

**HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
Wednesday, September 9, 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 September 9, 2015 at the office of the Hamilton County Election Commission, 700 River Terminal Road, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Invocation: **Commissioner Braly**

Pledge of Allegiance: **Chairman Walden**

Present at Meeting:

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

Approval of Minutes:

Chairman Walden asked has everyone had the chance to review the minutes? They are coming to us via email and they look very, very good.

Commissioner Braly made a motion to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Clem seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

New Business:

Offices on the Ballot in 2016

Administrator Steelman said he had included in the commissioners' packages, for their information, a list of offices on the ballot for March, August, and November 2016.

Nominating Petitions for Delegates and County Primary Candidates § 2-2-102(b)(5)

Administrator Steelman said there's nothing urgent to take care of this morning but he felt it was important for the commission to get together because we are quickly approaching the 2016 election season. This Friday, September 11, is the first day that nominating petitions can be picked up for the county offices on the ballot in March.

Secretary Summers asked about the vacancy in the criminal court judgeship. He has heard that an appointment will not be made until the latter part of the month, if then. What is the timeline for picking up petitions and qualifying to appear on the ballot?

Administrator Steelman said the qualifying deadline is noon on December 10, 2015 for the March 1, 2016 election.

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National Voter Registration Day

Administrator Steelman said September 22 is National Voter Registration Day. We are going to have an open house here that afternoon and we will highlight the new website that day. The open house will be from 1-4 p.m. with the website presentation at 2 p.m. He said he has also reached out to both parties about potential voter registration drives on that day.

Polling Site Changes § 2-3-101

Administrator Steelman said during August he, Assistant Administrator Scott Allen, and Deputy Nathan Foster visited all the polling sites in Hamilton County.

Chairman Walden asked how many polling sites do we have?

Assistant Administrator Allen said we have 81 polling sites. We have 130 precincts, but some precincts share polling sites.

Administrator Steelman said visiting each site gave them the opportunity to make sure all sites were in compliance with the law, particularly the Americans with Disabilities Act. We noticed several had issues and, working with the office of the State Coordinator of Elections, we were able to get equipment such as handicap-accessibility ramps that fixed those problems and brought the sites into ADA compliance.

Commissioner Clem asked so there have been no complaints? We're just fixing it before we have one?

Administrator Steelman said yes, we're being pre-emptive.

Administrator Steelman said during the visits, we did identify a couple of places that need to be changed. The polling place we were using for Eastside 1&2 was a gym owned by Tennessee Temple University. That property has been sold to Redemption Point Church. The church has been very good to work with, but has asked us to switch to another gym. It's on the same property, just in another building. The Bachman Community Center used for the Fairmount precinct has significant accessibility issues. We have had discussions with the pastor at Pinecrest Baptist Church on Signal Mountain and they are very receptive to us. We will be meeting with him to arrange using the facility. At Soddy Daisy 2 & 3, Daisy United Methodist has a new pastor. His first election was the Fairbanks/Thurman election with the write-in campaign. It was a bad experience for him. So they suggested we find another location for the precinct.

Commissioner Clem pointed out that was the election that was the problem, not us.

Administrator Steelman agreed, saying yes, no complaints with us. We have two options. Daisy Church of God is one. We were there before and moved because the church was having renovations. The other option is the Soddy Daisy campus of Stuart Heights Baptist Church.

Commissioner Braly asked if we will send notifications when the new polling places are finalized.

Administrator Steelman said yes, we will send new registration cards to everyone in those precincts.

Appointment Certificates from State Election Commission

Administrator Steelman said each commissioner had in his or her packet a certificate provided by the state.

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Other Business:

Administrator Steelman said the Democratic Party Executive Committee has asked him to address a specific issue that came up last year. During the August election last year an issue arose with the John Allen Brooks' campaign sending unsolicited absentee ballot applications. The Brooks campaign had mailed these to people completely filled out with the exception of the Social Security Number and a signature. This is a Class A misdemeanor. They admitted they had done it, but said it was a rogue staffer.

Chairman Walden clarified they only sent those to the voters with the intention of the voters signing it and sending it to us. They did not actually send them to us attempting to get absentee ballots on behalf of the voters.

Commissioner Clem added there was no forgery, but it was still something they shouldn't have done.

Administrator Steelman said that is correct. Only an Election Commission official can send out absentee applications.

Commissioner Clem asked what exactly the Democrat party wanted in regards to this issue.

Administrator Steelman said they were looking for clarification on the process and he has prepared documents to give them some guidance on what they can and can't do related to absentee ballots.

Chairman Walden suggested having Attorney Rheubin Taylor review the documents.

Administrator Steelman said he also planned to talk to both the Democrat and Republican executive committee about their responsibility in nominating poll workers. The law says 90 days before the election they are supposed to submit nominations for poll workers.

Commissioner Clem asked Steelman if he was confident both parties would submit names. They haven't really done that in the past.

Administrator Steelman said he doesn't think they really understood their statutory obligation in regard to nominating poll workers.

Administrator Steelman said we've been testing pens looking for a good pen for the upcoming elections. We've tested a large number of pens to make sure there's no issue with bleed-through on the ballots. We've picked a pen and have made a purchase.

Chairman Walden asked if the ballot printing contract had been finalized with purchasing.

Administrator Steelman said yes.

Commissioner Clem asked about the status of the approval of the provisional ballot bags.

Administrator Steelman said they go before the state election commission next month.

Adjournment:

Secretary Summers made a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Braly seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

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APPROVED:

Jerry Summers Secretary

Michael S. Walden Chairman

Ruth Braly Commissioner

Chris Clem Commissioner

Kelvin Scott Commissioner