MACON-BIBB COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CALL BOARD MEETING

2525 PIO NONO AVE., STE 1200 MACON, GA 31206

*(HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE)*

MARCH 26, 2020

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Board Members Present: Dr. Henry Ficklin, Mr. Mike Kaplan, Ms. Cassandra Powell, Herbert Spangler and Mrs. Rinda Wilson

Staff Present: Mrs. Jeanetta Watson, Elections Supervisor, Mrs. Veronica Seals, Chief Registrar, Ms. Charlene Maynard, Administrative Assistant, Mr. Thomas Gillon, Elections Officer

Board of Elections’ Attorney: Mr. William Noland

Visitors: Commissioner Elaine Lucas, Elaine Johnson, Sandy Tharpe, Claudia Kirkwood, Jacklyn Carter, Maria Bryant, Peter Taylor, Virgil Adams, Carolyn Hargrove, Keith Moffett, Juan Jackson, Alexia – WGXA News, Merritt Johnson

CALL TO ORDER:

Dr. Henry Ficklin, Chairperson, called the regular meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, Dr. Ficklin requested approval from the Board to conduct future Board of Elections Board meetings and hearings by teleconference, until further notice on how we should proceed so Ordered by the U.S. President and/or Governor/Mayor. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, Mr. Kaplan made a motion to approve conducting all future Board meetings and hearings by teleconference until further notice on how we should proceed is so Ordered by the U.S. President and/or Governor/Mayor. Mr. Spangler seconded. Dr. Ficklin, Mrs. Wilson and Ms. Powell agreed. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board members asked Mrs. Watson to investigate getting a dedicated teleconference meeting number for the Board of Elections for future meetings.

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. Mrs. Watson informed the Board that Mr. Brad Raffensperger, Secretary of State and Mr. Chris Harvey, Director of Elections held a teleconference with elections officials on Tuesday, March 24, to notify counties of the following:
   1. Preparation for the May 19, 2020 General Primary and Nonpartisan General Election will proceed as planned. Counties will be made aware if anything changes.
   2. All “ACTIVE” voters in the State of GA (6.9 million) will be mailed an absentee ballot application to encourage voting by mail to minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus; also, to encourage voting and maximize turnout during this pandemic.
   3. Governor Kemp announced that all public schools K-12 will be closed until April 24, 2020.
2. Mrs. Watson stated she has met with Dr. Keith Moffett, County Manager and Mrs. Julie Moore, Strategic Budget and Planning regarding this office submitting a supplemental budget to cover expenses for purchasing the supplies needed due to acquiring the new voting equipment and for compliance with recently passed new legislation and State Election Board Rules. Dr. Moffett stated it is the goal to have the supplemental budget on the April 7, pre-commission agenda.
3. Items from Board Members
   1. Mr. Kaplan asked Mrs. Watson to inquire with Mr. Chris Harvey, Director of Elections concerning opening absentee by mail ballots earlier than the law permits.
4. Items from the County Attorney
   1. Mr. William Noland, County Attorney stated the Board of Elections received a letter from Mr. Virgil Adams, Attorney for the Macon Water Authority (MWA) concerning the Macon Water Authority’s position which is due to the passing of Mr. Javor’s Lucas, MWA District 2, that a probate judge could appoint someone who does not live in the district to represent that district; and there is no requirement to appoint someone who resides in the district. The disagreement from the standpoint of the Board of Election’s and the Macon Water Authority is in the language of the MWA Charter as it pertains to the word “qualified”. Mr. Noland further stated it is his legal opinion that a qualified person must live within the same district.

After much discussion, Mr. Kaplan made a motion for Mr. Noland to submit a letter to the Macon Water Authority asking for clarification of their definition of the word qualified as it pertains to their Charter. Mr. Spangler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

* 1. The requested the attorney’s opinion regarding a letter from Mr. Merritt Johnson, candidate for Macon Water Authority, District 2. Mr. Merritt believes he should be viewed as the “incumbent” on the May 19, Nonpartisan General Ballot as well as being sworn in on April 1, 2020. Mr. Noland stated it is his legal opinion that Mr. Johnson is not the incumbent until after the May Election.

1. Items from the Supervisor
   1. Mrs. Watson requested approval from the Board to move the Thursday, May 21, 2020 Board meeting to Friday, May 22, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. for the Board to conduct a hearing for any challenges from the May election. Mr. Kaplan made a motion to approve moving the Thursday, May 21, 2020 Board meeting to Friday, May 22, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. to conduct a hearing for any challenges from the May election. Mr. Spangler seconded. Dr. Ficklin, Mrs. Wilson and Ms. Powell agreed. The motion passed unanimously.
   2. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on social gatherings, this office has decided to use Webinar Software for training poll workers. We are in the process of assessing poll workers access to the internet.
   3. This office is currently re-assessing polling place availability for access for the May Primary Election. The polling places currently in question are: Middle GA State University, Northeast HS and Brookdale Elementary – which are all closed indefinitely.
   4. To assist with help of sanitizing safety during voting, the Secretary of State has committed to providing hand-sanitizer to all election’s offices for distribution to poll workers.
   5. I will keep the Board up to date as to progress of the May Primary and any other updates and announcements that warrants the Boards attention and/or action.
   6. Sample Ballots for the May 19, election will become available as soon as possible.
2. Correspondence *(Copies of documents for the following correspondence was provided to each Board member)*
   1. FY 2020 Supplemental Budget Request
   2. Macon-Bibb County Precinct District Combination Sheet
   3. Qualified Candidates list of emails and addresses
   4. Official Election Bulletin – Postponement of the Presidential Preference Primary Election
   5. Appointment for MWA District 2 *(Letter submitted by the County Attorney on behalf of the Board of Elections)*
3. Final Public Comment

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Kaplan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:57 p.m. Mr. Spangler seconded. Dr. Ficklin, Mrs. Wilson and Ms. Powell agreed. The motion passed unanimously.

***Minutes transcribed by Charlene Maynard***