

BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

MEET: Time 6:00p 09/05/2023

Where: Community Room at the Police Department and remotely via Zoom

Present: Grace Grundhauser, Annie Schneider, Lauren Ebersol, Mike McGarghan, Michelle Lefkowitz, Olga Bravo, Alison Harte, Lesley Gendron

Absent: Karen Rowell, Thea Knight, Helen Rock

Also Present: Sarah Montgomery (Assistant City Clerk)

Meeting called to order by Chair Grace Grundhauser at 6:00pm

Agenda:

Approved unanimously.

Meeting Length:

The meeting length was set for one hour.

Public Comments:

No members of the public were present.

Clerk's Report:

Sarah Montgomery reported that there are currently 31,095 registered voters on the checklist. Out of those, 8,239 voters are challenged. In August, 202 voters were added to the checklist, 38 voters were purged/ removed from the checklist, and 139 voters were transferred to other Vermont towns.

Sarah Montgomery followed up with information surrounding questions that were raised last month during the BRV and Clerk authority discussion: She reported that she reached out to one of the election administrators from the Secretary of State's office and they verified that the checkbox on the voter registration form is for if a registration needs to be referred to the BRV for further review. It does not indicate that the BRV (BCA in other towns) needs to review every application. Alison Harte asked, does this mean board members no longer need to go to City Hall to sign applications? Grace Grundhauser confirmed this and added context, explaining that, by custom, the BRV had been doing this diligently, but recent research by the clerk's office has shown that this is not something that is in the board's jurisdiction. This was discussed at the last meeting, but one of the follow-up questions to this discussion was why there is a checkbox for the BCA (BRV for Burlington) on the voter registration form if the BRV does not need to approve these forms. Mike McGarghan asked if there should be a letter from the city attorney's office stating that the BRV holds the authority that the BCA would normally hold for this function in this form. Grace Grundhauser responded that is probably not necessary since the board can point voters directly to the city charter where this authority is given. Alison Harte asked, does the BRV

sign off on new voter registration forms on Election Day? Grace Grundhauser shared that there is a specific statute that addresses same day voter registration and that responsibility is specifically given to the ward clerk or their designee. Mike McGarghan read the section of the charter relating to the Board of Civil Authority delegating certain authorities to the Board for Registration of Voters. Mike agreed that as long as the charter language is available for people to read and review, he doesn't need to make a motion for the attorneys to draft this communication. Sarah Montgomery reported that she is also still looking into another question that was raised by the board at the last meeting about the BRV's authority to sign off on forms that are completed on Election Day. She is working with the attorney's office to clarify some ambiguities around this process and will report back with more information. Michelle Lefkowitz added that it is the ward clerk that is ultimately adding the voter to the checklist, with the BRV to Ward Clerk form, not the BRV member.

Sarah Montgomery reported that the legal resident voter registration forms and information have been translated and are available on the city website. The clerk's office will be beginning outreach on this in the next few months and hopes the board can help with this.

Sarah Montgomery reported that the last board vacancy should be posted next week and will be open for about a month before City Council makes the appointment. Grace Grundhauser shared that she was able to get a government Front Porch Forum account and can share the information there to help recruit applicants. Mike McGarghan stated that he does not use Front Porch Forum, so would appreciate if she could also share the information with the board via email. Grace Grundhauser agreed to do so. Lesley Gendron asked if there was an expectation that all wards would be represented on the board. Michelle Lefkowitz shared that historically this has not been the case; party balance is more important. Grace Grundhauser shared that requirements for party balance for the BRV is set out in city charter. Mike McGarghan added that the party balance is important so the public can be assured that there are balanced viewpoints represented.

Approval of Challenges:

A list of 23 voters was reviewed. This list of voters was presented to the board by the clerk's office, because there is a specific reason to believe the voters may not be eligible to vote in Burlington (mail sent to the voter from the clerk's office was returned as undeliverable or the voter sold their Burlington property that is listed as their legal address in their voter registration). Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to approve challenging 22 voters, as amended to remove a duplicate entry from the original list. Seconded by Lesley Gendron. Passed unanimously.

New Business: Youth Member Appointment

William Cunningham applied to be a youth member for the board. Mike McGarghan asked what the role of a youth member is. Michelle Lefkowitz shared that the previous youth member helped with special side projects. Annie Schneider added that the previous youth member was like a full member of the board, but without voting rights; She helped with Election Day troubleshooting, helped training workers, and really contributed a lot. Mike McGarghan said he is concerned about appointing someone without fully understanding what their role would be. Grace Grundhauser said that she could add a piece about

the youth member position to the BRV job description and the board could vote on that if they would like. Sarah Montgomery added that there is also some general information about youth members serving on city boards posted on the city website.

Mike McGarghan made a motion to delay the vote until the information about what is required is clearer. There was no second for the motion.

Lesley Gendron asked if the description for the youth member could be pulled up for review. The board reviewed the description that is posted on the city website.

Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to approve William Cunningham as a youth member. Olga Bravo seconded.

Discussion: Olga Bravo stated that this youth member will have a mentor, and it is important to encourage those who come behind us to do this important work. Mike McGarghan added that even full members will have a mentor and be trained, so that mentorship is provided to all members regardless of youth status. Lauren Ebersol added that she agrees it would be helpful to have responsibilities outlined for the board member, especially since this board holds more authority than some others do, but she doesn't think the vote needs to be delayed in order for that to happen. Lesley Gendron asked if this is something that could be determined more specifically as the board learn the specific youth member's skills and interests. Mike McGarghan noted that he thinks it is important that the parameters for a youth member are nailed down in advance of onboarding a youth member. Grace Grundhauser noted that since this will be a non-voting member, the ultimate authority will still lie with the board. Annie Schneider commented that there may be a time constraint for the applicant since it is likely in conjunction with something he is doing for school. She also offered to act as a mentor to him.

Mike McGarghan called the question. 1 voted No; 7 voted Yes: the motion passed. William Cunningham is appointed to the board as a youth member.

New Business: Voter List Maintenance

Due to time constraints, this item will be moved to the next meeting agenda.

Previous Meeting Minutes:

Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes. Seconded by Lauren Ebersol. The minutes were accepted unanimously.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 7:08pm.

Respectfully Submitted By: Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk