

BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

MEET: October 1st, 2024 at 6:00pm

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

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

Absent: Mike McGarghan

Also Present: Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk

Meeting called to order by Chair Grace Grundhauser at 6:01pm

Agenda: Alison Harte made a motion to accept the agenda. Seconded by Michelle Lefkowitz. Passed unanimously.

Meeting Length: Set to one hour.

Previous Meeting Minutes: Grace Grundhauser said that in the last paragraph of the public comment section the minutes say that she stated that a citizen wouldn't have a social security number. She did say this, but it was incorrect, so she requested to make an editorial to note that error. There are circumstances where a legal non-citizen resident would have a social security number or VT ID number.

Jeanne Keller thanked Sarah for the clear and fair minutes.

Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Seconded by Alex Demoly. Passed unanimously.

Grace Grundhauser said that from the previous public forum discussion, she realized how little she knows about the status of legal residents who are not citizens and thinks it might be helpful for the board to devote some time to learning more about this so they are better able to assist our legal residents with voter registration questions. Grace Grundhauser also spoke about the systematic way that the checklist is evaluated with the biennial checklist review. During this review process, the board could further look at options for identifying if voters are citizens. She is not sure if this is something that is doable or legal, but it could be discussed and researched. Karen Rowell agreed that this would be a helpful way to ensure voters are citizens. Olga Bravo said just looking at a social security number would not indicate if an individual was a citizen or not. Grace Grundhauser asked if there was anything identifying in the state ID number to indicate citizenship status. She said the idea is only that the board could look into this further during the biennial review, to see what is possible. Olga Bravo said she does not think there would be differences, but that it would be interesting to bring someone from the social security office in to give information. Alex Demoly suggested that the Secretary of State's office might be able to assist with information regarding this. Jeanne Keller asked when the biennial review happens. Sarah Montgomery answered that it happens in the summer of odd years. Jeanne Keller said that this

digging into this further seems like a solution looking for a problem and she hopes this topic doesn't detract from the board's other important work. Karen Rowell said that if there is an opening for the problem, it should be addressed before it becomes a large problem. She thinks it is important for the integrity of the checklist and for fair election results. Jeanne Keller said that fair results can also be a concern when voters are registered at an old address and voting in an old ward where they are not eligible to vote. She feels like there is no evidence non-citizens voting being a problem. Olga Bravo said she thinks it is important to learn more to make informed decisions.

Public Comments:

No public comment.

Clerk's Report

Sarah Montgomery reported a total of 32,530 voters on the checklist. 8,391 of these voters are currently challenged. In September, there were 463 new registrations, 306 voters were transferred to other VT towns, and 43 voters were purged from the checklist. For the upcoming General and Special City Election, being held on November 5th, the state mailed ballots out to all active registered voters on October 1st. Sarah Montgomery reported that the ward 4 polling place will be moving – from St. Mark's to the Elk's Lodge. This change will be going into effect for the November election, and for all future elections until further notice. Sarah Montgomery also shared a few logistical updates with the board. She will be sending them all parking information with places available to park near each polling place. She also said that on Election Day, instead of sending hot spots with the laptops to the polling places, she will include Wi-Fi login info in the BRV binders.

Election Prep

Grace Grundhauser said that she previously emailed the board with a schedule for Election Day. She also reported that she had 28 potential volunteers who are available to work on Election Day. 9 of those interested have worked with the board on Election Day before. Grace Grundhauser will share any extra volunteers with Sarah Montgomery for general election worker work.

Grace Grundhauser asked if one volunteer per polling place will be enough. Are there budgetary restrictions to how many volunteers can work? Sarah Montgomery answered that if an extra volunteer is needed, that it fine. Lesley Gendron said it might be helpful to have an extra volunteer from 7pm-9pm. Lauren Ebersol added that 7am-9am might also be a good time to have extra help. Grace Grundhauser asked if there are any wards in particular that need extra coverage? She said that ward 8, with heavy student voting, could use two volunteers. Michelle Lefkowitz said it might be helpful in ward 3 to help with the lines and help people find their district. Lauren Ebersol added that ward 2 could use extra help as well, since they are still feeling the effects of the redistricting. Lesley Gendron added that ward 1 could also use extra help, due to the large student population.

