



Board for Registration of Voters

Tuesday, May 7, 2024, 6:00 PM,

Sharon Bushor Conference Room, 149 Church Street, Burlington, VT, 05401 OR remotely via Zoom.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93712437108>

Meeting ID: 937 1243 7108

1. Agenda

1.1. Motion to amend/adopt agenda

2. Meeting Length

2.1. Set Meeting Length

3. Adopt Minutes

3.1. Motion to adopt minutes from February and April

File Attachments

1. Draft Minutes 2/6/24

DRAFT Minutes 02062024.pdf

2. Draft Minutes 4/2/24

Draft minutes 04022024 BRV.pdf

4. Public Forum

5. Clerk's Report

6. Approval of Voter Challenges

6.1. Motion to approve proposed challenges

7. Voter Outreach

8. Annual Board Report to City Council

8.1. Annual Board Report to City Council

9. New Business

10. Adjournment

10.1. Motion to Adjourn

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.

VEIMS: Grace Grundhauser gave tips for searching VEIMS: 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

BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

April 2nd, 2024

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

Present: Lauren Ebersol, Alex Demoly , Alison Harte, Grace Grundhauser, Annie Schneider, Michelle Lefkowitz, Olga Bravo, Karen Rowell, Mike McGarghan, and Youth Member Will Cunningham

Absent: Helen Rock, Lesley Gendron

Also Present: Assistant City Clerk, Sarah Montgomery

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

Agenda: Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to adopt the agenda. Seconded by Lauren Ebersol. Approved unanimously.

Meeting Length: Alison Harte made a motion to set the meeting length at one hour. Seconded by Alex Demoly. Passed unanimously.

Announcements: Grace Grundhauser made an announcement that the meeting recordings will now be posted publicly along with the meeting minutes. This is a new city policy.

Grace Grundhauser announced that Thea Knight resigned from the board.

Minutes: An error was noted that the circulated minutes appeared to be for January. The board decided to wait until the May minutes to approve the February minutes. Sarah Montgomery apologized and will circulate the correct minutes after the meeting.

Mike McGarghan asked Grace Grundhauser if she could provide follow-up on a few issues that he had brought up at a previous meeting. Grace Grundhauser said she would circle back to him with the information he was looking for.

Public Comment: No members of the public present.

Clerk's Report: Sarah Montgomery reported that there are currently 32,839 citizen voters and 115 legal resident voters. 7,534 of these voters are currently challenged. In February, there were 591 new registrations, 153 voters were transferred out of town, 19 voters were purged from the checklist, and 362 voters made revisions to their registrations. In March, there were 1,159 new registrations (848 of which were on Election Day), 238 voters were transferred out of town, 31 voters were purged from the checklist, and 1,118 voters made revisions to their registrations.

For the Annual City Election, 14,963 ballots were cast. Out of these 97 were cast by legal resident voters. 7,970 of these ballots were cast absentee.

For the Presidential Primary, 8,611 ballots were cast. 1,618 of these ballots were cast absentee.

Election Day Review: Alison Harte shared that the updates to the manual were really clear. Everything went smoothly. She loved her volunteers.

Michelle Lefkowitz (in Ward 3) said that it was so busy.

Alison Harte (in Ward 6), Karen Rowell (in Ward 7), in Lauren Ebersol (in Ward 2) all said it was moderately busy in their wards. Alex Demoly said there were lines when he was in wards 3 and 8.

Michelle Lefkowitz said that it helped to only search a piece of the first name/last name instead of the voter's entire name. This was a time saver.

Grace Grundhauser said that in Ward 8 they had waves of business, and the volunteer was really helpful in helping direct and manage traffic.

Annie Schneider (in Ward 5) said that due to the redistricting she had a lot of people in the ward that should have been elsewhere. Lauren Ebersol said that in ward 2 the greeters were really good at directing people who were in the wrong ward at the end of the day. Grace Grundhauser shared that she also had people in the wrong ward due to the redistricting. Michelle Lefkowitz said that someone was accidentally sent to her ward (3) from ward 2 when they actually belonged in ward 2. They ended up unable to vote because the polls were nearly closing – this was difficult.

Alex Demoly said there were some issues with the online ward/district lookup tool. Michelle Lefkowitz and Lauren Ebersol mentioned that they also had similar experiences.

Lauren Ebersol said there were some issues with apartment numbers being entered incorrectly in VEMS and because of this, they were assigned to the wrong ward (assigned to ward 3 when they should have been ward 2). This happened with 3 voters. Olga Bravo mentioned that she also had difficulty with something similar. Also, she said that there were a lot of voters who had registered to vote online after the early registration cut off that needed to fill out paper applications in person.

Lauren Ebersol said that sometimes voters who were resident voters were being sent to the BRV even though they were already registered because the checklist workers weren't finding them in the list. Grace Grundhauser said that it might be helpful for the BRV member to remind the election workers to check the blue sheets. Mike McGarghan suggested that voters could also show their IDs.

Grace Grundhauser shared that she had a non-citizen resident that was uncomfortable with registering to vote (as a legal resident voter) because of potential concerns about immigration law. Grace shared information that was provided by the city attorney's office with the resident, who ultimately did not end up registering. It might be helpful to have the city attorneys provide more clear FAQ information for voters. Grace reached out to the other clerks in VT who have implemented resident voting and one suggestion was the resident voter could be issued a certified letter stating that they had not cast a federal ballot. Olga Bravo stated that she doesn't think that would have helped this particular voter. Grace Grundhauser noted that the term indefinite in the definition of residency in VT statute can be interpreted in different ways.

Mike McGarghan stated that he thinks we should be spending more discussion time on citizen voters and keeping our voter checklist clean by addressing challenged voters rather than wasting time on outreach to non-citizen voters. Grace Grundhauser said that we are discussing this because it is a new charter change in Burlington and the board wants to make sure it is being done right. She believes that this is a good use of our time. Mike McGarghan asked: isn't this a trial period to see how this process works? Grace Grundhauser answered no but she will pivot the conversation now.

Annie Schneider asked how people did with their volunteers. All members answered that they had really positive experiences with their volunteers. Ward 3 was very busy, but Michelle Lefkowitz said she isn't sure if additional volunteers would have made it go more quickly or not. Annie Schneider said it was hard to get volunteers to go to ward 3.

Annie Schneider would like to pass volunteer recruitment over to another board member. Grace Grundhauser suggested there might be a better way to do it – by sharing the load and by better utilizing technology. She added that all members should always feel free to recruit helpers.

A volunteer, David, suggested having sticky notes in the BRV folders. This made it so the volunteer could start helping the voter and hand off relevant information to the BRV member.

Grace Grundhauser suggested adding some information about parking in the manual, and also wondered if board members might be able to get parking permits.

Grace Grundhauser noted that punctuation in the checklist can throw off the order of names in the checklist. Sarah Montgomery added that city staff will work on cleaning this up (removing punctuation) prior to the next election, to hopefully minimize confusion around this.

Grace Grundhauser shared that it seemed like some registered voters were being sent to the same day voter registration table even though they were already registered. This might be worth checking in with election officials to make sure these voters go to BRV first.

Grace Grundhauser shared how to register a homeless voter. They can register by selecting a ward/district instead of a physical legal address. The voter does need to list a mailing address (if they don't have a specific mailing address, a voter can use general delivery as the mailing address).

Grace Grundhauser mentioned that election officials at the polling place were asking all newly registering voters if they were a U.S. Citizen. This allowed them to give them the correct form to the voter and register them appropriately. Annie Schneider agreed that this seemed to work very well. Alison Harte mentioned that might sound a little jarring to some residents – it might be helpful to give the voter additional context as well. For example, saying the reason the question is being asked is so the election official knows which form to give them.

Alex Demoly asked if all entrance checklist lines were uneven, with one line being much longer. Everyone agreed that the checklist lines were uneven. Jim Radar was the one who initially implemented the alphabet split in the checklists. Alex Demoly said that maybe the point of the split should be adjusted.

New Business:

No new business.

Adjournment: On a motion by Annie Schneider, seconded by Karen Rowell, and approved unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 6:56 pm.

Respectfully Submitted By: Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk

To: Members, Burlington City Council
From: Board for Registration of Voters
Date: June 15th, 2023
Re: 2023 Annual Report

The Board for Registration of Voters (BRV) receives its authority from the Burlington City Charter § 43 which asks the 12 members of the BRV to (1) review and take lawful action on additions, corrections, alterations, and removals of voters to the voter checklist; (2) work at the polls on Election Day on voter registration related issues (i.e., Election Day registration, address and name changes, omission from the checklist, verification issues, etc.); (3) attend^{*} and participate in monthly and special board meetings; and (4) participate in Board sponsored voter outreach activities.¹

Election law, 17 V.S.A. § 2144(a)(1) requires towns and cities to add new voters to the statewide voter checklist within three days of receipt of their application by the clerk. It is the Board's practice to schedule one BRV member to review and approve new applications at the clerk's office every Thursday, including online applications and applications received through the DMV from the registrations of voters who apply for Vermont driver's licenses.

The Board's primary responsibility is to maintain the Burlington City Voter checklist. Our usual meeting time is the first Tuesday of the month at 6:00 PM. Meetings are held at the Police Department on North Avenue, and since the pandemic, the Board has typically included a virtual option. Notices of meetings posted at City Hall, the Department of Public Works, Fletcher Free Library, and on the City of Burlington's website at <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CT/Board-for-Registration-of-Voters>. Zoom links are published at the top of each agenda.

In fiscal year 2023, the Board registered 3,790 new voters, deleted 5,333 voters, and 2,338 moved to other Vermont towns. Currently, there are 8,360 challenged voters in Burlington.

