

The official certification/regular monthly meeting of the Erie County Board of Elections was called to order by Chairman Ferrell at 8:03 a.m. on Wednesday, November 18, 2020.

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| <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>Absent (sick)</b> |

Guests in attendance: Amy Grubbe

Mr. Ferrell stated that we were here to certify the results of the November 2020 General Election. Ms. Salyers passed out the paperwork for the board members to sign, and they took a couple of minutes to do so.

While the board members were signing, Mr. Ferrell stated that he received numerous complaints in regards to activity by the board in this last election process. It was suggested to him that he create a list with the other board members of some protocols for the board to follow. He stated that if any of the other board members had suggestions, to email him and he can present them at a future board meeting.

Ms. Salyers, Director, asked Can I ask in regards to what? Mr. Ferrell replied that, for one thing, board members are not employees of the board. There shouldn't be one board member back behind the counter without another board member present. Board members also shouldn't be touching ballots. Mr. Monaghan agreed. Mr. Monaghan also stated that there shouldn't be a Democratic board member in the back area of the office without a Republican board member present, and vice versa. Mr. Ferrell also stated that there were several outside complaints that the Election Protection Group brought to his attention.

Once the board was finished signing the paperwork, Ms. James, Deputy Director, asked if there was a motion to certify the results. Motion to certify was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Smith. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Ferrell- yes  
Mr. Monaghan- yes  
Mr. Smith- yes  
Mr. Krabill- absent

Motion carried.

Next on the agenda was to set up the audit. Ms. James explained that, according to the Secretary of State, we must audit five percent of the total votes cast. 40,783 total votes were cast in this election. Five percent of that is 2039.15, or about 2,040. Ms. James explained that they could audit either by precinct or by voting machine, and that the staff decided they wanted to do by voting machine. All of the DS200 sticks from Election Day were in a box, and the board members picked sticks out of the box at random until they reached 2,040 votes or higher. The sticks randomly chosen by the board members were the sticks from the Sandusky Library, Castalia Village Hall, Sandusky Cultural Center, Son Rise Marina, Huron Township Building, and the County Service Center, Perkins Township 4. In total, these sticks represented 2,058 votes cast.

Next, the board discussed the date for the audit. Ms. James stated that according to the Elections' Officials Manual, the audit must begin no sooner than six business days after the board certifies, and must complete the post-election audit no later than 21 days after certifying. She also stated that the three races to be audited would be for President, Justice of the Supreme Court, and the contested County Commissioner race. The board members decided to do the audit on Thursday, December 3 at 9 a.m.

Next, Mr. Ferrell asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meetings, which were on September 24, October 7, and October 23. Motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Mr. Ferrell then asked if there was a motion to pay the bills. Motion to pay the bills was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Smith. Motion carried.

Ms. James then stated that she had a question regarding training pay for precinct support. She was looking at the pay rate sheet for all the different election workers, and it said the rate was \$140 flat rate for precinct support and 45 cents per mile, but it didn't say anything about training pay for precinct support. Ms. James suggested that precinct support should be paid \$15 for training, plus the extra \$15 training bonus that the board approved earlier this year for all other election workers who didn't quit. There were five precinct support people for this election, so this would amount to \$150. Motion to pay the precinct support people \$30 for training for this election was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried.

Next, Ms. Salyers brought up the idea of shooting videos for our precinct election official training and putting those videos on our website. She stated that it could be shot in modules, and the election workers could bring up certain videos on their phone if they weren't certain on how to do something on Election Day. This would reduce the need to do in-person training. Ms. Salyers' and Ms. James' in-person classes run about three hours, while the other two classes run about 30 to 45 minutes. Ms. Salyers stated that she contacted Doug at Firelands Photography, and the cost of doing these videos would run between \$650 and \$1,000.

Mr. Smith inquired if other counties did this. Ms. Salyers stated that she didn't know. Mr. Smith also asked if this was an approved method by the Secretary of State. Ms. Salyers remarked that the SOS office put out its own videos for training purposes, but that she could check with the SOS to make sure training videos for PEO training was allowed.

Mr. Smith stated that he would like to think about this, and see what other counties are doing. He stated it could possibly save the staff members some time so that they wouldn't accrue so much comp time. Mr. Ferrell remarked that by doing videos, the training would be standardized. Mr. Smith asked if new videos would have to be shot for every election. Ms. Salyers stated no. The board members agreed that it was a good idea to explore, but they did not want to vote on it right now.

Next, Ms. Salyers brought up an issue with the Sandusky Firehouse polling location. She stated that she heard from a poll worker who said that the firehouse would not allow any poll workers to use their restrooms on Election Day. Instead, the firehouse put a portable toilet outside for the poll workers to use, and the toilet did not have any lighting. Ms. Salyers asked the board members if they needed to consider getting another location because of this. Mr. Smith stated that we would need to call the city of Sandusky to find out why this happened. If this is something that is potentially going to reoccur, then we would need to think about getting a new polling location.

