BOARD for REGISTRATION of VOTERS

City of Burlington
City Hall, Room 20, 149 Church Street, Burlington, VT 05401 **Voice (802) 865-7137**
Fax (802) 865-7014
Deaf/Hard of Hearing 711

AGENDA
FOR MONTHLY MEETING OF
THE BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS
Tuesday, April 4, 2023; 6 pm

In Person – Community Room at the Police Department
Or access the meeting remotely via Zoom:
Join Zoom Meeting
https://zoom.us/j/93049576072?pwd=MU9Gak9XQTJlSnVGUEhDNXZyZ3Bydz09

Meeting ID: 930 4957 6072
Passcode: 710354

1. Agenda
2. Set Meeting Length
3. Minutes
4. Public Comments
5. Clerk's Report
6. Approval of Applications
7. Approval of Challenges
8. Application Signing Schedule
9. March Election Review
10. New Business

*****Please let Tenzin or Grace know if you will not be attending the meeting*****

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BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

MEET: Time 6:00 04/04/2023

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

Present: Grace Grundhauser, Larry Granillo, Elisabeth Mickenberg, Mike McGarghan, Helen Rock, Kate Baldwin, Thea Knight, Alison Harte, Michelle Lefkowitz

Absent: Annie Schneider, Karen Rowell

Also Present: Sarah Montgomery, Assistant City Clerk; Tenzin Chokden, Associate City Clerk

Meeting called to order by Chair Grace Grundhauser at 6:03pm

Agenda: Approved unanimously.

Meeting Length: The meeting length was set for one hour.

Previous Meeting Minutes:

Grace Grundhauser made the motion to approve the minutes after Helen Rock made a comment to reflect Annie's name spelled as Annie on the minutes to be consistent throughout the minutes. Seconded by Helen Rock. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments:

No members from the public attended.

Mike McGarghan asked: Where is the meeting publicized so that the public would know if there was a meeting and how they could access it?

Sarah Montgomery replied: It's at DPW, Fletcher Free Library, and City Hall and posted online and on the public meeting calendar for the city.

Clerk's Report:

Sarah Montgomery reported: We have 35,583 registered voters as of today; 11,849 of those are challenged. After wrapping up the Annual March Election, the result of total number of votes cast was 10,696, which is 30.2% turnout. The turnout was slightly higher than the last Annual City Election as the participation for that election was just under 10,000. Out of 10,696 votes, 7,033 were absentee ballots (1400 of which were returned to the polling places on Election Day) and 3,663 residents voted in person on Election Day. The initial number of defective ballots submitted was 96 ballots - fifty percent of those were cured.

The Secretary of State has sent out a request for proposals for a new Election Management System. It is not clear exactly when VEMS will be replaced – possibly before the March 2024 election but it will definitely be before the August 2024 election.

Lis Mickenberg asked: Does anybody get back to the voters that submitted defective ballots and let them know the issue so they could fix the issue?

Sarah Montgomery replied: We don't contact after the election, but we do give them plenty of opportunity to cure their ballot before the election.

Mike McGarghan asked: Are there times we can't contact voters - if they didn't provide phone number or email and we have do it by mail only? Is the problem that their mailing address is incorrect?

Sarah replied: No, the problem is not the mailing address, because they have received their ballot at their address and returned to the office. We mail defective notices until 5 days before the election and then we try to contact them by email or phone if it is less than 5 days. If they don't cure their ballot, then they would see defective status for the election.

Grace Grundhauser asked: Why haven't we reviewed the voter challenges in the past? Why are we reviewing now?

Lis Mickenberg mentioned that we never reviewed the challenges on regular basis but only done it after post-election.

Sarah Montgomery agreed and added we have asked the board to review the large batches of challenges post-election.

Larry Granillo asked: When was the first time that we did the mass mailing from the State? Was that the November of 2020 election? He wanted to clarify and point out why we have large number of challenged voters. This is because the voters will remained challenged for 2 General Elections if they don't respond the challenge letter or participate in elections and then they will be purged from the checklist.

