

**HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
Wednesday, October 8, 2014**

Call to order:

Upon notice duly given, Secretary Summers called to order a regularly scheduled meeting of the Hamilton County Election Commission at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, October 8, 2014 at the office of the Hamilton County Election Commission, 700 River Terminal Road, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Present at Meeting:

Commissioners Summers, Braly, Clem, and Scott were present at the meeting, as well as staff of the Election Commission, and members of the public.

Invocation: **Commissioner Clem**

Pledge of Allegiance: **Secretary Summers**

Approval of Minutes:

**Commissioner Braly** made a motion to approve the minutes.

**Commissioner Clem** seconded the motion.

**All approved.**

New Business:

**HCEC Productivity Report**

**Administrator Steelman** said he wanted to give the Commission a snapshot of the work that is being accomplished in the office. Several members of the commission have been serving in this capacity for some length of time and know what goes on here, but some are newer and he wanted to give the commission a good view of the work that's being accomplished by the staff here. He highlighted several numbers off the report including the nearly 2,500 new applications for voter registration processed in August and September and the overall 117,311 transactions. He said all of these numbers reflect an instance where this staff has touched a record and performed a job. He further said that one number not reflected on this report is petitions. This year we've been inundated with petitions—the Chris Anderson recall, the Domestic Partnership Ordinance, the Wine in Grocery Stores petitions, and the retail package stores in Soddy Daisy. There was no way to track that work previously. We worked with IT to come up with a way to be able to track all the signatures we were checking on the petitions beginning with the Wine in Retail Food Stores. The number of 16,802 signatures checked is the Wine in Retail Food Stores and Soddy Daisy Package Stores and doesn't include the Anderson Recall or Domestic Partnership Ordinance petitions.

**Absentee**

**Administrator Steelman** said he had an update on the absentee ballots that have been processed. To date, 95 military and overseas ballots and 320 ballots requested for all other reasons have been sent. Voters have until October 28 to request an absentee ballot, so those numbers will increase. He said Nursing Home voting began October 7 and will continue through October 14. Three teams will visit 33 nursing homes and assisted living facilities during that

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time and we have identified 1,003 potential voters at all of these facilities. Turnout Tuesday was good: of the 123 potential voters yesterday, 54 voted.

**Commissioner Braly** asked if the 33 nursing homes we visit were all the nursing homes and assisted living facilities in the county, or do you just pick out certain ones to do?

**Administrator Steelman** said Shannon DeFriese, the Nursing Home Voting Coordinator, contacts the state-licensed facilities to ask them to send a list of residents to us. Residents who are registered to vote are our potential voters.

**Commissioner Scott** said he would like to see a list of facilities because he believes there are more than 33.

**Commissioner Clem** said if there's anyone that wants this service that's not getting it we need to know that.

Administrator Steelman asked Shannon DeFriese to enter the meeting to further explain the process to the commissioners.

**Administrator Steelman** said Shannon, we're talking about the nursing home facilities that we go vote and your process where you contact the nursing home and assisted living facilities. You also have the component of retirement centers, which we don't vote. They have questions with respect to the number of facilities in Chattanooga that we go to.

**Deputy DeFriese** said we have 39 currently that we attend in six days.

**Commissioner Clem** asked how do we select those?

**Deputy DeFriese** said we go to every facility that is licensed by the state of Tennessee. Those are the ones that we are supposed to go to. We don't go to any that are not licensed by the state of Tennessee.

**Administrator Steelman** said to clarify, the Alexian and Standifer Place facilities are counted as one in my list of 33 facilities. I included those as one each rather than counting them separately.

**Deputy DeFriese** said yes, when I say 39 there's the Healthcare Center at Standifer Place and that's Dalton Place. Then there's the Assisted Living and Hamilton Terrace. Those operate as separate facilities although they are on one campus and I counted them individually. Alexian would be the same: there's Alexian Inn and Alexian Healthcare. We do not go to the Alexian Village apartments any longer because the state has said not to vote residents at independent living facilities.

**Secretary Summers** asked of all the groups that are eligible for us to service, are there any that are not being serviced, for example, because of location? If the criteria are they have a state license, are we serving all those?

**Deputy DeFriese** said yes, sir.

**Commissioner Clem** said he remembered an issue which came up in a prior election where a facility called me and Jim Fields because they had people there who apparently were not qualified for voting without a picture ID. Because I think if you're in a nursing home, you don't have to have a picture ID. Are the people in the assisted living center still allowed to vote early in this process? When you go out there and they are in a facility that has nursing home and assisted living, are they allowed to vote early in this process?

**Deputy DeFriese** said Summit View, for example, has a certain number of beds that are eligible for us to assist them under nursing home voting. They have many, many more people on that property but the only people we are allowed to assist under nursing home voting are those 40 beds covered under the state license.

**Commissioner Clem** asked and they don't need to have picture ID?

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**Deputy DeFriese** said no, sir.

**Commissioner Clem** asked but the others?

**Deputy DeFriese** said the independent living residents do have to have ID, but they would also qualify for absentee balloting which residents in the state-licensed beds do not.

**Commissioner Clem** said what we ended up telling them was if you don't have picture ID, just get your absentee ballot and don't worry about it.

**Secretary Summers** asked if there was any kind of information sheet? It seems to me that can create some kind of...

**Commissioner Scott** said exactly. This is always a hot topic and that's why I said I want to see a list because several people have called me that this pertains to and said they get no services, but then we come in here and you say we service everybody.

