

**HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
Wednesday, August 1, 2018**

Call to Order:

Upon notice duly given, Chairman Walden called to order an emergency meeting of the Hamilton County Election Commission at 9 a.m. on August 1, 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, Summers, Braly, Clem, and Meadows were present at the meeting, as well as Election Commission staff, and members of the public and media.

Approval of Minutes:

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

**Commissioner Braly** seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

New Business:

**Discussion of GIS Boundaries**

**Administrator Steelman** said State Coordinator of Elections Mark Goins called me after hours on Monday at approximately 5 p.m. and left a message indicating that there appeared to be a discrepancy in some border lines. He was unspecific in his message and asked me to follow up. On Tuesday morning I called Coordinator Goins and he further elaborated that it appeared the steward of our district lines, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), had some inconsistencies with district borders that were affecting approximately 325 voters in 198 parcels. It appeared that these district lines are outside of the lines that were established through the census data. At that time we followed up with GIS to determine what the issue may be. I also spoke with you, Chairman, about a process that we could establish to ensure that these 325 voters are provided the correct ballot.

**Chairman Walden** said the discrepancy was between the city limits between Collegedale and Chattanooga?

**Administrator Steelman** said that's one example. There were other districts affected. All state house districts, both senate districts, and all county commission districts except District 3 and District 6 were affected.

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**Chairman Walden** said then you called me at 3 p.m., at which time I told you to notify the other commissioners and call a meeting for this morning.

**Administrator Steelman** said of 325 voters that were affected by this change, according to the state, 43 have already cast a ballot during Early Voting. Of these 43, three were in House District 28, and 10 were in School Board District 5.

**Chairman Walden** said of the 282 who have not voted yet, it's imperative that when they vote tomorrow they be given an accurate ballot for the districts and the precinct they are in.

**Administrator Steelman** said based on the district lines that the state has presented, 42 of these voters are not represented in a precinct that exists. Of the 130 voting precincts, not one of those precincts has the combinations of districts...

**Commission Clem** said you have to create new precincts, basically.

**Administrator Steelman** said yes, we've had to create three new precincts. Deputy Nathan Foster, the election programmer here, has created three unique ballots for those 42 individuals. For the other 240 voters who are affected, there is an existing ballot combination prepared.

**Commissioner Clem** said they were just assigned to the wrong precinct.

**Administrator Steelman** said that is correct.

**Chairman Walden** said so when they go to the precinct that they would normally go to for this election they will be given a specific ballot?

**Administrator Steelman** said the names of the affected voters have been noted in the poll books. They will be directed to the Officer of Election who will then conduct their voting through the established provisional ballot process.

**Commissioner Clem** said we're not going to make them go to a new precinct.

**Chairman Walden** said or down here to the headquarters.

**Administrator Steelman** said they will vote at the precinct that is on their current registration.

**Commissioner Braly** said there are only two races involved?

**Commissioner Clem** said they are all involved, but only two contested races could potentially be affected.

**Administrator Steelman** said yes, based on the ballots that have already been cast.

**Chairman Walden** said the voter will go to their voting location and be given a specific customized ballot. They will vote it and it will be brought back to headquarters and counted with all the other ballots.

**Administrator Steelman** said it will be counted by a separate provisional ballot board established for this process. There is a statute that outlines the process. We will have two members – a Republican and a Democrat – opening the ballots and calling the votes and two members counting the votes. After five ballots are called, they will count the votes to ensure there is a regular update of the count. That was at the suggestion of our auditor.

**Chairman Walden** said also, that night, that will be public for anyone who wants to watch this process. After the election we will be correcting boundaries and reissuing voter registration cards?

**Administrator Steelman** said yes. As a further note, auditors from Mauldin and Jenkins will visit the precincts with the highest volume to observe and ensure this process is being followed.

**Chairman Walden** said currently three people incorrectly cast ballots in the House District 28 Democratic primary and there's nothing we can do about it, and there were 10 in the District 5 school board. If the margins after the votes are counted are within three or 10, respectively, we

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will have to have another election; but if the margins are not within three or 10, we won't have to have another election. However, there's no process in place for us to do anything about the ballots that have already been cast.

**Administrator Steelman** said no, sir.

**Chairman Walden** said the important thing is we were notified yesterday and less than 24 hours later we've called an emergency meeting. We know what happened, how it happened, and how to correct it. We have a plan in place for the 282 voters and the election will go off as it should.

**Chairman Walden** said do we have a ballot to approve?

**Assistant Administrator Allen** said there are nine ballots. There are three variations – Democratic, Republican, and General – for three precincts.

**Chairman Walden** said has the state approved these ballots?

**Administrator Steelman** said not yet.

**Chairman Walden** said and you've checked them and double checked them.

**Administrator Steelman** said yes, sir. One notation to make, when the results are posted on the server, those are based on the disks pulled from the voting machines. Since these ballots are not cast through the voting machines, they won't be reflected on the results posted on the website on election night, but they will be reflected on the certification for the state.

**Chairman Walden** said but the results will be available that night, just not on the website.

**Administrator Steelman** said yes, sir.

**Commissioner Braly** made a motion to approve the ballot contingent on the state's approval.

**Secretary Summers** seconded the motion.

All approved.

**Chairman Walden** said I appreciate County Attorney Rheubin Taylor, GIS, and the auditing firm being here this morning. I also want to commend the staff. I know there were still here at 10, 11 o'clock last night working on this. It is unfortunate this happened, but I'd like to commend the staff on how they rallied. They realized what happened, how it happened, and how to correct it, and had that plan in place by 9 o'clock this morning. Administrator Steelman, you and your staff did an outstanding job. When I first heard this, I thought it could potentially be a lot worse than it actually is. But you and your staff did an outstanding job and I'm sorry that it happened. Who did what wrong is not as important as the fact we identified it and had it corrected in a timely manner. Great job on that.

**Secretary Summers** said I've always said our main objective is to make sure the candidates and the voters get a fair shake and I think this has been handled that way. Administrator Steelman, I have to give accolades to your staff. I think they jumped on this situation immediately.

**Chairman Walden** said again, this could have been worse than it is. We also looked at the race where Greg Beck lost by 15 votes. None of these people voted in that race. We looked back and to our knowledge this hasn't adversely affected any races; none have been within these margins. And we're glad it hasn't affected House District 30.

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Adjournment:

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

**Commissioner Clem** seconded the motion.

All approved.

APPROVED:

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Michael S. Walden

Chairman

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Jerry Summers

Secretary

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Ruth Braly

Commissioner

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Chris Clem

Commissioner

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Secondra Meadows

Commissioner