Sarah Montgomery replied she believes so and agreed with Larry Granillo.

Thea Knight asked if this process was too long whether we should change the rule about when to remove challenged voters. Are we receiving notification from another state or city or town if a challenged voter is registered somewhere else?

Larry Granillo replied: No, we don't need to change the rule and he just wants everyone to understand the process.

Mike McGarghan asked: What was the challenged voter number before the November 2020 election?

Sarah Montgomery replied: She is not sure if she can pull the numbers of voters that were challenged in the past – she can pull the dates of when currently challenged voters were challenged if that is helpful.

Lis Mickenberg asked: What is the purpose of Mike's question in collecting a date of challenged voters before the November 2020 election?

Mike McGarghan replied: He wants to know if there is a big problem or if the board just never really paid attention to this before.

Helen Rock explained that prior to the November 2020 election, the board has always addressed challenged voters and just never had the large number of challenged because ballots were not being mailed automatically. She asked how this pertains to the work of the BRV?

Lis Mickenberg added the system of dealing with challenged voters hasn't changed.

Thea Knight wanted to confirm the rule of the challenged voters remaining on the checklist for two General elections were same as prior to November of 2020.

Lis Mickenberg replied: Yes, that did not change at all.

Grace Grundhauser replied the challenged voters are definitely part of the BRV work but whether it's an issue or not is something that they can discuss more.

Approval of Applications:

Sarah Montgomery Reported:

February: 232 New Registrations, 126 Transferred out town and 56 were purged.

March: 350 New Registrations, 124 Transferred out of town and 14 purged.

Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to accept the numbers as presented, seconded by Lis Mickenberg. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Challenges:

Sarah Montgomery reported that the challenge list that was sent via email to everyone is based on the undeliverable ballots received after the March election after subtracting anybody that participated in the election otherwise or changed their address or other information in their voter registration from the date that the data was pulled for the ballot mailing.

Grace Grundhauser read the number of challenges in each ward:

Ward 1: 142, Ward 2: 283, Ward 3: 283, Ward 4: 174, Ward 5: 217, Ward 6: 194, Ward 7: 150, Ward 8: 86

Total: 1,529

Lis asked: What happens now that the board has approved of challenges?

Sarah Montgomery replied: We will challenge the voters on the list and send letters notifying that they have been challenged.

Helen Rock asked: What are their options to respond to the challenge letter?

Sarah Montgomery replied: They can reply to challenge letter and send it back with postage paid return envelope or login on to mvp.vermont.gov.

Grace Grundhauser asked: Do you recall any voters on this list who corrected their information on Election Day, like though a checklist revision form?

Sarah Montgomery answered: There might have been because there were probably about 1,800 undeliverable ballots to begin with and once we removed people made those revisions or participated in the election, it brought it down to around 1500 voters who are being challenged.

Mike McGarghan asked if a sample of challenge notice can be shared, so the board has an idea to tell the voters what they look like.

Sarah Montgomery replied she can send a copy.

Grace Grundhauser made a motion to approve the voter challenges. Seconded by Kate Baldwin. The motion passed unanimously.

Application Signing Schedule:

The following schedule was set for approving voter registration applications at the clerk's office:

04/13-Alison Harte; 04/20-Grace Grundhauser; 04/27-Kate Baldwin

March Election Review:

Grace Grundhauser opened discussion by stating it was an incredible experience to go around all the wards except Ward 2 and thanked everyone.

Lis Mickenberg mentioned that we should continue to accept volunteers even though the last election was not busy. Kate Baldwin agreed with Lis adding that we should continue to have volunteers and they might apply to serve on the board in the future. Alison Harte shared that even though it was a slow election, she is a pro-volunteer and happy to have them as observers. Larry Granillo agreed.

