

**HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
Wednesday, March 7, 2018**

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 March 7, 2018 at the office of the Hamilton County Election Commission, 700 River Terminal Road, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Invocation: **Commissioner Braly**

Pledge of Allegiance: **Commissioner Meadows**

Present at Meeting:

Commissioners Walden, Braly, Clem, and Meadows were present at the meeting, as well as staff of the Election Commission and a member of the public.

Approval of Minutes:

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

**Commissioner Clem** seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

New Business:

**Welcome Commissioner Secondra Meadows**

**Chairman Walden** administered the oath of office to Commissioner Meadows.

**Chairman Walden** said welcome Commissioner Meadows. Kelvin Scott served with distinction and honor and we wish him luck in his future endeavors.

**Approval of Ballot: May 1, 2018 County Primary**

**Administrator Steelman** said the state has reviewed the ballot. Historically, they have only reviewed the layout and ordering, but they have not looked at the fine details such as spelling of offices and candidate names. The state is now taking a proactive role in that regard and giving the ballot a more scrutinized review. They were very complimentary of Hamilton County's ballot; that's all Nate's work.

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

**Commissioner Clem** seconded the motion.

All approved.

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### Early Voting Wednesday, April 11 – Thursday, April 26

**Administrator Steelman** said as we discussed in November, it is the desire of this commission to maintain consistency with locations and hours; however, last year we had issues with two facilities and as such have relocated those two Early Voting locations. In the Collegedale area we are moving to the Collegedale Municipal Building. This is a great move – it has more space and is centrally located in the community. In the Northgate area we are moving to the Hixson Community Center in the old Hixson Middle School. This is also a great location in terms of space, parking, and handicap accessibility. We will send a targeted mailing to everyone who voted at those two Early Voting sites in 2016 to ensure they are aware of the change. We also plan on running supplemental ads and PSAs.

**Chairman Walden** asked which paper did we use last time we moved an Early Voting site?

**Administrator Steelman** said we used the Chattanooga Times Free Press, Chattanooga.com, the Chattanooga Chronicle, and we will continue to do that. While we are talking about ads, we have been exploring other opportunities with the paper for publishing our legal notices. We identified an opportunity to advertise through the Community News – it's an insert printed on Wednesdays and targeted to specific areas within Hamilton County. It is supplied to every household, not just Times Free Press subscribers. However, it is an insert, not one of the regular sections. I raised the question with the state as to whether this would meet the requirements of the law and they would not permit us to use it.

**Commissioner Clem** made motion to approve the Early Voting sites.

**Commissioner Braly** seconded the motion.

All approved.

### Poll Official Report

**Administrator Steelman** said this report gives you a breakdown of our officers of election. The political party affiliation of the officers reflects the ratio on the commission. Most have been serving for years and they do an exceptional job.

**Commissioner Clem** said is there someone from each party at each location?

**Administrator Steelman** said yes. Their choice in the previous primary is how we determine their party affiliation.

**Commissioner Braly** said how many poll workers are there?

**Administrator Steelman** said a little over 700.

**Chairman Walden** said did we ask for a raise for them?

**Administrator Steelman** said yes. We raised the poll officers pay to \$175 and the election workers to \$135. It's a substantial raise, but it is consistent with Knox County.

**Commissioner Braly** made a motion to approve the poll official report.

**Commissioner Clem** seconded the motion.

All approved.

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### FY19 Budget Proposal

**Administrator Steelman** said this budget is consistent with previous election years with August and November elections. However, this budget is slightly higher, due in large part to the poll worker pay increase. There is also a capital request for \$30,000 for Nursing Home voting equipment. Dominion is in the process of having new equipment certified by the state. The state must review the equipment while it is being used in an election and it is my understanding that they will do so in August of this year. It is tablet based, so there is a touch screen component to it; however, it has a ballot marking device. It has a printer that actually prints out the ballot so there is a paper ballot. That's essential. We cannot move away from paper ballots. For nursing home residents, the majority of whom require some assistance, this will give them independence when they vote.

**Commissioner Braly** said how many do we need?

**Administrator Steelman** said we need a minimum of 15: three for each nursing home team, plus a back up at each early voting site. Nathan has developed a process in terms of planning the distribution of ballots at the Early Voting sites. It is a challenge to cover all 130 precincts at each Early Voting site without over-ordering extra ballots.

**Assistant Administrator Allen** said in a primary that number doubles to 260 ballot styles because you have Democratic and Republican ballots for each precinct. In an August election it's 390 ballot styles because each precinct has a Democratic, Republican, and general ballot.

**Administrator Steelman** said with this machine, in the event of an emergency, someone could vote on this machine and it would print out a ballot. We are looking at having these in place for 2020.

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

**Commissioner Clem** seconded the motion.

All approved.

Other business:

### Date to Certify May 1, 2018 Election

The commission will meet Monday, May 14 at 8 a.m. to certify the election.

### Online Voter Registration Update

**Administrator Steelman** said we coordinated with the county clerk's office and included OVR handouts in all the property tax bills, as well as all license renewals. Nathan Foster created the QR code that allows us to track the response to this specific mailing and it has been outstanding.

**Chairman Walden** said it was smart to add information about signing up to be a poll worker.

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**Administrator Steelman** said that has honestly been the greatest response. We've built a large database of potential poll workers.

**Deputy Foster** said 627 people have registered online with this flier and 162 poll workers requested an application. For the first time in a really long time we have a surplus of potential poll workers.

### Legislative Committee Update

**Administrator Steelman** said once the state moved to photo ID as the means of voter identification the signature on the ballot stub has become a redundant part of the voting process. We verify the voters with their photo IDs then they sign the application, the poll book, and the ballot stub. Some people have an inherent skepticism of government and this is demonstrated to us by voters routinely questioning the purpose of signing their ballots. Most are concerned that this signature permits the government to track their votes.

**Commissioner Clem** said but you tear off the stub.

**Administrator Steelman** said yes, but we have often have to explain the process and how there's no way to trace a voted ballot once that stub is torn off. Our thought process is: if the signature isn't necessary for voter identification, why are we still requiring them to sign the stub? Working with the TACEO legislative committee, Senator Bo Watson has introduced legislation to the senate to remove the requirement for a signature on the ballot stub. It has passed the committee and house and will be effective after May. We will still have the stub because the stub itself is crucial to quality control, but beginning with the August election we should be able to produce ballots without a need for a signature on the stub.

### Early Voting Scanners

**Deputy Foster** said we have added scanners to all Early Voting sites. This gives us the capability to scan the barcode on the back of State of Tennessee photo IDs and use that to pull up voters in our system. It speeds up processing time because we can immediately pull them up, verify their address, and process them, but it also cuts down on the chance for a clerical error when manually searching for a name or address.

**Chairman Walden** said that sounds like a best practice that you can share at TACEO.

### Adjournment:

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

**Commissioner Braly** seconded the motion.

All approved.