Since last June, members Martha Gile, Charles Cashatt, Jim Rader, and youth member Rebecca Cunningham all resigned. Karen Rowell, Allison Harte, and Lauren Ebersol joined as new members. Grace Grundhauser was elected as chair of the Board, replacing Lis Mickenberg. Michelle Lefkowitz was reelected vice chair. Tenzin Chokden was appointed Associate City Clerk.

During elections, BRV members are stationed at each polling place to assist voters in matters concerning voter eligibility, checklist corrections, and address changes. BRV members use City-provided laptops to access the statewide voter checklist and the Burlington ward and district look-up tool. Since last June, BRV members worked at the August 2022 primary election, the November 2022 general election, the East District special election in December, and Town Meeting Day 2023. The BRV recruits and trains volunteers to support BRV members at the polls by assisting with tasks not requiring BRV sign off. The BRV organized a pre-election training session at City Hall prior to this Town Meeting Day election and intends to make this standard practice.

¹ <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CityCouncil/Member-of-the-Board-of-Registration-of-Voters>

Burlington High School students volunteered for the BRV on Town Meeting Day. In the past, the BRV has benefited from the participation of BHS youth members, and hopes to work with CEDO's Youth on Boards Program again in the future to welcome youth members again to the Board. These members actively participate in meetings and work at the polls on Election Day.

The BRV continues to refine a draft version of its Election Day handbook for member and volunteer orientation and training purposes. The handbook has become a valuable and much-discussed resource and other City election personnel have expressed interest in its value beyond the BRV. In December the Board voted to create a working group to propose updates and revisions to the document for the Board's approval.

The BRV continues to communicate with the Secretary of State's office to improve the voter registration process. In December, the Board voted on a communication about technical issues experienced with the Vermont Election Management System (VEMS). The Board is interested in increasing communication with this office. This seems especially appropriate given the election of a new Secretary of State in November.

City Councilor Gene Bergman attended the Board's September 2022 meeting to present information from the Charter Change Committee on the siting of polling places and all legal resident voting. Both of these charter changes passed at the Town Meeting Day election and are pending legislative approval.

Topics of ongoing BRV discussion include:

- Consistent election day practices across ward
- Whether BRV members or ward staff handle same-day voter registrations and challenge forms
- Voter issues resulting from higher volumes of voter challenges resulting from automatically mailing ballots
- Vermont's voter ID requirements
- Meeting attendance and accessibility/coverage concerns of 12-hour Election Day shifts
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As the BRV's 2019 Annual Report related, past activities of the Board have included voter registration and education at senior centers and new U.S. citizen ceremonies; review of the Vermont Voter's Oath language and instructions on Absentee Ballot envelopes; and discussion regarding translation services for Burlington voters.

Submitted by Grace Grundhauser, Chair, Board for Registration of Voters

Board for Registration of Voters Annual Report Signoff Sheet

Grace Grundhauser, Chair:

Michelle Lefkowitz, Vice Chair:

Kathleen Baldwin:

Lauren Ebersol:

Larry Granillo:

Alison Harte:

Thea Knight:

Michael McGarghan:

Elisabeth Mickenberg:

Helen Rock:

Karen Rowell:

Anna Schneider:

Tenzin Chokden

From: Kate Baldwin <Kate.Baldwin@uvm.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, August 8, 2023 7:05 PM
To: Tenzin Chokden
Cc: Grace Grundhauser
Subject: Re: BRV Annual Report
Attachments: 2023 BRV Annual Report.docx

[WARNING]: This email was sent from someone outside of the City of Burlington.

Tenzin

The report looks fine and thanks to you and Grace for your efforts.

I thought there was some mention that our "duties" of reviewing and signing voter registration forms was not an official expectation? If so / should we include the following paragraph?

"Election law, 17 V.S.A. § 2144(a)(1) requires towns and cities to add new voters to the statewide voter checklist within three days of receipt of their application by the clerk. It is the Board's practice to schedule one BRV member to review and approve new applications at the clerk's office every Thursday, including online applications and applications received through the DMV from the registrations of voters who apply for Vermont driver's licenses."

I realize this is a report of actual board work so I can understand keeping the statement because board members performed that task every Thursday for the past year and more.

This report has my approval

Kate

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 8, 2023, at 9:34 AM, Tenzin Chokden <tchokden@burlingtonvt.gov> wrote:

Hi Kate,

Hope you are doing well.

Attached is the 2023 BRV annual report which was approved on 06/06 meeting and requires signature from all the members. Could you know let me if you approve this report and I can attached your email approval as a signature? Or you can stop by this week and sign it in the office. Please let me know.

Best regards,

Tenzin Chokden
Associate City Clerk
Clerk/Treasurer's Office
149 Church St.
Burlington, VT 05401
Phone:802-865-7019