Helen Rock mentioned the use of pronouns with voters as something to be thoughtful about. If it is something BRV members might be comfortable with sharing on their name tags, that could be helpful. The volunteers said they would love to get more training on an ongoing basis. The volunteers were invited to last BRV training and members felt the board should keep doing that practice. Grace Grundhauser asked if the timing of the training that was held the Thursday before for the March election was successful and she might make it a standing time. Lis Mickenberg agreed. Helen Rock suggested the board and ward clerks do training together because the gender notion has come up a little bit and it would be helpful to ensure they are all talking to voters in a similar way.

Mike McGarghan asked if there is anything in VEMS that would indicate voters have expressed interest to work in the election process because the ward clerks and the board might use it as volunteer source. He expressed that it might be helpful to update the voter's missing information such if they are missing

email address or phone number when they search a voter. They could ask the voter if they would like to update their information. Grace Grundhauser agreed and thought this would be good idea to update the voter record and they can just add this information to a checklist revision form. Michelle Lefkowitz added that the information is then going to be available to public campaign workers. Sarah Montgomery corrected Michelle that the phone numbers and emails are not public information. Larry Granillo suggested that the voters can also update their information on my voter page. Mike McGarghan asked is this something Clerk's office can come up with or edit the form. Sarah Montgomery said she can incorporate into the checklist revision form. Helen Rock said she would like this to remain as optional, as it is on voter registration application. Larry Granillo mentioned if people can add email and phone, they should be able to remove the same information from their registration by using the checklist revision form. Grace Grundhauser mentioned it would be good to see a report of people are interested in the volunteering during elections and would like to see the options to pull this data from an election management system in the future. Sarah Montgomery said she had found the report in VEMS in the past and she will try again.

Grace Grundhauser asked the board how they feel about the election coverage and working 12 hours. She also brought up that she has gotten complaints from parents who are worried about their kids' who do not live in Burlington getting ballots - she doesn't have an answer for them and it has been recurring concern. She wants to know if we can put together a flyer to this concern – similar to the handout addressing the recurring social security number issue.

Grace Grundhauser read the email from Karen Rowell who couldn't join the meeting because she had an issue with Zoom. Grace Grundhauser said Karen Rowell had an issue with a ward clerk because she submitted a BRV to Ward Clerk form with the affirmation form and the ward clerk didn't want to accept it. They did accept it, but then complained that it threw off their count. Grace Grundhauser said she needs to gather more about this and discuss later with Karen.

Mike McGarghan wanted to know if there was hiccup with verifying social security numbers in VEMS and editing information on voter's page. Grace Grundhauser explained that editing voter's information is VEMS is not their purview, though it had appeared that Mike accessed an area that he was able to edit. Sarah Montgomery confirmed the board doesn't have access to edit or make any changes in VEMS.

Kate Baldwin commented there is nothing in the manual what to do with when see you duplicate in VEMS and she would like to see that in the manual. Mike McGarghan made the suggestion that we should write down voter's ID number and context, so we can go back later and resolve the issue. Helen Rock and Mike McGarghan expressed the incidents where the voters who were sent over to BRV table for verification but when they checked VEMS, it showed they were. They asked if this was coincidence or not. Sarah Montgomery replied that this is had to do with timing of checklist printed the Saturday before the election and verifications were processed after the checklist was printed. Lis Mickenberg agreed with Helen Rock on training with Ward Clerks.

New Business:

Grace Grundhauser announced: Charles Cashatt sent his resignation from the board, which is effective immediately. The deadline for applications to fill the now open position is the 26 of this month.

Helen Rock asked: How much time is left on his term?

Grace Grundhauser replied: Two years. Grace also noted that she is thankful for all the work that Charles did to put together the original BRV procedures manual.

Mike McGarghan noted a safety concern about work area during the last election because he felt like there were too many cords and that it was a tripping hazard. He asked if the wires can be more secured and if they can be moved to different area. Grace Grundhauser commented that this is an issue he should address with the ward clerk, who would be receptive.

New Business

No new business.

On a motion by Mike McGarghan, seconded by Lis Mickenberg, the meeting was adjourned at 7:03pm.

Respectfully Submitted By: Tenzin Chokden, Associate City Clerk