

BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

MEET: April 1st, 2025 at 6:00pm

Where: Police Station Community Room (1 North Ave) and remotely via Zoom

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

Absent: Olga Bravo, Mike McGarghan

Also Present: Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk

Meeting called to order by Chair Grace Grundhauser at 6:04pm

Agenda: Jeanne Keller made a motion to accept the agenda. Passed unanimously.

Meeting Length: The meeting was set to end at 7:00pm.

Previous Meeting Minutes: Jeanne Keller made a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes. Seconded by Colleen Montgomery. Passed unanimously.

Public Comments: No members of the public spoke.

Clerk's Report Sarah Montgomery reported that there are currently 29,114 registered voters. Out of those, 3,855 are challenged. In February, there were 169 new voter registrations, 79 voters were transferred to other Vermont towns, and 40 voters were removed from the checklist. In March, there were 248 new voter registrations, 104 voters were transferred to other Vermont towns, and 13 voters were removed from the checklist.

For the March 4, 2025 Annual City Election: 9,823 voters participated. Out of this total, 4,831 cast their absentee ballot prior to Election Day. An additional 1,326 returned an absentee ballot to their polling place on Election Day. The remainder cast in person votes. There were approximately 130 new voter registrations on Election Day. There were 484 changes made to voters' registrations in March.

Sarah Montgomery reported the state has set a launch date for the new Election Management System – May 5th. Once it launches, she will work to coordinate training for the board.

Jeanne Keller asked if there were any new registrations for non-citizen voters. Sarah Montgomery answered that there were around 17 new registrants for this election cycle, bringing us to around 130 total. 59 non-citizen voters participated in this election.

Alison Harte asked if Sarah would let board members know if she had questions about submitted forms. Sarah Montgomery answered yes, and that she did reach out to a handful of members for clarity.

Board Member Terms Ending in June Alison Harte, Alex Demoly, and Lauren Ebersol all have terms ending in June and will need to reapply if they would like to be considered for another term. Sarah Montgomery will reach out to these members once applications are being accepted.

Grace Grundhauser announced that Olga Bravo resigned from the board. The board member expressed their gratitude for Olga.

Grace Grundhauser asked when that seat would be filled by City Council. Sarah Montgomery answered that it will likely be filled with the other seats that will have terms ending soon. Grace Grundhauser mentioned that the board may want to discuss advertising the vacancy once the applications open.

Election Review

The board reviewed the Annual City Election.

Ward 1 – Colleen Montgomery: She said it was generally a quiet day, but noted an issue with a voter concerning residency. The voter said he was currently living outside of Burlington, Colleen advised he should then not be voting in Burlington, but the voter continued to cast his vote anyway. He was already an active registered voter appearing on the checklist.

Grace Grundhauser asked if this voter would appear on the challenge list for next month's meeting. Sarah Montgomery answered that it could, but that she spoke to the voter after the election and he stated that his legal address for voter registration purposes should remain in Burlington. Jeanne Keller asked if the appropriate action for this circumstance would be to challenge the voter, not remove him from our checklist – unless he actively registers elsewhere.

Annie Schneider asked if this is voter fraud. Grace Grundhauser said it seems like something the board should discuss with the voter and that she is confident that it is within the board's purview to challenge the voter if they decide to.

Will Cunningham asked whose job is it to report voter fraud? Sarah Montgomery answered that the Clerk's office reports instances of voter fraud to the Secretary of State, but that voter registration eligibility is the purview of the board.

Annie Schneider will reach out to the Secretary of State's office to determine process. Jeanne Keller agreed that this situation needs to be treated differently than other challenge cases since there was overt action to vote after being told he was not eligible.

Grace Grundhauser asked Sarah Montgomery to send the board the voter's information. She also mentioned that educating the public around residency and voter eligibility may also be helpful – letting people know about the 17 day rule and where they are eligible to vote.

Colleen Montgomery noted that this situation was especially frustrating because the voter was also working as an assistant election official at the polling place. Grace Grundhauser asked if this is

prohibited. Sarah Montgomery answered that election officials must be registered voters in Burlington. The clerk's office does verify this before recommending individuals for appointment.

Sarah Montgomery noted that if the board intends to challenge his voter registration, they should consider what their next step will be if he affirms that Burlington is his residence. Grace Grundhauser will look into that. Jeanne Keller noted that it would be good to understand this generically regardless of this specific circumstance.

Alison Harte asked Sarah Montgomery if she is suggesting that the board challenge the voter, then wait to receive a response before taking further action, so that they can have a written record from the voter? Sarah Montgomery answered that challenging the voter always is the first step the board would need to take to remove anyone from the checklist – she will need to look further into what happens if the voter responds to the challenge affirming they belong on the checklist, but the board disagrees.

Grace Grundhauser will look into the procedures more. She also noted that the definition of residency in statute is really a personal judgement, and that there is a gray area about someone's "intent to return" for voter registration purposes. There are legally valid reasons that a person would correctly call a place their legal residence even if they are not currently there, due to intent. If a person is willing to swear that they intend to return to this address to live, that is something valid to consider. She thinks the next step will be for one of the board members to personally talk to this voter to ensure he understands what residency means, rather than jumping to conclusions.

Ward 2 – Laurie Ebersol: Lauren noted that she had several voters whose addresses were reverted to an old address by the DMV. Karen Rowell asked if this was a difference between the legal and mailing address. Lauren answered no, in these circumstances, she could see the correct address listed in the previous address history. Board members speculated that the voters could still have the old address on their VT ID. Grace Grundhauser asked if people with incorrect addresses were showing up in the ward they were supposed to vote in, or the ward that their voter registration address was incorrectly linked to? Lauren Ebersol said that in her experience, voters were at the ward they were supposed to vote in.

Grace Grundhauser clarified that the legal and mailing address are intentionally two separate fields. This is because the legal address determines voting eligibility, but the mailing address can be wherever they receive mail.

Ward 3 – Michelle Lefkowitz: She noted that she had one voter who was not receiving ballots by mail. She worked with Sarah Montgomery to try to verify their address. She also had a voter that was on the checklist twice – this was resolved. She cancelled her volunteers since it was quiet.

Ward 4 – Jeanne Keller: She noted that this is a very well managed ward with a great ward clerk and volunteers. She also had a duplicate voter appearing on the checklist (resolved now). Jeanne also noted a situation where a voter's address in their registration had been changed without their knowledge. This was referred to the Clerk's office who worked with the Secretary of State's office to look into the incident. Jeanne had really great conversations with the ward staff where they were able to learn more

about each other's roles. She found the flow charts to be very helpful in orienting her volunteers. Lesley Gendron noted that an update to the flowchart was made post-election, so there is a new version now.

Ward 5 – Annie Schneider: Annie did not have anything to report.

Ward 6 – Alison Harte: She had a rough start with difficulty finding the new polling place entrance, but had an otherwise smooth day.

Ward 7 – Karen Rowell and Will Cunningham: Karen said she had a good day. She enjoyed chatting with the ward team and with Will. Will Cunningham noted that some voter situations involve a lot of extra writing to explain the situation to the clerk's office. He suggested having a memo sheet to complete to send to the Clerk's office. Grace Grundhauser had previously discussed having something similar, but to give to the voter rather than the clerk's office.

Ward 8 – Alex Demoly: Had a fairly low-key day. He noted that he saw a lot of unverified social security numbers – some for newer voters, but also some that had voted before. Grace Grundhauser noted that in student wards, it is more common to see since a lot of those voters do not have VT IDs.

Lauren Ebersol asked if the "new VEMS" will help alleviate some of the challenges with names that have punctuation included. Sarah Montgomery answered that the search functionality in the system should be better (not needing the correct punctuation to pull up results), but that alphabetization on the checklist will likely still be an issue. Board members shared experiences where voters were sent to them, but were actually correctly registered on the checklist. Grace Grundhauser noted that is good to walk voter over to the checklist when this happens to help resolve it.

New Business

No new business.

Adjournment

On a motion by Jeanne Keller, seconded by Alison Harte, the meeting was adjourned at 6:57pm.

Respectfully Submitted By: Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk