

BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

May 7th, 2024 at 6:00pm

Called to order at 6:06pm

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

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

Absent: All members present.

Also Present: Assistant City Clerk, Sarah Montgomery

Agenda: Grace Grundhauser said she would like to amend the agenda to add a section for announcements, right after the meeting length item. Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to adopt the agenda. Seconded by Alex Demoly. Passed unanimously.

Meeting Length: Set for one hour.

Announcements: Applications are being accepted for 3 seats on the board – one position is open due to a Thea Knight's recent resignation and two are opening due to Helen Rock and Annie Schneider's terms coming to an end. Helen Rock announced that she will not be reapplying for a new term on the board. She served on the board for a total of 12 years. She said she would still help on Election Days. Annie Schneider isn't sure if she will be reapplying. Applications for the seats are due on 5/15. At least one application has been received in the clerk's office at this point. Grace Grundhauser posted on Front Porch Forum to share information, but members can also share the information independently. Karen Rowell said that another avenue to post would be Vermont Daily Chronicle. Grace Grundhauser will share the ad with the whole board so folks can share individually.

Minutes: Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to adopt the minutes from February and April. Seconded by Lesley Gendron. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: No members of the public were present.

Clerk's Report: Sarah Montgomery reported that there are currently 32,923 registered voters in Burlington, 7,470 of which are challenged. 116 of our total registered voters are resident voters. In April, there were 129 new registrations, 164 voters were transferred out of town, and 33 voters were purged from the checklist.

Approval of Voter Challenges: Sarah Montgomery reminded the board that they had not approved voter challenges since before the Annual City Election ballots were mailed out in January. The spreadsheet that she shared with the board prior to the meeting shows three different groups of voters that the clerk's office is recommending the board challenge. The total list contains 2,488 voters. Sarah Montgomery explained:

- The first group of voters on the list are voters who had ballots returned as undeliverable to the clerk's office, who did not update their voter registration since the ballot was mailed, and who

did not vote in the election. Voters who had ballots that were undeliverable, but which were noted by the USPS as being temporarily away, are not included on this list.

- The second group of voters, labelled as cross-state movers, were added to this list based on information provided by the Secretary of State's office that identified these voters as likely having registered to vote or having voted in another state more recently than their last voter activity in VT. Michelle Lefkowitz asked: why are these voters only being challenged, not removed? Sarah Montgomery answered that if the clerk's office would have received a direct notice from another state that our voter had registered there, we would remove them from our checklist, but since this information was just gathered in a data comparison of national voter information, a challenge is appropriate. Grace Grundhauser asked if this is the first time we have utilized the ERIC data to take action on our checklist. Sarah Montgomery said this is the first time since she has been with the City. She also shared that the SoS is using the ERIC data to re-send challenge letters to already challenged VT voters that were identified – this is because a more current address was identified for them.
- The third group of voters included routine challenges – based on property being sold and undeliverable voter registration letters.

Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to challenge all the voters on the spreadsheet. Seconded by Lesley Gendron. Passed unanimously.

Voter Outreach: Grace Grundhauser said that she added this as an unstructured agenda item due to discussion about this being requested by members at prior meetings.

Helen Rock mentioned that there was a voter registration outreach kit previously that was helpful for pop-up registration. She asked Sarah Montgomery if this was still around at City Hall? Sarah Montgomery said she wasn't aware of it. Grace Grundhauser noted that it sounds like something that could be recreated.

Alison Harte asked if there was data to show what wards or groups might have low voter registration or voter turnout. If identified, voter outreach could be targeted to areas where there is low turnout or registration.

Will Cunningham suggested doing voter outreach at schools, especially for upper class students. He recommended that it might be more effective to have a guest speaker come to speak to classrooms than just providing a handout.

Lauren Ebersol added that 17 year olds can vote in the primaries if they will be 18 before the General Election. She asked if there was a civics teacher that could be worked with directly.

Mike McGarghan said that it is great if individual board members want to do outreach on their own, but that he doesn't think the board has the time to focus on voter outreach at this time since there are a lot of other items that the board also needs to focus on.

Grace Grundhauser shared that this is part of the board's purpose and she thinks it is important to the current members of the board. While there is other work that takes priority, the board does have a calm moment to focus on this topic.