Ms. Salyers also stated that she received another complaint regarding the Sandusky Firehouse. She stated that a voter called and said a woman was outside the firehouse, wearing a Democrat button and asking people if they needed help with voting. The voter sent in pictures of the woman. The woman was outside the flags, but at some places, it is not always feasible to put the flags 100 feet away from the polling location. Mr. Smith stated that as long as the woman was outside of the flags, she had a right to be there. Mr. Ferrell suggested that they could talk about this later and perhaps put something about this in the list of protocols to be adopted later.

Next, Ms. Salyers gave an update on the phone situation from Election Day. We received 1,278 phone calls that day, most of them between 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. Ms. Link, Clerk, referenced the Elections Administration Plan, which showed that we did follow protocol when the phones went down. Page 14 of the EAP discusses communication plans. Ms. Link explained that we gave our cell phone numbers to precinct support people, and that she had a group message going with them throughout the day, keeping them updated on the situation and telling them how to proceed with their VLMs.

Page 22 of the EAP discusses potential voting disruptions. The protocol for the phones going out is to contact county and local Emergency Management Agency, or EMA. Ms. Link explained that she called EMA six times, and she called Gary Wobser, who is in charge of the county's phone system, five times, so we did follow protocol. Mr. Ferrell suggested getting burner phones in case the phone lines go down again. Ms. Salyers stated that according to Gary Wobser, it wasn't just the Board of Elections phones that went down on Election Day. About half the county, or anybody who shared a switch with us, went down. Because of this, the county is thinking about putting the Board of Elections on its own phone switch. Ms. Salyers also stated that we were writing down the numbers as they appeared on our caller ID, and calling people back right away on our cell phones.

Then, Ms. Salyers stated that the office received several thank you notes from both part-time staff and from citizens, thanking the staff for the great job they did this election season. Eliza Link and Libby Grant, clerks, read the thank-you notes aloud. Mr. Monaghan stated it was important that the staff write and sign thank you notes to the poll workers. Ms. Salyers stated that they were already working on that.

Ms. Salyers then stated that she had worked on writing up three new policy changes, two of which may be discussed in open session. The third potential policy change would need to be discussed in executive session, because it deals with individual employees' pay. The first proposed policy change is regarding holiday time. It reads,

**"In the event that the Secretary of State's office directs the Board of Elections to be open during a period of time that Erie County would normally be closed due to an approved, observed holiday, the office may use another day in the calendar year in lieu of that holiday. The board may also approve the closing of the office to compensate for that day mutually agreed upon by the staff and the board."**

The second potential policy change is regarding signature matching. It reads,

**"Whenever an employee has deemed a signature on an application for an absentee ballot, identification envelope, or those signatures that appear on petitions do not match the ones we have on file, an employee of the opposite party must validate this in order to proceed sending a form to verify and update the individual's signature. If a determination is unable to be reached, it will be taken to the Director and/or the Deputy Director."**

Mr. Ferrell suggested getting a computer program like Pennsylvania has, which does the signature matching for us. Mr. Smith stated that the policies make sense, but he would like to run it by Gery Gross in legal and the Secretary of State's office to make sure we are in compliance. Ms. Salyers stated that she spoke with Jeff Hobday at the Secretary of State's office during the last election, and he confirmed that it was our job to verify signatures. She also stated that we don't just look at the most recent signature; we look at old signatures and old voter cards as well.

Ms. Grubbe asked what training do they have? There is none. Mr. Ferrell stated that's a good question. Ms. Salyers responded that they have offered training classes at conferences in the past, but that you don't have to be a handwriting analyst to see that signatures don't match. Mr. Ferrell stated that signatures do change over the years. He also stated that there was the problem of the time frame, and the post office being slow. This could prevent someone from voting. He also agreed that signature matching training was a good idea, if offered. Mr. Smith suggested that we could even add language to the proposed policy change, which states that any employee doing the signature checking has to have undergone the signature training.

Mr. Ferrell stated that it was a good idea to check with other employees, too, if someone was unsure about a signature. Ms. Link stated that we usually do, because making a call that someone's signature doesn't match is always uncomfortable. She also stated that out of all the voters we had this election, not that many people were flagged due to a signature not matching.

**Mr. Smith stated that it made sense to him, if someone's signature does not match, to simply call them and ask, "Did you sign this?" Then, if they say yes, it's not a problem. However, he understands that the law does not permit this.**

**Ms. Salyers stated that she would contact both Gery Gross and legal at the Secretary of State to get their opinions on the proposed policy changes. Mr. Ferrell then stated that we needed a motion to go into executive session to discuss the third potential policy change regarding individual employees' compensation. Motion to go into executive session was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried. Board went into executive session at 8:41 a.m.**

**Motion to go back into regular session was made by Mr. Monaghan, seconded by Mr. Smith. Motion carried. Board resumed regular session at 9:14 a.m.**

**Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Monaghan. Motion carried. Board adjourned at 9:14 a.m.**

**Lori J. Salyers, Director**

**Attest:**

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**Thomas M. Ferrell, Chairman**