

**HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
Friday, September 14, 2018**

Call to Order:

Upon notice duly given, Chairman Walden called to order a meeting of the Hamilton County Election Commission at 9 a.m. on September 14, 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.

Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Clem made a motion to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Meadows seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

New Business:

Approval of New Precincts to Address GIS Issue

Administrator Steelman said on July 30 the Election Commission was notified by the Coordinator of Elections that the Office of Local Government had a discrepancy in district borders relative to Hamilton County GIS's information. The discrepancy in the border lines was in the Senate, House, and County Commission districts. It affected 325 voters in Hamilton County. To remedy this discrepancy, we coordinated with Hamilton County GIS, Office of Local Government, and the State Coordinator of Elections. Hamilton County GIS completed its correction of the borders and submitted that information to the Office of Local Government. The Office of Local Government has since completed a new geocode and have determined that all of the discrepancies are resolved.

Chairman Walden said the county had the more accurate information.

Administrator Steelman said the issue is relative to the census blocks but, yes, the county did have more accurate information.

Assistant Administrator Allen said when the district lines drawn by GIS, GIS knew they had more accurate data here. They would look at these lines and clearly see that this line was supposed to follow a road. Well, that line didn't follow a road, it cut through a house or cut through a field. So GIS would move that line over and adjusted lines based on what they

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thought the legislature intended. But you can't do that. You can't go on their intent, even if it makes more sense. Once the Office of Local Government explained to GIS and GIS understood it, GIS moved the lines back. This created 19 new precincts.

Commissioner Clem said some of these precincts don't even have voters.

Assistant Administrator Allen said yes, some of these precincts have zero registered voters.

Chairman Walden said so what we did what was called smoothing.

Assistant Administrator Allen said our GIS did that, yes.

Commissioner Braly said so some of these areas don't have even one voter?

Commissioner Clem said but there are residential lots so there could be voters.

Administrator Steelman said we also identified that Hamilton County GIS had not been communicating with the Office of Local Government over the years on some of the methods that the Office of Local Government employs that can help GIS better prepare, particularly as we start to move into redistricting. Hamilton County GIS will now be using the programs and systems that are provided by the Office of Local Government so we won't run into this again.

Chairman Walden said our local GIS tried to use common sense.

Commissioner Braly said have notifications gone out?

Administrator Steelman said yes.

Commissioner Clem made a motion to approve the new precincts.

Commissioner Braly seconded the motion.

All approved

Approval of Ballot: November 6, 2018 State/Federal General

Chairman Walden said what is the city charter amendment change?

Secretary Summers said the city court is eliminating any reference to criminal court.

Commissioner Clem said they've pretty much stopped using it for criminal court anyway.

Secretary Summers said they have, but technically it's still on the books.

Administrator Steelman said the ballot has been reviewed by the state

Commissioner Braly made a motion to approve the ballot

Commissioner Meadows seconded the motion.

All approved.

Commissioner Braly said when do the military ballots go out?

Administrator Steelman said September 22 is the 45th day before Election Day. That is when military ballots must go out.

Chairman Walden said what is the procedure for requesting an absentee ballot?

Deputy Bumgardner said members of the military, their dependents, and overseas civilians can submit a request at any time during an election year and it covers all elections during that year. Domestic absentees can request a ballot beginning 90 days before an election. The deadline is always seven days before an election.

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Early Voting: Wednesday 10/17 – Thursday 11/1 (TCA § 2-6-102(a)(1) and 03(a)(1)/(b)(a))

Administrator Steelman said Early Voting locations have not changed. The locations and times will be the same for consistency.

Poll Official Report

Administrator Steelman said the poll workers have not changed. With very few exceptions, the poll officials have carried over from May to August to November. We strive to keep that party mix that the commission has requested.

Commissioner Clem made a motion to approve the Early Voting locations and times.

Secretary Summers seconded the motion.

All approved.

Old Business:

Lawsuit Update

Commissioner Clem said the lawsuit in Davidson County was dismissed. It was briefly appealed to the Court of Appeals, then that appeal was dismissed in Middle Tennessee. They refiled the case in Hamilton County and that case was dismissed. I don't know if the final order has been signed by the judge yet. The Democratic Party has indicated they're considering appealing in East Tennessee now, but they have not done it yet. They have 30 days from the time Chancellor Atherton signs the final order.

Administrator Steelman said we have received the legal bills. So far the total expenses we've incurred are \$29,612 in Davidson County and \$11,891 in Hamilton County. Right now we're looking at about \$41,500 in legal expenses, currently under the \$50,000 allotted for legal expenses.

Chairman Walden said tell us about the NAACP letter.

Administrator Steelman said they requested some general information relative to the GIS dispute and potential issues with disenfranchisement. County Attorney Rheubin Taylor and I crafted a letter notifying them we had addressed the situation. We created a solution, everyone was able to vote, and every vote that was cast was counted. They asked for additional information but Taylor sent a letter noting nothing further was going to be provided. Rheubin felt confident the Hamilton County Election Commission had done its due diligence.

Deputy Nathan Foster said their primary concern was that there was some misreporting in the local news. There was one flagrantly wrong headline. That sort of thing scares people.

Chairman Walden said but we have it covered. Attorney Taylor handled it.

Administrator Steelman said yes.

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Adjournment:

Commissioner Braly made a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Meadows seconded the motion.

All approved.

APPROVED:

Michael S. Walden

Chairman

Jerry Summers

Secretary

Ruth Braly

Commissioner

Chris Clem

Commissioner

Secondra Meadows

Commissioner