

**HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
Wednesday, July 8, 2015**

Call to Order:

Upon notice duly given, Chairman Walden called to order a meeting of the Hamilton County Election Commission at 8 a.m. on July 8, 2015 at the office of the Hamilton County Election Commission, 700 River Terminal Road, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Invocation: **Commissioner Braly**

Pledge of Allegiance: **Commissioner Scott**

Present at Meeting:

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

Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Braly made a motion to approve the minutes.

Secretary Summers seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

New Business:

RFP for Ballot Printing Services

Administrator Steelman said as requested by the Election Commission, he's been working with the Department of Purchasing to develop an RFP for ballot printing. Gail Roppo from Purchasing will present a report on the RFP process.

Gail Roppo, Director of Purchasing for Hamilton County, said the Purchasing Department worked with Mark Beckstrand from Dominion Voting to ensure they had all the necessary technical specifications for the RFP. Additionally, they wanted to make sure of four things with the printers. They must: 1) be approved by Dominion, 2) have their own printing facility and not a subcontractor, 3) have been in the business of printing ballots at least five years, and 4) must be certified both on the equipment and also to print ballots for the state of Tennessee. There are 16 printers currently certified to print on our voting equipment and approved by Dominion. The purchasing department followed a two-step process. On January 16 they sent out a letter to those 16 printers informing them we were going to send out an RFP and asking if they were interested in participating in the process. Of those 16, eight responded in a timely manner. Then on April 21 we sent out the RFP. We included a provision that as part of the RFP the printer should print a sample supply of ballots. Bids were opened on June 5. Of the eight who

Hamilton County Election Commission – Minutes of Meeting, July 8, 2015

requested the RFP, only one returned a bid. That one was Mid-West Printing Company. Mid-West has been with us since 1998. The contract is a four-year contract with two additional four year renewals. Also, it includes a provision that the price of ballots can be increased every two years with documented proof of increases in the price of paper. Director Roppo recommended accepting the bid from Mid-West Printing Company.

Secretary Summers asked if there were any Tennessee printers considered.

Director Roppo said there were not any Tennessee printers certified by Dominion.

Secretary Summers asked if the prices were reasonable.

Administrator Steelman said yes, they are very reasonable. In talking with other election officials, he has been told of some companies that charge as much as 40 or 50 cents per ballot.

Commissioner Braly made a motion to approve the bid from Mid-West Printing Company.

Secretary Summers seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

Primary Request from Party Executive Committees § 2-13-203 (d)(1)

Administrator Steelman advised the commission that the state statute requires the local parties to call for a county primary if they intend to hold the primary in conjunction with the Presidential Preference Primary. Both the local Democrat Party and the local Republican Party have sent letters making that request.

Secretary Summers made a motion to formally call for the County Primary elections to be held in conjunction with the Presidential Preference Primary.

Commissioner Braly second the motion.

All approved.

Provisional Ballot Bags

Administrator Steelman informed the commissioners that the Provisional Ballot Bags used by Hamilton County were once again up for approval by the State Election Commission. Historically, the Election Commission used bulky metal boxes for provisional ballots. The boxes were bulky, hard to carry, and destructive to car interiors. In 2006 then-Administrator Bud Knowles started looking for an alternative and approached bank bag company A. Rifkin about designing a bag that could be used for ballots. The state approved the bags as a pilot project and provided HAVA funds for the purchase of the bags. Everything went well until 2012 when an expense report was submitted with the line item “seals for ballot bags” and the current state elections office questioned the use of the bags. Since that time the state has required that we get the bags re-approved on a temporary basis for each election cycle. We’ve used these bags for nine years, a total of 25 elections, with no issues. They meet the statutory requirement of a “safe, secure, and durable” container. With that in mind, I have provided the commission with a draft of a letter asking the state election commission to permanently approve these bags.

Hamilton County Election Commission – Minutes of Meeting, July 8, 2015

The members of the Election Commission were given the opportunity to examine the bag. **Administrator Steelman** said the issue with bags has been that other counties have used a different bag which could be opened and sealed up again without any sign that they've been compromised.

Commissioner Braly said this bag is secure with two separate locks.

Chairman Walden said you can't get into the bag.

Commissioner Clem said you could get into it, but it would be obvious what had been done, and you could get into a box, too.

Administrator Steelman said State Election Coordinator Mark Goins and Beth Henry-Robinson will present the bag to the State Election Commission in September for re-approval.

Secretary Summers made a motion to send a letter to the State Election Commission asking that they permanently approve the bag.

Commissioner Braly seconded the motion.

All approved.

New Website Preview

Administrator Steelman said previously we were dependent on the Hamilton County IT Department for our website maintenance. They have one webmaster who works with all the county departments. We are pleased to finally have control of our website.

Deputy Nathan Foster said he had been with the Election Commission for 10 years and during that time there has not been a major upgrade to our website. With the new website we are no longer dependent on IT to make changes for us and we can update our website whenever we need. The new domain name will be hamiltonelections.com. We are also purchasing hamiltonelection.com and the old domain of elect.hamiltontn.gov will direct to the new site, as well.

Deputy Foster walked the commissioners through some of the features of the new site.

Secretary Summers asked when the site was going to go live.

Deputy Foster said there is not a firm date yet. It depended, in part, on the feedback we received today from the commission.

Commissioner Scott said he would like to see us do a big unveiling for the site and invite the local elected officials.

Chairman Walden said the website looked wonderful.

Deputy Foster added that the site doesn't stop here. We will continue to add new content. We're very excited about the future of the site.

Secretary Summers made a motion to accept the website.

Commissioner Braly seconded the motion.

All approved.

Hamilton County Election Commission – Minutes of Meeting, July 8, 2015

Adjournment:

Chairman Walden told Administrator Steelman he would like him to look into what grants are available to increase voter outreach to the inner city. I don't care how people vote, I just want more people to vote, he said. He also asked that the staff look at voter turnout for the last 10 years to see if there are any patterns in voter turnout increases or decreases.

Commissioner Braly made a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Summers seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

APPROVED:

Jerry Summers Secretary

Michael S. Walden Chairman

Ruth Braly Commissioner

Chris Clem Commissioner

Kelvin Scott Commissioner