

BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

February 6th, 2024 at 6:00pm

Where: Sharon Bushor Conference Room, City Hall and remotely via Zoom

Present:

Lauren Ebersol, Alison Harte, Helen Rock, Grace Grundhauser, Annie Schneider, Michelle Lefkowitz, Olga Bravo, Karen Rowell, Lesley Gendron, Mike McGarghan and Youth Member Will Cunningham

Absent: Alex Demoly, Thea Knight

Also Present: Assistant City Clerk, Sarah Montgomery

Meeting called to order at 6:10pm.

Agenda: Karen Rowell made a motion to adopt. Seconded by Michelle Lefkowitz. Approved unanimously.

Meeting Length: Set to end at 7:10 to equal 1 hour.

Minutes: Michelle Lefkowitz noted a grammatical error and requested it be amended.

Mike McGarghan asked for clarification about the portion of the January minutes where the previous minutes were approved – where Helen Rock commented about amending the minutes. He commented that he felt it was important to amend those previous minutes to record all parts of the conversation as part of the permanent record. Helen Rock noted that those minutes have already been amended and approved at this point. The January minutes are just reflecting conversation that happened when the board was approving the minutes from November and December.

Helen Rock made a motion to adopt both previous meetings' minutes. Seconded by Michelle Lefkowitz. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: No members of the public present.

Clerk's Report: Sarah Montgomery reported that there are currently 31,536 registered voters in Burlington, 7,945 of which are challenged. In January, there were 327 new registrations, 183 voters were transferred out of town, and 31 voters were purged from the checklist.

Grace Grundhauser asked if the number of challenges has changed since the last meeting. Sarah Montgomery noted that the number has decreased from the 8,010 that were challenged last month.

She reported on upcoming activity for the March 5, 2024 election, noting that Presidential Primary ballots are now available for early voting and that city election ballots will be mailed out to all active voters next week (by Feb. 14th).

Annie Schneider asked how many all legal resident voters are registered. Sarah Montgomery answered there are around 33. Mike McGarghan answered if these numbers were being comingled with the numbers of citizen voters. Sarah Montgomery answered yes.

Helen Rock asked if it is too late for a voter to request that their city ballot be mailed to a different address than the mailing address that they have on file. Sarah Montgomery answered no, but since the initial batch of ballots is already being processed for mailing, a second ballot would need to be issued, requiring the voter to sign an affidavit of no ballot cast.

Karen Rowell asked if legal resident voters would be eligible to register to vote on Election Day. Sarah Montgomery answered yes.

Lauren Ebersol asked what the deadline is for someone to request a presidential primary absentee ballot be mailed to them. Sarah Montgomery answered that residents can request a mail ballot up until the Friday before the election, but it is recommended that people do it further in advance. If it is the first ballot, they are requesting, voters can request online, but if they need to request a second ballot be mailed to a different address, they will need to contact the Clerk's office.

Michelle Lefkowitz asked if people can also come to the office to vote early. Sarah Montgomery answered yes.

Election Day Training & Planning:

Ward Assignments: Grace Grundhauser presented ward assignments. She noted that there will be additional volunteers added to the list. BRV members who are still training will rotate wards throughout the day.

VEMS: Grace Grundhauser gave tips for searching VEMS: try looking up your own name, try statewide search, and search just first few letters of the name you are looking for. She reminded the board that it is not permissible to ask for ID (per VT law).

Mike McGarghan asked for citations about not asking a voter for their ID. Grace Grundhauser said she will share information with him, since this is something that has previously been discussed by the board.

Helen Rock reminded members that they can also clear their search, just in case some information is stuck in the search.

Grace Grundhauser noted that the ward/district tool should be open all day and will be utilized for most voters. She noted that the city wards are changing for this election so voters may come to the wrong ward more than usual. Michelle Lefkowitz shared that voters can also look up their own ward, by scanning a QR code that is posted at the polling places and at the BRV table.

Annie Schneider asked if there is also a statewide lookup tool to help identify polling places in other towns. Grace Grundhauser answered that she has a link to this tool in the election guide.