Grace Grundhauser said the volunteer orientation will be on Wednesday, 10/30 from 5pm – 7pm in the Sharon Bushor Conference Room. She asked if the training needs to be recorded. Lauren Ebersol said

that it would be helpful to be able to share a recording with people who can't attend or for future trainings. Grace Grundhauser said that she would be concerned about sharing a recording of VEMS with folks' personal information. Lesley Gendron said it would likely be more helpful to discuss scenarios and show the forms and when they are used. Grace Grundhauser agreed that private information can be excluded and the training can be recorded and shared.

Olga Bravo is concerned about security on Election Day. She expressed concern about the people campaigning near the exit of the polling place and the comfort and security of voters who might feel that their voter eligibility could be questioned based on their appearance or an accent.

Jeanne Keller asked if there has been communication with election officials about security in the polling place. Sarah Montgomery answered that this is something she is working on with the election officials. Recently, CISA (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency) agents visited and did a walkthrough of our polling places. They will be providing us with reports with recommendations to mitigate risk on Election Day, and those reports will be used to work with the election officials to create some Election Day safety plans. Jeanne Keller noted that it would be helpful to outline how rowdiness outside of the polling place would be handled as well.

Michelle Lefkowitz shared the city ordinance that restricts campaigning around the entrance of the polling place – the campaign free zone must include a corridor that extends 15 feet to each side of the designated primary access route and ending where the primary access route reaches the city sidewalk; and the area within a 30 foot radius of the front of the polling place drawn from the center-point of the designated primary entrance.

Alison Harte asked if people felt security was an issue in previous presidential elections. Grace Grundhauser said that from her perspective nothing had materialized. There were some disgruntled voters that were referred to the BRV, but it never felt like a security concern. Annie Schneider said that in 2016 it didn't feel weird in the polling place, but in the city in general it did feel like a lot was going on in Burlington.

Grace Grundhauser brought up the topic of political discussions by BRV members on Election Day. Michelle Lefkowitz shared information from the ordinance that outlined the conduct of election workers. She will share the full ordinance with the board after the meeting. Beyond the ordinance, Grace Grundhauser suggested: keep conversations at the table light-hearted so there is no perception that the members are distracted or unavailable; Avoid controversial topics; Limit remarks about local politicians, even if they are not on the ballot; Do not use laptops to play audio or video content; Avoid profanity. Annie Schneider said this often comes up more with volunteers so it is helpful to discuss with them as well. Colleen Montgomery suggested making a note of this to volunteers at the pre-election training. Olga Bravo also suggested that people be aware of what they are wearing on Election Day – no logos, etc.

New Business:

Meeting location: Sarah Montgomery shared that she looked into alternate meeting locations. Many locations in the city are not available on Tuesday evenings, but the community room at the police station should be available again in November. The board agreed to move the meetings back there when the space is available.

Annie Schneider asked if residents under 18 can pre-register to vote. Sarah Montgomery isn't aware of any forms or processes that allow for it. She can look into and reach out to the Secretary of State for more info.

Lesley Gendron said that a helpful addition to the guide would be to show images of the forms to use in the most common scenarios. Karen Rowell said she found the guide to be invaluable. Annie Schneider found the last training to be very helpful.

Grace Grundhauser asked if there is anything that the board wants to post on Front Porch Forum prior to the election. One idea is to post the voter page so residents can check their voter status – especially if they did not receive a ballot in the mail. Alex Demoly asked if it would also be helpful to link to the ward look up so voters can check their ward and polling place. Grace Grundhauser will draft a post for the first idea, and Alex Demoly will draft a post for the 2nd idea.

Grace Grundhauser also suggested having a quick reference available about residency. She will draft this and share it with the board.

Adjournment

On a motion by Lesley Gendron, seconded by Karen Rowell, the meeting was adjourned at 7:02pm.

Respectfully Submitted By: Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk