

**HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
Wednesday, July 13, 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 July 13, 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, and Clem were present at the meeting, as well as 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.

Old Business:

**Avondale Youth & Family Development Center**

**Administrator Steelman** said, as we discussed last meeting, it was uncertain when the City of Chattanooga would begin demolition of the old Avondale Youth and Family Development facility. Commissioner Scott and I have communicated about this numerous times. He was communicating with the City Councilman in that district he was going to get a response from him in regards to what the demolition timeline was. In the absence of that, I do have official correspondence from the Office of the Mayor stating that it will not be demolished this year. They say it is slated to be demolished in April of 2017.

**Chairman Walden** said then if we choose to leave the polling location at that center, we can do so without a problem in November.

**Administrator Steelman** said yes, which is the best possible outcome.

**Certificate of Appreciation: Mary Tull 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

**Chairman Walden** said we have a certificate to sign for Miss Tull who was a long-time poll worker.

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**Administrator Steelman** said Commissioner Scott mentioned her last meeting. Her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday is coming up this week and we are presenting her with a certificate of appreciation for all her years of service to the Election Commission.

### New Business:

#### **FY17 Adopted Budget**

**Administrator Steelman** said the county passed the budget on June 29. However, when they passed the budget, they cut our budget.

**Commissioner Clem** asked if they had done that before.

**Administrator Steelman** said not as far as he knows. I spoke with Albert Kaiser, the Finance Administrator, and he indicated that there was a 2.5% pay increase given to all county employees and no property tax increase. Because of that, in order to balance the budget, the commission had to make cuts. In the budget hearing, I specifically pointed out to them that they could not compare FY16 to FY17. In FY16 we had one election. The best comparison would be FY13 which was a Presidential election cycle and we budgeted consistently with that year. The line item they cut is the line item for office supplies and forms, which is where we purchase our ballots.

**Commissioner Clem** said he would suggest that, for the record, it is this commission which is in charge of the budget and while the county commission does fund the overall budget, they have no right to line item anything. They can maybe approve the overall budget, but I don't believe they have the authority to tell us how to spend it. I think it's questionable if they can cut it, but they certainly can't line item and tell us where we have to spend it.

**Administrator Steelman** said we do have this overall pot of operating funds and we, just in terms of budgeting, put it in the line items so we know we can meet the expenses.

**Chairman Walden** asked how much they cut.

**Commissioner Braly** said \$130,000 is what we are left with in that line item.

**Administrator Steelman** said they funded \$130,000. I had requested \$250,000 in that line item.

**Commissioner Clem** asked Administrator Steelman if he could make this work.

**Administrator Steelman** said if the City of Chattanooga election has a run-off – and the odds are yes, they will have a run-off – it will not be possible. Now I did talk to Mr. Kaiser about this and he said after November – he wasn't even thinking about having an August election – but after November, he'll look at our budget and if we're not able to meet our needs for March and April then he would go back to the County Commission and tell them that we made this request, but it was cut and now they need additional funding.

**Commissioner Clem** said I don't think it needs to be asking. I think it needs to be telling them that it will go to court.

**Commissioner Braly** said this is not only for the ballots. This line item is for everything you need for office supplies.

**Assistant Administrator Scott** said just ballots alone will cost what they gave us, if we just purchase ballots and don't buy anything else for the office.

**Chairman Walden** said this may be a little bit of smoke and mirrors from the County Commission so they can say they are going to make cuts to meet the budget and then give back

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later. I want to pass this until the next meeting. We will review the statutory requirement and then decide how we move forward. Let us look at what our best course of action is to resolve the issue. At the end of the day the county is responsible to fund the budget, and the county also realizes this. Does this take into consideration any of the money that we get from other municipalities to refund us for their city elections?

**Administrator Steelman** said yes, that revenue is included in the budget.

**Chairman Walden** asked why we had a negative line item in salaries.

**Administrator Steelman** said that reflects a vacant position.

**Chairman Walden** said you submitted this and they approved a certain amount. We'll just have to see what recourse we have. At the end of the day, you're going to operate within this budget so we have to make sure we don't set you up for failure.

**Commissioner Braly** said it just doesn't seem right that during a Presidential election year they would cut our budget that much.

**Commissioner Clem** said we're not like their other departments. They don't have a right to treat us however they want.

### Scheduling

**Administrator Steelman** said on Election night I've tentatively scheduled the meeting at the same time we usually meet, 30 minutes before polls close. The deadline to certify the election is the third Monday following the election. That meeting is tentatively scheduled for Monday, August 22. In regards to the September meeting, we will have to make an adjustment to when we meet. There is the potential for a vacancy in County Commission District 3 following the Haynes/Siedlecki race for Property Assessor. If Marty Haynes is elected, he will have to resign from the County Commission by September 1. I've had conversations with Haynes and if he is elected, he will submit his formal resignation in time for the County Commission to accept it in their August meeting, effective September 1. That sets in motion the qualifying deadline for filling the vacancy, which is the 55<sup>th</sup> day before Election Day. That will be September 14 at noon. With a vacancy the withdrawal deadline, rather than seven days after the qualifying deadline, is three days following the qualifying deadline. The withdrawal deadline will be at noon on Saturday, September 17. In order for us to get the ballot approved and ready for military ballots to go out by the 45<sup>th</sup> day, we need to have the meeting Monday, September 19 at 8 a.m. to approve the ballot.

### Adjournment:

**Secretary Summers** made a motion to adjourn.

**Commissioner Clem** seconded the motion.

All approved.

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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