**Secretary Summers** asked Kerry, can you prepare some sort of information sheet so these people will understand, the ones that do need to have some sort of photo ID and the ones that do not.

**Administrator Steelman** said we'll certainly do that. We'll develop a white paper.

**Secretary Summers** said maybe you can have something to distribute at the next meeting.

### National Voter Registration Day 09/23/14

**Administrator Steelman** said just as a note, National Voter Registration Day was September 23. We had a team travel to Chattanooga State on September 23 to register voters. We collected 12 registrations. We also had a presence at the Hamilton County Fair where we collected 39 registration forms which included a combination of new registrations and voter updates. It was a good service and we received positive feedback from the community for having a presence at the fair.

**Secretary Summers** asked if anyone had any questions.

**Commissioner Scott** said a group from National Voter Registration Day went down to UTC and over 100 registered down at UTC.

### Poll Worker Staffing

**Administrator Steelman** updated the commission on efforts to bring more parity to staffing at the precincts. He said we have two working specifically on this project and they have been directed, at least from this point forward, to work on bringing parity to the polling sites. Since many of our workers are already in place for this election season, it will be easier to do this next election season when we're recruiting new workers. We're advising our officers of the statute and asking that as workers drop out they need to recruit people of the needed party. We're having some success in that regard. I have a list of several precincts here where you can see some of the staffing adjustments we've made in that regard.

**Commissioner Scott** asked if this is the current list or the one that reflects that changes. Because this list says, for example, Lookout Valley has four Democrats and 10 Republicans. The statute says it has to be better than that.

**Administrator Steelman** said we are working toward that end, to try to get parity. Right now we have people who have already been in place since May working at the polls. Finding people to work polls is equivalent to finding people to do volunteer work. It's a challenge to recruit new workers. In this period between now and the November election we're focusing on those

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precincts where folks are rolling off, rather than telling precinct officers you need to get rid of somebody and appoint somebody else. I think that would send the wrong signal.

**Commissioner Scott** said we're going to have problems if someone complains because of the state statute. If you don't have new workers, you rotate what you already have.

**Commissioner Clem** said you're going to have people quit if you tell people they have to go to a precinct they don't know.

**Commissioner Scott** said it's a state statute. We don't have that choice.

**Commissioner Clem** said the state statute says make an effort. I don't think it says it has to be even.

**Commissioner Braly** said she doesn't have a problem except for the Officer of Election. She thinks the Officer of Election needs to be a Republican because Republicans are in the majority. Right now, if they are doing a good job, that's fine. But if they leave, they need to be replaced by a Republican. I do think this is lopsided. And it may be the areas, I don't know.

**Administrator Steelman** said obviously there are going to be some precincts that are heavily Republican and some that are heavily Democrat. That's just the makeup of the community and we try to use people from the community to work in the precincts.

**Assistant Administrator Scott** said another issue we run into is because in Tennessee you don't have to register as a Democrat or Republican, you look at some people's history and it is split.

**Administrator Steelman** added that sometimes an officer will tell you a worker is a Democrat or Republican and when you look at the voting record it doesn't match up with what's being said.

**Secretary Summers** said as I understand these are the changes you have made as there's attrition or as people drop off. I wasn't here last time, but is the consensus that you want there to be parity as much as possible? That's what the goal is?

**Administrator Steelman** said last meeting the consensus was that the goal needs to be parity unless a precinct has an odd number of poll workers, then the majority need to be Republican.

**Secretary Summers** said looking down the road this needs to be examined periodically to make sure it doesn't get too lopsided either way.

### Scheduling:

#### Election Night Meeting Date

**Administrator Steelman** asked on Election Night do you want to meet at 7 p.m. or 7:30 p.m.?

**Commissioner Braly** said we usually meet at 7 p.m.

**Commissioner Clem** said he thinks a 7:30 p.m. meeting will be fine because it's usually only a 10 minute meeting.

**Commissioner Clem** made a motion to set the meeting for November 4 at 7:30 p.m.

**Commissioner Braly** seconded the motion

**All were in favor.**

#### Certification of Election

**Administrator Steelman** said since they usually set the date for certification at the Election Night meeting, he wanted the commissioners to go ahead and begin thinking about a date because of the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. The staff would like to set the date as close to the deadline as possible. The deadline is Monday, November 24, which is the Monday of

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Thanksgiving week. Our preference would be to certify either Thursday or Friday, November 20 or 21, the week before.

**Secretary Summers** asked if we had to set it now or could we wait until November 4?

**Administrator Steelman** said the commission can decide on Election Night. He just wanted to put this out there because Thanksgiving is a busy time and he wants to be considerate of everyone's schedule.

Legal Matters:

**Libertarian Candidate Daniel T. Lewis (Memo from Coordinator Goins)**

**Administrator Steelman** said the matter has been resolved. A memo from State Election Coordinator Mark Goins was included in the commissioners' meeting information.

Adjournment:

**Commissioner Braly** made a motion to adjourn.

**Commissioner Clem** seconded.

**All approved.**

APPROVED:

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Jerry Summers

Secretary

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Michael S. Walden

Chairman

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Ruth Braly

Commissioner

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Chris Clem

Commissioner

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Kelvin Scott

Commissioner