

BOARD OF ELECTIONS AND VOTER REGISTRATION OF JASPER COUNTY

BOARD MEETING MINUTES – MARCH 12, 2015

PRESENT: Chairman Joseph Arzillo; Commissioner Donald Sheftall, Sr.; Commissioner Pamela M. Williams; Commissioner Patricia Walls; Commissioner Carl Tyler; Commissioner Rodney Catterton; Commissioner Warren Johnson; and Director Jeanine Bostick.

ABSENT: Commissioner Lillian King.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: All

INNOVATION: Commissioner Donald Sheftall, Sr.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Motioned by Commissioner Sheftall, seconded by Commissioner Tyler to approve tonight's agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motioned by Commissioner Tyler, seconded by Commissioner Walls to approve the February 12, 2015 Board meeting minutes with the following correction; add ***Commissioner Lillian King as being present to the meeting.*** Motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS: UPDATE DISCUSSION OF SPECIAL SCHOOL BOARD

ELECTION: Chairman Arzillo asked the Director to give any update to the Board on the upcoming Special School Board Election. The Director informed the Board that the Judge has not yet handed down a ruling on this matter. The Director stated to the Board that in their packets as requested was a timeline breakdown pertaining to the preparation of the upcoming Special School Board Election. The Director discussed and explained each timeline. The Director stated that she understood a thirteen weeks timeline is being requested by Jasper Delegation, however to ensure accuracy the Director is showing that a true timeline preparation would be approximately six months after the Judge's ruling. The Director stated she understood she would have to adhere to whatever timeline is ordered by the Judge and is asking the Board to be available to assist in any way possible. Commissioner Williams mentioned bringing in other qualified personnel to help with updating the VREMS database. It was mentioned possibly bringing in other Directors or IT personnel from other Counties to help update the Database and it was also asked who would be responsible for paying for these individual's time. The Director stated that she is very uncomfortable with persons outside of her Office having access to Jasper County Voter Registration Database and should there be mistakes the Director would be seen as being at fault. The Director stated she has forwarded the estimated timeline to the County Attorney Mr. Marvin Jones and will forward copies to the Jasper County Council and Jasper Delegation in hopes of extending the election past the thirteen weeks once a ruling is handed down.

NEW BUSINESS CONT'D.: UPDATE DISCUSSION OF SPECIAL SCHOOL BOARD

ELECTION: The Director stated if petitions are filed each Board member would need to be available to help with validating signatures keeping in mind this process would take more than one day and could possibly take as much as two to three weeks to complete. Commissioner Williams suggested forming a Committee to meet and discuss a solution to ensure the Voter Registration Office meets the timeline that was handed down. Chairman Arzillo; Commissioner Williams and Commissioner Sheftall stated they would like to be a part of that Committee. The Board discussed putting an ad in the local newspaper and sending out a notification to those persons listed on the in-house poll workers mailing list to find out their availability. Chairman Arzillo stated he did not want the ad to run in the legal notice section but in a section where it would be visible by all. Per Chairman Arzillo this ad would cost one hundred dollars to run.

PETITION DISCUSSION: Commissioner Williams stated that she was given a package with a complaint that person's signatures were marked invalid on petitions that should have been marked valid. The Director looked at the list and asked for clarification of what was checked invalid because the names listed on the petition in the packet all the signatures are checked as valid. Commissioner Williams stated the complaint was person's names were being marked invalid because the signatures were missing their middle name initial. Commissioner Sheftall stated it's part of our responsibility to review and validate signatures and Commissioner Johnson concurred with Commissioner Sheftall that it's the Board decision. Commissioner Williams stated it was brought to her as a complaint and she just wanted to clarify that this should not be happening. The Director clarified that signatures are not rejected because an individual left out their middle name initial. A comment was made that a citizen in the community brought in two sheets of petitions to the Voter Registration Office and over half of those signatures were stated to be invalid because the individuals did not sign their names as recorded in the Voter Registration Office. The Director stated that no one signature was stated invalid unless the individual's signature did not match the Voter Registration system. The Director stated she is following the law as stated in the Election Commission and Voter Registration Manual. The Director stated that all petition candidates are instructed to collect double the amount of required signatures to ensure that the candidate would meet the petition requirements, voters sign petitions and some are found invalid because they are not in the district, not enough information given, not found registered, or signature does not match what's found in the Voter Registration system. There is a filing period that petitions are to be turned in and all petition sheets are to be turned in to the Voter Registration Office at one time. The candidate is given a petition receipt, the petition receipt confirms that the candidate turned in their petition in a timely manner and how many signatures and pages are received from the candidate in the Voter Registration Office.

