

Board for Registration of Voters

Meet: Time: 6:00PM Date: 11/07/2023

Where: Community Room, Burlington Police Department, 1 North Ave. and remotely via Zoom.

Present: Lauren Ebersol, Grace Grundhauser, Alison Harte, Mike McGarghan, Olga Bravo, Michelle Lefkowitz, Karen Rowell, Helen Rock, Alexandre Demoly; Youth Member: Will Cunningham

Absent: Lesley Gendron, Annie Schneider, Thea Knight

Also Present: Sarah Montgomery (Assistant City Clerk)

Agenda:

Mike McGarghan made the motion to move item number 8 (Youth Member Responsibilities) after item 10 (New Business) and address this topic only if there is time. Seconded by Karen Rowell. Amended agenda adopted and approved unanimously.

Meeting Length:

The meeting length was set for one hour.

Introductions:

Alexandre Demoly, the newest member of the BRV introduced himself. All board members in attendance also introduced themselves.

Adopt previous minutes:

Michelle Lefkowitz made the motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Alison Harte. Approved unanimously.

Public Forum:

No members of the public were present.

Clerk's Report:

Sarah Montgomery reported that there are currently 31,208 registered voters, 8,107 of which are challenged. In October, there were 185 new registered voters, 136 voters were transferred out of Burlington into other Vermont towns, and 18 voters were purged from Burlington's voter checklist. Sarah Montgomery reminded everyone of the upcoming elections in 2024, Annual City Election and Presidential Primary on March 5, 2024, State Primary Election on August 13, 2024 and Presidential Election and State General Election on November 5, 2023.

Mike McGarghan asked: What is the deadline for submission for candidates and questions on the ballot?

Sarah Montgomery answered the deadline for candidates is on January 29th at 5:00 pm and January 18th is the deadline for petitioned questions that are not charter changes. The deadline for charter change questions is earlier—mid December. She added that the specific dates relating to this election are available on the legal calendar which is posted on the City's election page.

Sarah Montgomery shared that redistricting doesn't go into effect until the March of 2024 Annual City Election. The new wards for redistricting are updated in VEMS. The new redistricting maps are also posted on the City election website, along with the current maps.

Sarah Montgomery also noted that per the request at the previous meeting, she had shared examples of out of state notifications with the board via email.

Challenge Approvals:

Grace Grundhauser explained that the information on the proposed voter challenge list posted in the agenda packet has less information than the one shared with the board via email because the board didn't feel need to share voter names and ID to the public.

Mike McGarghan felt like we shouldn't have to hide this information because the voter checklist is public information.

Helen Rock argued that people should make a public record request if they want to see more information.

The board decided to discuss this further at a later date - whether the full information should be shared in packet or not.

The board reviewed a list of 21 voters proposed to be challenged.

Mike McGarghan asked if a voter name would be listed on challenge list, if a property is put under trust name.

Sarah Montgomery replied no.

Michelle Lefkowitz made the motion to challenge the 21 voters listed. Seconded by Alison Harte. Approved unanimously.

All Legal Resident Voter Registration Overview:

Sarah Montgomery shared that all legal resident voter went through the legislative process by the end of June and legal residents are allowed to register and vote in all city and school elections for candidates and questions. Registered legal resident voters are eligible to run for Burlington city and school offices as well. How they can register to vote is little bit different than citizen registration. There are currently four registered legal resident voters and continued outreach is needed to educate people. The registration can be only done in person, by mail or by sending a form by email. She is hoping the ability to register resident voters in the state's system will be incorporated with new election management system.

The difference between the two voter registration forms is the eligibility questions. The Vermont registration form asks if you are citizen, whereas the resident form asks if the voter is a Burlington resident. The other big difference is the required voter identification. For a resident voter, the two options for identification are that they can enter their Vermont ID number, which is the preferred method, and if they don't have that, they have the ability to present an alternate ID. The acceptable

forms of alternate ID are current and valid photo id, or a utility bill, bank statement, or government document with their name and current address. This alternate ID replaces the social security number option on the citizen form, because without being able to incorporate these voters into the state election management system, the clerk's office cannot directly access the social security data to verify that information matches the voter's identity. The clerk's office can verify a VT ID number for verification.

The oath on all legal resident voter is different from the Vermont registration form.

Alison Harte asked if they would need to make judgment call if a legal resident voter presents an alternate ID on Election Day.

Sarah Montgomery replied this would fall on ward clerk or election workers at the voter registration table.

Mike McGarghan asked with so many illegal immigrants in this country, how do you verify that a resident voter is legally residing here?

Sarah Montgomery replied we are not verifying - a voter is self-attesting on the form just like a voter is attesting that they are US citizens on the Vermont registration form.

