

**HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
Wednesday, June 8, 2016**

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 June 8, 2016 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, Clem, and Scott were present at the meeting, as well as members of the public, the media, and staff of the Election Commission.

Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Braly made a motion to approve the minutes.

Secretary Summers seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

New Business:

Approval of Ballot: August 4, 2016 State Primary/County General

Administrator Steelman presented sample ballots for review.

Chairman Walden asked if the ballots were already approved by the state.

Administrator Steelman said yes, they are.

Secretary Summers made a motion to adopt the ballots.

Commissioner Braly seconded the motion.

All approved.

Early Voting: Friday 07/15/16 – Saturday 07/30/16
(TCA § 2-6-102(a)(1) and § 2-6-103(a)(1) and (b)(1))

Proposed Locations/Times

- 1. Brainerd Rec Center (Mon – Sat 10A-6P)**
- 2. Eastwood Church (Mon – Sat 10A-6P)**
- 3. North River Civic Center (Mon – Sat 10A-6P)**
- 4. Election Commission (Mon – Friday 10A-7P; Sat 9A-6P)**

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Administrator Steelman said the proposed Early Voting locations and times are the same as previous elections for consistency.

Commissioner Braly made a motion to accept the Early Voting dates, times, and locations as presented.

Secretary Summers seconded the motion.

All approved.

Poll workers: August 4, 2016 State Primary/County General

Commissioner Braly asked about the party ratio of the officers.

Administrator Steelman said it is about 55/45, Republican/Democrat. We are aware that you all have an interest that the officers of election should reflect the party makeup of the commission. As a Democrat officer rolls off the position, we are seeking to replace that person with a Republican.

Commissioner Scott said he understands that the Republicans should have the majority but just because a Democrat rolls off does not mean that a Republican takes their place automatically just because they have a majority. It's not balanced.

Assistant Administrator Allen said we're talking about the officer positions. For the regular workers, we have a staffing matrix we go by to keep the workers mixed.

Commissioner Braly asked if the staff was still working on precincts where the workers are all one party or the other.

Administrator Steelman said we are still activity working those.

Commissioner Scott said if you have a site that has no Democratic representation you have got to move somebody. We can't have a site that is all Democrat or all Republican.

Commissioner Braly said you can't force the poll workers to move, though.

Commissioner Clem said if you move some of these people, they just won't go.

Deputy Foster said we're not done yet. We still have to add about 120 people to fill all our spots.

Chairman Walden said last time I looked, poll workers don't sway an election one way or the other. They get one vote just like everybody else.

Commissioner Scott said but a candidate can come back and say it wasn't fair.

Commissioner Clem said it protects us if there's ever a controversy.

Commissioner Braly made a motion to approve the list of poll workers.

Secretary Summers seconded the motion.

All approved.

Other Business:

New Recreation Center in Avondale

Administrator Steelman said the City of Chattanooga will be building a new recreation center in Avondale to be completed in the fall of 2017. It is unclear when they are going to demolish the

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current facility. We have determined that it would be best to go ahead and move now to be sure that there are no changes between August and November.

Chairman Walden asked if we could contact the city and ask when they are breaking ground.

Administrator Steelman said we did that and the city hasn't given us a clear answer.

Chairman Walden asked if the city had plans to do it before November.

Administrator Steelman said it is unclear. The Mayor's office cannot give us a solid answer. With that level of uncertainty, we feel like it would be better to move the Avondale precinct to the Carver Center where the Bushtown precinct currently votes. There's more than enough room there and it is less than a mile from the currently facility.

Chairman Walden asked if we had talked to the candidates about the move.

Commissioner Scott said this is a touchy situation. We need to try to get a pinpoint answer from the city.

Commissioner Clem said we can probably do the August voting easily, but the risk is that we're going to end up switching before November.

Administrator Steelman said yes, and my concern is that the Avondale voters go and vote there in August and then we have to make a change before the Presidential election in November.

Chairman Walden said he is concerned about making a decision without involving the stakeholders and I would like for them to weigh in. It's their race and their district.

Commissioner Scott said if we decide to do this, we need enough time to notify people.

Administrator Steelman said we are required by statute to notify voters of a change and that's why we wanted to do it early to get out the new voter registration cards, to be able to put advertisements in the paper.

Commissioner Clem asked if we could wait a month before we make a decision.

Commissioner Scott said for November?

Administrator Steelman said for August.

Commissioner Clem said then we have to make a final decision at our July meeting.

Newspaper Ad Expense

Chairman Walden asked if the law had been amended to allow us to explore other options for newspaper ads.

Administrator Steelman said there was a bill introduced in the Tennessee General Assembly to do just that, but it was defeated and we are still required to run our legal notices in a newspaper of general circulation.

Commissioner Scott asked so it can be any newspaper?

Administrator Steelman said no, it has to be the major newspaper in the county. We also do other postings. The state requires that you post election information either on our own Election Commission website or the state's website.

Chairman Walden asked if it would be possible for us to cut the amount we spend at the Times-Free Press and spread some of that money around to other outlets?

Administrator Steelman said no, we are already doing the minimum newspaper advertising required by law and cannot cut it further.

Voter Outreach and Webpage

Chairman Walden said and we are now doing a community outreach on radio stations. Do we have any way to measure that success?

Administrator Steelman said we saw a significant increase in voter registrations prior to the March Presidential Primary, but nothing out of line with previous years. We don't expect to see an increase in August, but we do expect a sizeable increase in November.

Chairman Walden asked about purging inactive voters.

Administrator Steelman said no purging will occur this year because it is an election year. State law prohibits purging within 90 days before a state or federal election.

Chairman Walden asked but we're up to date and have an ongoing process.

Administrator Steelman said yes, we went through a purge in 2015.

Commissioner Clem asked we do it mostly in off years?

Administrator Steelman said yes.

Chairman Walden said we can do a purge during an election year, just not within 90 days of the elections.

Administrator Steelman said we could.

Chairman Walden said but that's not our policy and I agree with that.

Administrator Steelman said state law has a two year period in which Election Commissions are to do list maintenance to keep the voter rolls up-to-date.

Commissioner Braly asked so if they miss two federal or Presidential elections...

Administrator Steelman said the law says if they miss two November general elections at that point we mark them inactive and send them a confirmation card so the voter has the chance to update their address. If the card comes back to us as undeliverable the voter remains inactive and if they do not have any voter activity after the two November elections after that, the voter is to be purged. Voter activity is not limited to voting. It includes updating an address, changing a name, requesting a new registration card, signing a petition. All these are voter activity. Basically, the state has set up an eight year timeframe for a voter to show that they are an active voter.

Commissioner Clem said that sounds very patient.

Commissioner Scott said if this is done every odd year, why did we have people who were just purged?

Administrator Steelman said to clarify, I'm speaking of mass purges. There will always be incidental purges such as when a voter is deceased, convicted of a felony, or meets other criteria the state allows for purging.

Assistant Administrator Allen said the big purges where we go in and look at everybody's activity date, that's only in odd years.

Commissioner Scott said there is still some confusion about purging. I would suggest that somewhere on our website we have some information about purging.

Chairman Walden said that leads into how is the new website going?

Deputy Nathan Foster said it is going really well. After today's meeting we will be updating the Early Voting dates and times and the sample ballots that you have just approved. We've got people downloading absentee ballot request forms. We have a list of candidates who have picked up and qualified for August and who have picked up for November. We are getting good

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feedback from that and our Facebook page. We have close to 500 people who like us on Facebook. It's slowly building as we put more content on there. People are on Facebook anyway, so anytime we put new content on our webpage, we post that link to our Facebook page to make it more convenient for the public to find.

Adjournment:

Commissioner Clem made a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Braly seconded the motion.

All approved.

APPROVED:

Jerry Summers

Secretary

Michael S. Walden

Chairman

Ruth Braly

Commissioner

Chris Clem

Commissioner

Kelvin Scott

Commissioner