NEW BUSINESS CONT'D.: PETITION DISCUSSION: Once the filing deadline closes the State allows the County thirty days to review; verify signatures and submit candidate's name to be printed on the ballot. The Voter Registration Office completes a Petition Check Worksheet identifying how many signatures were checked and if the candidate met the requirements, the petition check worksheet is sent to the State. No candidate has ever been told they did not have enough signatures to meet the requirements to have their name printed on the ballot. The Director stated the voter has to be held accountable with updating their information with the Voter Registration Office and not point the finger solely at the Voter Registration Office with signatures being decided as valid or invalid. Chairman Arzillo asked the Director to notify the Board once the petitions start coming in and those Board members that are available can start checking signatures. The Board discussed and decided to meet with the individual that filed the affidavit to clear up the matter of validating petition signatures.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: The Director distributed copies of the estimated cost of the Special School Board Election; a copy will be forwarded to the County Attorney; County Council and the Jasper Delegation. The Director informed the Board the State is looking at purchasing new voting machines and is planning a Voter Registration Fair on May 13, 2015 at the Columbia Convention Center in Columbia, SC, time to be announced.

Total Registered Voters as of March 3, 2015: **15,930.**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Mrs. Denise Davidson asked the Board to wait on the ruling from the Judge before putting an ad in the local newspaper concerning Poll Workers availability. Mrs. Davidson stated that she gave the Board a packet back at the December 11, 2014 Board meeting and in the packet a citizen submitted an affidavit stating persons signatures were being marked invalid because their last names did not match. Mrs. Davidson asked if those people's names that were submitted for the June 2014 Election will they receive a notification of availability for the upcoming special election. The Director stated yes.

Mr. Milton Woods asked for clarification that those persons on the office mailing list would receive the notification of the upcoming election asking their availability. Mr. Woods stated we are asking for fair and equal representation for the upcoming special election and is there anyone on this Board that feels asking for this is unfair. Chairman Arzillo asked Mr. Woods to explain what he meant about equal and fair representation. Mr. Woods stated that equal and fair representation is that the Democratic and Republican have the same number of persons working the election. Commissioner Sheftall stated the state of South Carolina does not register persons by party and this special election is a non partisan election. Commissioner Johnson stated it isn't appropriate or fair to assume this Board is going to make those selections based on race. Chairman Arzillo stated this is not about race and we are not going to have anyone come in here and state otherwise.

PUBLIC COMMENTS CONT'D.: Mr. Milton Woods: Commissioner Williams spoke about the Affirmative Action Law that was put into place where you are not discriminated by race or creed, and equal does not mean having 50% of one or the other race. Mr. Woods spoke on other matters about things happening at the various precincts on Election Day. Chairman Arzillo stated we had some procedure errors and those matters were corrected in-house. Commissioner Williams stated a packet was received at the December 11, 2014 Board meeting and there were no responses because there was no request for action. No remedy was asked for in those packets. When you submit a packet you should be able to state what it is you want and a remedy.

Ms. Barbara Clark asked to the Board to stay on top of this election, we need to know what we are up against with this upcoming election, we have to get the funds from somewhere and different departments would be effective by this expense. Ms. Clark stated they asked the State to reimburse the County for this election, it may not happen but you don't know if you don't ask, we also asked that no petitions be required in this election. Ms. Clark stated that the State is tired of hearing from Jasper County because we don't work together. This election must go right; it will determine the outcome of Jasper County as a whole. Something has to change. The system has gone down. Again, please stay on top of this election.

ADJOURNMENT: With no further business, motion to adjourn by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Johnson. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by: Jeanine Bostick, Director

cc: File; Election Commission; Mr., Andy Fulghum, County Administrator; Mrs. Judy Frank, Clerk of Council and Jasper County Delegation