Lauren Ebersol said that maybe it could be added to future agendas as an open item – addressed if there is time, but only if other higher priority items have been given the time they need first.

Annie Schneider shared that she is working with the Secretary of State to help with civic engagement. Would the clerk's office be interested/ able to do voter outreach in schools? Sarah Montgomery said she would be interested in this.

Annie Schneider asked if outreach should be done in schools now, prior to the primary election in August. Will Cunningham shared that this might be a difficult time of year since the end of the year is busy for students. Next year might work better.

Michelle Lefkowitz asked if there would be something that could be done more passively since we are on a tight timeline – put up a table in the lobby of the school, etc.

Olga Bravo suggested that something basic be done right now, but then that something more robust be done next school year. The reason to do something small now would be to get information to the 2024 class before they graduate, then do a more comprehensive educational push next school year.

Mike McGarghan said that it would be helpful to know what Burlington's voter turnout data looks like in comparison to other towns and counties. It would be helpful to know how we are doing, so we can better make judgements about where/if outreach should be done.

Helen Rock noted that we generally have pretty low voter turnout in Burlington.

Mike McGarghan said that some people have been alienated from the voting process. Outreach methods utilizing only technology may also exclude certain people who don't have access.

Annie Schneider recommended a light touch for this school year – making a poster and posting at the local high schools, including a QR code that links to the voter registration site. Will Cunningham said this would be a good idea, but mentioned that a video might be more effective.

Annie Schneider said that videos about how to register to vote do exist – created by the Secretary of State in previous years.

Alison Harte mentioned that she has a connection at BHS (her daughter) that she could utilize to share information with students there.

Olga Bravo asked if the City could use social media to share information.

Helen Rock noted that the board members collectively have connections with BHS, Rice, and Winooski.

Grace asked if it might be an option to set up voter registration tables at graduation. Helen Rock said that might not be utilized since students are there celebrating with families. Lauren Ebersol added that might also be confusing for folks who are leaving VT to go to college in another state.

Grace asked: what action can the board take now? Action would need to be taken before the next board meeting since the school year is ending soon.

Olga Bravo said she likes the poster idea. Alex Demoly agreed.

Michelle Lefkowitz said she still thinks setting up a table at the school before the end of the school year could be doable. Helen Rock noted that it can be tricky to get into schools for security purposes. Will Cunningham said that he has seen similar things happening in his school. He said this could be achievable for this year

Olga Bravo asked if there might be an existing career fair that the board could table at. Annie Schneider answered that the school does host an event like this, but it already occurred this year.

Olga Bravo asked if the schools could share information through their social media. Annie Schneider said the kids do not follow the schools' social media.

Grace Grundhauser suggested creating a poster with a QR code to mini-video and another QR code to the voter registration portal.

Will Cunningham said the video should be informational instead of persuasive, explaining what you need to register and what steps to take.

Grace said it might be helpful to include information about residency.

Lesley Gendron said the information should be concise.

Helen Rock made a motion that the board make an accessible poster to potential voters at Rice, Winooski, and BHS before June 10th. Seconded by Annie Schneider. 1 opposed, 10 in favor. Motion carries.

Alison Harte asked: How will this happen logistically? Grace said she will communicate via email and sort out the details with anyone who is interested in helping.

Michelle Lefkowitz shared a list (made by Helen Rock) of places for tabling for voter registration drives: Market 32, the farmer's market, Hannaford, the fair. Lesley Gendron also suggested posting the poster with the QR code at these locations.

Annual Board Report to City Council:

Grace Grundhauser explained that this is the report that the board submits to City Council each year. Sarah Montgomery attached the previous report to the agenda for reference and Grace Grundhauser will share a draft version she created of the current year's report. Grace would appreciate any feedback prior to the next meeting. The board will vote on this in June.

New Business: No new business.

Alison Harte asked when the August Primary is. Board members answered: August 13th. Generally, the board has skipped a meeting in July. Grace Grundhauser said that due to new board members joining and the August election, it may be helpful for the board to meet in July this year. This can be decided next month.

Adjournment: On a motion by Annie Schneider, seconded by Olga Bravo, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05pm.

Respectfully Submitted By: Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk