

## BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

MEET: August 6th, 2024 at 6:00pm

Where: Sharon Bushor Conference Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor City Hall and remotely via Zoom

**Present:** Alison Harte, Grace Grundhauser, Karen Rowell, Mike McGarghan, Michelle Lefkowitz, Alex Demoly, Annie Schneider, Lauren Ebersol, Olga Bravo, Colleen Montgomery, Jeanne Keller, Lesley Gendron, Youth Member Will Cunningham

**Absent:** None

**Also Present:** Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk

**Meeting called to order by Chair Grace Grundhauser at 6:06pm**

**Agenda:** Agenda agreed to by all members.

**Meeting Length:** Karen Rowell made a motion to aim to end by 7pm and then add more time if needed. Seconded by Alison Harte. Passed unanimously.

**Previous Meeting Minutes:** Jeanne Keller made a motion to adopt the minutes as circulated. Seconded by Colleen Montgomery. Passed unanimously.

**Public Comments:** No members of the public present.

Karen Rowell shared that she heard from a resident again with concerns about non-citizens being on the citizen checklist. She would like more information about what actions the board can take if someone is questioning a voter's eligibility to be registered to vote. Karen shared that the resident is willing to come to a board meeting to share his concerns. Grace Grundhauser said that the resident is welcome to come and speak at public forum. She also shared that she has done some research about voter challenges and has some information about this that she can share later in the meeting.

Mike McGarghan recalled that someone had come to a BRV meeting prior to the legal resident charter change to discuss the topic, and that even though the board didn't endorse the proposal, they were perceived as having involvement in the process. If there is a problem with processes or legislation, the board should go to legislators to share the feedback they have received.

Jeanne Keller said if the resident wants to speak to the board, he should bring specific evidence to show what he thinks is happening.

Karen Rowell clarified that she is not speaking about non-citizen voting for local issues; she is talking about non-citizens registering to vote on the citizen checklist.

Annie Schneider called for a point of order. This discussion should not be had during the public forum section of the meeting.

## **Clerk's Report**

Sarah Montgomery reported that the voter checklist has a total of 32,245 voters. Out of these, 8,814 of these voters are challenged. In July, 220 new voters registered, 192 were transferred out of Burlington into other Vermont towns, and 115 were removed from the checklist. For the 8/13 primary election, a total of 2,227 ballots have been issued and 1,105 have been returned as voted. For the 8/13 special ward 3 election, 2,795 ballots were issues and 229 have been returned as voted. For the state primary election, 22 of the submitted ballots were defective – 11 have been cured at this point. Sarah reported that early voting volume for this state primary election has been low compared to the 2022 state primary election.

## **Election Prep**

Grace Grundhauser noted that she shared the schedule for Election Day and all volunteer slots are filled (either with volunteers or trainees). The shared spreadsheet to recruit volunteers seemed to work well to help share the recruitment efforts.

Lesley Gendron said that she thinks it will be helpful to work through the voter scenarios with the volunteers at the training on Thursday.

Alison Harte asked if the updated guide would be ready for this election. Grace Grundhauser shared that she will share it prior to the training on Thursday and will bring printed copies to the board.

Grace Grundhauser asked if there is anything different to know about parking for this election. Sarah Montgomery answered that there is nothing different than usual. Olga Bravo recommended issuing parking passes for board members, so they do not need to deal with paying for parking on Election Day. Annie Schneider shared that this has been done previously. Grace Grundhauser and Sarah Montgomery will look further into this possibility.

Grace Grundhauser shared the current Election Day guide and highlighted some of the resources that will be used on Election Day, including VEMS (Vermont Election Management System) and the online ward/district look-up tool.

Alison Harte said that she had issues connecting with the Wi-Fi at the ward 6 polling place last election. Her hotspot was also providing a spotty connection.

Grace Grundhauser asked if anyone had any ideas about the best ways to utilize volunteers. She mentioned the last volunteer she worked with was very helpful identifying which voter should be helped first (based on what order they arrived). Lesley Gendron said it would be helpful to know which types of forms are most common in each ward – this could help people be prepared for the upcoming General Election. Lauren Ebersol said that she had her volunteer pre-date forms. Alison Harte said she had a volunteer escort voters back to the front of the line to make sure they didn't need to wait again.

Olga Bravo said she was concerned about people who had just submitted an online voter registration application and then were needing to re-register at the polling place since their online application had

not been processed. She wondered if that would cause duplicate registration. Olga asked if signage could be placed at the polling place letting voters know that if they registered online after the deadline they would not be on the printed list. Grace Grundhauser noted that there are also situations where voters think they aren't on the voter checklist, but when looking in VEMs, they end up actually being there.

Grace Grundhauser said that when there are two election types (local and state/federal), it can be helpful to ask all voters if they are a legal resident voter or a citizen voter, to avoid stereotyping.

Lesley Gendron added that the group text was also really helpful last time. Grace Grundhauser noted that board members may be busy and unable to constantly monitor the large text thread, but it is a useful tool.

Alison Harte asked if a voter is in the wrong ward, should they fill out the form in the ward they are in, or should that be handled at the other ward? Members agreed that best practice would be to help the voter complete the forms in the ward that they have started in to prevent them from waiting in another line.

Mike McGarghan reminded the board that text messages shared between members on Election Day could be subject to a public records request. Same if a board member is using a private email address.

Olga Bravo asked if the BRV member from one ward is able to confirm information for a voter voting in another ward. Other members agreed that this does not seem like a concern.

### **New Business**

Jeanne Keller spoke about the legal resident voting lawsuit. She has received questions about it, especially since one of the plaintiffs on the lawsuit of a board member. She said that the assistant city attorney's memo is very clear, but that the board has not taken any specific action or decided how they might talk to residents who ask questions about it at the polling place. Jeanne Keller presented a proposed resolution that states each board member's right to participate in litigation against the city and also that the board acknowledges their responsibility to uphold and obey the current laws. Jeanne Keller thought adopting this would be helpful for transparency.

Alison Harte asked if the board has the authority to adopt resolutions like this. Grace Grundhauser answered that she has not seen something this formal in her time on this board, but it is certainly something that boards do.

Mike McGarghan said he thinks this is something that the board should have had a chance to review prior to it being presented. He also asked about verification of the legal status of resident voters. He stated that he thinks adopting this resolution would conflate the issue further.

Jeanne Keller said that this resolution only speaks to what exists in our charter, saying the board agrees to the current law. The resolution would not have any more force than what is already in the law.

Grace Grundhauser said she did agree that this is something that the board should have opportunity to discuss this more.

Jeanne Keller asked if this could be placed on the agenda next month.

Karen Rowell said she thinks it is sufficient to tell people that we are following current law and that nothing else is needed.

Jeanne Keller said that she thinks it is something that is important for board members to be on the record making a statement about.

Mike McGarghan asked Grace Grundhauser to treat this agenda request as fairly as she has treated his agenda item requests.

Lesley Gendron said that the voter posters have been printed and shared them with the board to distribute.

### **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