

**HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
Wednesday, January 4, 2017**

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 January 4, 2017 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, Braly, Clem, and Scott 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.

**Commissioner Clem** seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

New Business:

**City of Chattanooga Election: March 7, 2017**

**Approval of Ballot**

**Commissioner Clem** asked looking at the City Council District 8 race, is there a reason why thomas kunesh wants the first letters of his name lower case?

**Administrator Steelman** said that's how he listed it on his petition.

**Assistant Administrator Allen** said we spoke to him and that's how his name is always written, all lower case. It is part of his religious beliefs.

**Administrator Steelman** said tom is a member of the Cherokee Nation.

**Commissioner Clem** said he just wanted to make sure he's not going to complain.

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

**Commissioner Clem** seconded the motion.

All approved.

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**Approval of Poll Officials**

**Administrator Steelman** said we have retained well over 90% of our poll workers from the November election. We have three, possibly four new officers. Of the 44 officers there's 24 Republicans, 19 Democrats, and 1 non-partisan. Again, that is based on previous voting history because voters do not register by party affiliation in Tennessee.

**Commissioner Clem** made a motion to approve the poll officials.

**Commissioner Braly** seconded the motion.

All approved.

**Early Voting: Wednesday 2/15/17 – Thursday 3/2/17**

**Proposed Locations/Times:**

**New:**

**South Chattanooga Rec Center (Mon – Sat, 10A-6P)**

**Glenwood Rec Center (Mon – Sat, 10A-6P)**

**Existing:**

**Brainerd Rec Center (Mon – Sat, 10A-6P)**

**North River Civic Center (Mon – Sat, 10A-6P)**

**Election Commission (Mon – Fri, 8A-7P, Sat, 9A-6P)**

**Administrator Steelman** said last night the city council voted to add two new satellite voting sites. They have requested the South Chattanooga Recreation Center in St. Elmo as well as the Glenwood Recreation Center. That is in addition to the three current Early Voting sites – the Brainerd Recreation Center, North River Civic Center, and the Election Commission office.

**Commissioner Braly** said so they are asking for a total of five.

**Commissioner Clem** said we asked you previously to start looking into new sites. What's involved in adding a new Early Voting site?

**Administrator Steelman** said to add a new Early Voting site, we will be required to equip the sites with the infrastructure to operate at full capacity. This will include a minimum of five laptops and three printers.

**Commissioner Braly** asked which we don't have now?

**Administrator Steelman** answered, correct. In addition to the laptops and printers we will need miscellaneous networking equipment and election supplies. We've estimated the total cost to equip a new site to be approximately \$15,000.

**Commissioner Clem** asked what about programming and just getting it up and running?

**Assistant Administrator Allen** said in our voter registration database, every time someone voters, it is tied to a site. So to add a new site would require IT to readjust the whole database. That way a voter voting at a new site could be tied back to that location. It would be a pretty extensive process when it comes to programming and redoing the database.

**Commissioner Clem** asked when does Early Voting start?

**Assistant Administrator Allen** said February 15.

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**Commissioner Braly** asked has there been shown to be a need for two extra sites?

**Administrator Steelman** said we haven't received any data from the city.

**Commissioner Braly** said we have three Early Voting sites and they are strategically located. And of course, we have the Election Day precincts. I think we have done more than we are legally obligated to do as far as the Early Voting sites.

**Commissioner Scott** said I disagree. We had lots of complaints of long lines and elderly people having to stand in line during the Presidential election. Also, this is not just limited to these two. I recall in a meeting prior to this I also mentioned that Soddy Daisy needs an Early Voting location. As far as these two sites go, I think it's a waste to set up the Glenwood Recreation Center when already have the Bethlehem Center which is an Election Day site. And it's around the corner from the Southside Recreation Center.

**Administrator Steelman** said currently, the Bethlehem Center, South Chattanooga Recreation Center, and Glenwood Recreation Center are all Election Day polling sites.

**Commissioner Scott** asked you think that South Chattanooga is better equipped to be an Early Voting location than the Bethlehem Center?

**Administrator Steelman** said yes, it has a much better layout, more space they can dedicate to the Election Commission, and better parking.

**Chairman Walden** asked what was the turnout for the last general election?

**Administrator Steelman** said the November election turnout was over 140,000. That's over 70% countywide. In the city it was a little over 60%.

**Chairman Walden** asked what about the last city election?

**Administrator Steelman** said in 2009 and 2013 turnout averaged approximately 18,000 total, or about 17%.

**Commissioner Clem** said if city wants to improve their voting percentage, they could go from 17% to 60% just by moving the election to November.

**Commissioner Scott** said the city doesn't pay for November elections.

**Commissioner Clem** said so it would save them money and increase the turnout by nearly five times.

**Commissioner Scott** said but that's not our decision. That has to come from the Chattanooga City Council.

**Chairman Walden** said what kind of real data do we have? We're comparing apples and oranges because of the turnout difference between elections. We're going from an election with 70% turnout – which is awesome, by the way. You guys did a wonderful job. Now we're talking about 17% turnout in a city election. And then adding more sites than we had for the Presidential? We have elected officials wanting to decide where they place the Early Voting sites in their districts, which to me is fundamentally wrong. They've really given us no data and we haven't had time to study this. They vote late Tuesday before our Wednesday morning meeting to ask us to go against long-standing, principled reasoning of where we have our Early Voting sites. Regardless of which party has been in charge of the Election Commission, we've been very hesitant to play with the voting patterns and change the locations for Early Voting. The law says the city gets one choice.

**Administrator Steelman** said one satellite other than the Election Commission.

**Chairman Walden** said they have two.

**Commissioner Clem** said and they are asking for four satellites.

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**Chairman Walden** said they get one – that’s what the law says. Any other voting location will be chosen by the Election Commission but it will be chosen based on -- not a hunch, or a feeling, or where a politician wants it to be – but where the data supports it is needed. If we are going to do this we need to take more time to study it before making a decision. It is not my recommendation or position to do anything about this today.

**Commissioner Scott** said I understand if you are talking about changing an Election Day site because that’s where someone has to go, but anyone can go to Early Voting. Adding Early Voting sites could give better accessibility to people and we might get a bigger turnout. People aren’t always able to get out to Brainerd Rec, or down to Amnicola. When you are talking about getting people out to vote, it should be accessible.

**Commissioner Braly** said we haven’t always had Early Voting. On Election Day we have precincts in neighborhoods close to people. Early Voting is just a convenience. The three we have, to me, are enough. We may want to look at adding one more, but not for this election.

**Chairman Walden** asked the city hasn’t rescinded the current locations, have they?

**Administrator Steelman** said no, the two sites were in addition to the three current sites. And the times and dates are consistent with the times and dates in the past.

**Commissioner Clem** made a motion to confirm the existing locations and times.

**Commissioner Braly** seconded the motion.

Commissioners Braly, Clem were in favor.

Commissioner Scott was opposed.

The motion passed.

### Adjournment:

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

**Commissioner Braly** 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