Checklist Tables: Grace Grundhauser shared that voters first stop at the polling place is the entrance checklist table. The voter often comes from these checklist tables to BRV with a "flag" card that indicates the issue they need the BRV's help to resolve.

Grace Grundhauser shared a revised BRV to Ward Clerk form. This allows for a few additional scenarios to better communicate with the checklist workers. Checklist revision forms should also still be completed for name or address changes.

Will Cunningham asked: for a NVD, if we aren't asking for the ID, how is that information being verified? Grace Grundhauser responded that the voter can either state their ID number or write it down on the form themselves.

Alison Harte asked for clarity about how to add a name change to the BRV to Ward Clerk form. Grace Grundhauser noted that the forms likely needs to be revised slightly to make that clear.

BRV to Ward Clerk can now also be used to acknowledge that the affirmation of domicile was administered. The BRV can then keep the affirmation to send back to City Hall.

Legal Resident Voters: Grace Grundhauser explained that this is for Burlington residents who do not have citizenship. This only applies to local ballots – resident voters are not eligible to vote in state or federal elections. All resident paperwork is printed on blue paper.

Mike McGarghan asked who in the Clerk's office is qualified to confirm that these voters are complying with immigration law. Sarah Montgomery answered that the city staff are not verifying that someone is residing here legally, just like they do not verify that citizen voters are United States citizens. The voter is self-attesting to this on the form. Mike McGarghan expressed concern about this, especially in scenarios where English is not a residents first language. Helen Rock asked if translated materials will be available. Sarah Montgomery answered that yes, translated voter registration forms and information is available, as well as phone interpreter services to increase language access. Michelle Lefkowitz added that Google translate works very well.

Karen Rowell asked for clarification on who is eligible to vote. Does legal resident mean they have a green card or something similar? They didn't come here illegally? Members of the board answered yes.

Annie Schneider asked how election officials will know if someone is a legal resident voter. Sarah Montgomery shared that the checklist pages for resident voters will be integrated with the main checklist (but printed on blue paper), so the checklist workers will be able to search both lists when a voter is checking in. If they are not yet registered, they will go to the same day voter registration table, where that election official will be prepared to ask all voters questions to determine which form should be used.

Lauren Ebersol asked how resident voters would be differentiated in VEMS. Sarah Montgomery answered that resident voters cannot be entered into VEMS. BRV members will have a printed list of existing resident voters.

Olga Bravo asked what happens if we find someone wasn't eligible to vote on Election Day after the fact.

Mike McGarghan asked for clarification about when someone who comes to our country seeking asylum becomes a legal resident. Grace Grundhauser said she would have to look into this further.

Olga Bravo shared that immigration laws do have a specific time in that process when someone is considered to be residing in the country.

Helen Rock also noted that in order to register, someone needs to have an address in Burlington.

Michelle Lefkowitz added that there is a penalty for people who are fraudulently voting.

Grace Grundhauser said that this isn't a forum for debate, but that people should feel free to reach out to her if they would like further information or discussion around this.

Grace Grundhauser noted that she will share the voter scenarios with the board after the meeting. She can also use these scenarios in the upcoming BRV training. This training will be held on 2/29 at 5pm at City Hall.

Annie Schneider asked if members knew anyone who would be interested in volunteering to help on Election Day. She would still like to add some additional volunteers.

Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to add 10 minutes to the meeting. Seconded by Karen Rowell. 9 in favor. 1 opposed.

Discussion continued about Election Day helpers.

Helen Rock asked if there would be forms available at the training. Sarah Montgomery answered yes.

Annie Schneider asked if a large turnout was expected for the March election. Sarah Montgomery answered that the last Mayoral had around 16,000 voters participate, so it will probably will comparable to that.

Helen Rock asked if there was a way to helps streamline the process of helping voters verify which ward they should be in. This is likely something the helper/ volunteer could help with.

New Business:

No new business.

Adjournment: On a motion by Lesley Gendron, seconded by Karen Rowell, the meeting was adjourned at 7:12pm.

Respectfully Submitted By: Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk