a higher level. Ms. Grubbe stated that that was a lot better. Mr. Monaghan stated that the box would be open 24/7, but Ms. Salyers stated that it would only be open 24/7 during early voting. Right now it is not. Ms. Salyers also stated that cameras would be installed in the conference room, along with a motion detector. Ms. Salyers also stated that the current security system in place works. She has gotten a couple of calls from the Sheriff's office when two other county employees, the carrier and the county administrator, swiped their badges to get into the office while staff was not there.

Mr. Ferrell asked if there was anything further, and Ms. Grubbe stated she had a couple more questions. She stated that at the Democratic Central Committee meeting, Mr. Monaghan and Ms. James stated that the dropbox would be open 24/7. Ms. James clarified that it was Mr. Monaghan who said that. Ms. Salyers stated that it would be open 24/7 during early voting.

Ms. Grubbe then stated that during the central committee meeting, a resolution was passed in regards to safe and fair elections. She passed out a copy to everyone present, and asked that it be included in the minutes. The resolution is as follows:

**“Erie County Democratic Party Resolution 2020-02
Supporting Voting Rights and a Safe, Fair and Accessible General Election**

WHEREAS, the right of the citizens of Ohio to cast their ballots in fair and free elections and to have their votes counted is held sacred by the Erie County Democratic Party; and

WHEREAS, any reduction in access to early voting will disproportionately disenfranchise people of color, low-income citizens, the elderly and our military, who often rely on flexible, early voting periods, especially amid a pandemic; and

WHEREAS, increasing the difficulty of voting by mail/absentee voting will disproportionately affect people of color, low-income citizens, health-compromised citizens, the elderly and our military, who rely on absentee ballots to overcome obstacles to voting in person and to secure their health and safety; and

WHEREAS, repealing or expanding statutory ratios of voters to voting machines or voters to precincts and/or consolidating polling locations will result in long, often unmanageable lines and a far less safe and orderly election, undoing the bipartisan consensus reached after the 2004 Ohio debacle and a commitment to never allow that scenario to occur again; and

WHEREAS, refusing to allow multiple secure ballot repositories (drop-boxes) in counties will reduce Ohio citizens' access to safe voting and promote the traffic and lines seen in the April Primary; and

WHEREAS, refusing to use funds from the federal CARES Act and the Help America Vote Act to send ballots to every registered voter in Ohio and/or to pay return postage for ballot applications and ballots is contrary to the intention of those Acts; and

WHEREAS, removing the ability of public health experts and officials to create safety guidelines for in-person voting, if necessary, will unnecessarily force voters to risk their health to exercise their right to vote and will reduce participation in the election; and

WHEREAS, restricting nongovernmental voter participation organizations directly affects people of color, low-income citizens, and the elderly, as these non-profit organizations are particularly likely to reach and engage these underserved citizens; and

WHEREAS, Democrats in the Ohio House and Senate have proposed numerous common sense bills and amendments to strengthen both in-person and mail-in voting, including on-line ballot applications, mailing postage-paid ballots to all voters, additional in-person early voting locations, multiple secure drop-boxes, counting ballots postmarked by Election Day and allowing 17 year old High School Juniors to train and work at polling locations; and

WHEREAS, Democrats holding public offices at all levels around Ohio, as well as others who respect voting rights, have an opportunity to assist in protecting the right to vote in Ohio against the onslaught of purging by serving as hubs of non-partisan voter registration all across the state; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Erie County Democratic Party condemns all voter suppression practices and techniques and commits unequivocally to fighting voter suppression in all forms, whether that fight occurs at the state level or at the county board of elections level; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Erie County Democratic Party supports all of the heretofore described common sense reforms proposed by Democratic elected officials and urges the 133rd Assembly of the Ohio Legislature, the Erie County Republican Party and the Ohio Republican Party to join in committing to fight voter suppression in all forms and to promoting best practices in expanding access to the polls for all eligible Ohioans; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Erie County Democratic Party urges elected Democrats at all levels of public office to open hubs of non-partisan voter registration, where appropriate, between now and the last day of registration; and

FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED that this Resolution be disseminated to the Erie County Board of Elections, the Erie County Republican Party, Ohio's Secretary of State, Ohio's legislative majority and minority leaders, State Senator Theresa Gavarone and State House Representative D J Swearingen.

Approved June 25, 2020.”

Next, Ms. Grubbe thanked staff for providing a list of voters whose party affiliation changed during this last primary. However, she stated that there were some discrepancies on the list. She mentioned one voter who requested a Republican ballot for the primary, but the list had him as undecided. Ms. Grubbe stated she had many examples like this. She also expressed concern that the Special Election in May 2019 may have skewed some voters, and made them be undecided, when they shouldn't be. Mr. Krabill suggested that the staff research the issue regarding the May 2019 Special Election, and report back at the next meeting. He also suggested Ms. Grubbe email the office the names of people whose party affiliation is incorrect, so that the staff can look into that as well.

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Krabill. Motion carried. Board adjourned at 9:48 a.m.

Lori J. Salyers, Director

Attest:

Thomas M. Ferrell, Chairman