Mike McGarghan noted that he thinks this will be an issue down the road because many people in immigrant communities are often changing their addresses.

Helen Rock called for point of order that she finds Mike McGarghan's comment to be racist and bigoted. It is okay to discuss the subject, but stereotyping and making generalizations about a group of people is not helpful.

Olga Bravo explained the importance of verifying somebody identity because identify theft is a big issue and if we are not able to verify their proper identity then there is going to be problem.

Helen Rock noted that we are asking for ID verification information.

Mike McGarghan stated that he takes issue with being called racist or bigoted, and would like an apology for that comment.

Helen Rock said that she did not call him racist, but that she felt the language used was targeted towards a certain group of people.

Mike McGarghan responded that his comment was not directed toward any specific race, or sex, or creed. It was about people residing here legally versus illegally.

Helen Rock apologized.

Grave Grundhauser noted that the discussion should be kept to the business of the board. If one member offends the other, she asked that they speak to each other outside of the meeting.

Helen Rock apologized again and clarified that she felt the way Mike was speaking was generalizing a group of people and was disrespectful.

Karen Rowell thanked Helen for apologizing and said that she has a hard time with this topic because she thinks that one of the reasons people want to become citizens is so they can vote. She thinks making

voting something to strive for makes it important. She believes that the citizens should be making these decisions about the country. She asked for clarification on what form of identity legal resident voters are being required to present.

Sarah Montgomery explained that the primary identification we are asking voters to provide is their VT ID number. If they do not have a VT ID, they may present an alternate identification.

Alison Harte stated the discussion happening in this meeting is a good reason to set some ground rules for conduct for board members at meetings. Not being on the same page about these things can make meetings frustrating for members.

Will Cunningham asked for clarity: is legal residency status being verified with the ID information the voter is providing?

Sarah Montgomery answered no, that step is to verify the voter's identity, not residency status.

Alex Demoly asked: what photo IDs are acceptable? Sarah Montgomery answered state or federally issued IDs.

Will Cunningham asked: For what elections is only residency required to vote? Sarah Montgomery answered that legal resident voters will be eligible to vote only in city or school elections.

Olga Bravo asked if voters would inadvertently be issued a state or federal ballot once they voted in a city election. Grace Grundhauser answered that the voter lists would be separate, so that would not happen.

Grace Grundhauser asked if the board would like to make a motion to extend this meeting till 7:10pm, going over the meeting length set in the beginning.

Michelle Lefkowitz made the motion, seconded by Alex Demoly. Approved unanimously.

Olga Bravo asked if this is something that is happening across VT. Grace Grundhauser answered no, just Burlington. Michelle Lefkowitz added that Montpelier and Winooski also have this in place. Karen Rowell shared that this was approved by the voters in March.

Mike McGarghan said that there is a handout that explains which elections legal residents can vote in. He also noted that he has family that is affected by immigration challenges and this is a sensitive and energetic topic for many. People shouldn't be discounted as racist or bigoted for discussing it. He is all for legal immigration processes.

Lauren Ebersol asked for clarification on what the board is working to decide on this topic.

Sarah Montgomery replied she is sharing this information with the board for informational purposes.

Grace Grundhauser added that this is important for board to have this conversation, since they are working the elections and people are going to ask these questions.

Helen Rock asked: How do we resolve issues with a legal resident whose name is not on the checklist and is sent to the BRV table?

Grace Grundhauser answered that is something she will need work with Sarah on – updating the BRV manual book before the March Election and devote more time discussing these procedures.

Sarah Montgomery added that voter registration drives and voter outreach are part of the board's mission, so this new information about our registering resident voters is important for them to know.

Alison Harte asked: What are sort of options does the board have to do outreach?

Michelle Lefkowitz recalls doing voter registration drives in front of City Hall, and going to the High School. Helen Rock recalls having a table at City Market for registering voters as well.

Mike McGarghan added that he wouldn't want to be involved in the voter outreach. He noted that there are plenty of people who have lived in our community for a long time but are not registered to vote, and he would prefer to focus efforts on those individuals.

Alison Harte thought it would be good idea to talk about this in future meetings and discuss strategies on how to do voter outreach. Helen Rock agreed with this idea.

New Business:

Mike McGarghan asked if there are any rules on member's absences from meetings because he is going to out of town in January and will miss the March Election. He will join the meetings remotely.

Grace Grundhauser doesn't think so and asked Mike McGarghan to send her notice on when he is going to be away.

Youth Member Responsibilities:

Postponed until next meeting.

Adjournment:

Mike McGarghan made the motion to adjourn. Seconded by Karen Rowell. Approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:08PM.

Respectfully Submitted By: Tenzin Chokden, Associate City Clerk