Electoral Board
Isle of Wight County Virginia
13 September 2023

The Electoral Board of Isle of Wight County held its regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, 13 September 2023 at the General Registrar's Office at IOW Courthouse. The Chairman called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM. Members present were Inetha Holmes (Chairman), Rod Hallum (Vice Chairman), Geoffrey McFather (Secretary), and Lisa Betterton (Director of Elections (DE)/General Registrar (GR)).

Rev. Willie Williams and Ms. Regina Haggerty (Democratic Committee of Isle of Wight Representative) attended to observe and were welcomed to the Electoral Board Meeting.

The minutes of the 09 August 2023 Electoral Board Meeting were read. Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to accept the minutes as written. Once signed by the Electoral Board Members, the minutes were delivered to the DE for filing.

Public Comments.

A general invitation was extended by the Chairman to the citizen observers and speakers offering any who wished to address the Electoral Board up to 5-minutes of un-interrupted time to express their desires and/or concerns.

Secretary's Report.

1. No Secretary's Report was offered this meeting. Instead, the Secretary deferred to topics on the Agenda to be addressed by the General Registrar.

General Registrar's Report.

1. The GR reminded the assembled that the September Electoral Board Meeting was moved to 13 September 2023 due to the 06 September 2023 date conflict with the announced Regional VEBA Meeting. Unfortunately, the Regional VEBA Meeting was cancelled immediately prior to the 06 September 2023 date, but there was insufficient time to announce another change in date of the Electoral Board Meeting to its originally-scheduled date.
2. The GR also reminded the Electoral Board that L&A Testing date for the upcoming Election cycle will be September 18, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.
3. VEBA Annual Meeting will be March 16-18, 2024 at The Homestead. The Secretary asked the GR to make reservations for the Electoral Board to attend as soon as VEBA announces The Homestead will begin accepting reservations. Rod Hallum will need to attend the Boot Camp again given his likely re-appointment to the Electoral Board for a new 3-year term.

4. The GR identified that only two Election Day Precinct forms require the signature of ALL Officers of Election, namely Form 2 and Form 2A.
5. The GR discussed the process her staff uses to validate the completeness of each Absentee Ballot when it is received. She identified the several situations where the Registrar Staff need to reach out to an Absentee Voter requesting the Voter "cure" (fix the omission) PRIOR to the Election Day so that the ballot can be counted. The GR indicated that State Board of Elections (ELECT) has created a new form that can be mailed to a voter needing to "cure" their omission (i.e., envelope missing Name, Signature, last four digits of SSN, Year of Birth, personal address).
6. GR reported that she has nearly completed the ADA Assessment for the CAP Voting Precinct in preparation for responding to ELECT by the October 2023 due date.

Motion was made, seconded and a unanimous vote rendered to accept the General Registrar's Report as delivered.

Public Comments.

1. Rev. Willie Williams and Mrs. Regina Haggerty were both offered the opportunity to address the Electoral Board. Both indicated they were present merely to 'observe' the proceedings and the planned vote of the Electoral Board regarding the documented August 2023 request that the Electoral Board permit Early Voting the two Sundays preceding the upcoming general election.

New Business.

1. None.

Old Business.

1. The Electoral Board discussed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance checklist form that must be completed for each of our 18 voting precincts. The checklists must be completed by each of the Board Member's assigned precincts prior to our October 4th Electoral Board Meeting. The completed checklists are due to the State Board of Elections not later than OCT 16th, 2023.
2. The Secretary reported that the letters provided to the Electoral Board from the several churches requesting the Board's consideration of Sunday voting were scanned and a .pdf of all the letters was provided to the GR. The GR, in turn, was requested by the Secretary to forward the .pdf file of the letters to all of the Electoral Board members. The Electoral Board members were, in turn, to perform their own research into the matter of Sunday Voting and come to the September Electoral Board Meeting prepared to discuss and vote on the matter. Following the foregoing discussion, the GR indicated she had compiled a list of comments detailing why the Registrar is opposed to Sunday Voting are generally summarized as follows:
    a. Virginia is one of only 4 states that already have 45-days of early voting;
    b. Virginia already has 45-days of vote-by-mail and ballots can be mailed, dropped in a designated dropbox, or brought to the precinct on election day;

c. Election Day is a holiday for lots of state, county and government workers;
d. Those who work Monday-Saturday can U.S. Mail their ballot back to the Registrar postage paid. If the voter does not feel comfortable using the U.S. Mail, a secure ballot dropbox has been permanently mounted to the front porch of the Registrar Building and is available 24x7 for the voter or anyone the voter trusts to drop the voter's ballot. The secure dropbox is emptied daily, first thing in the morning and again prior to closing the Registrar at the end of the workday;
e. A review of significantly larger jurisdictions around Virginia and the local regional area have revealed that none of them permit Sunday voting and have no intention to start supporting Sunday voting;
f. In 2020, there were over 14,000 voters that opted to vote early and there were no lines of any significance and the polls closed on-time each early voting days;
g. If there is any voter that has no other option than to vote on a Sunday, the GR expressed that her office will be more than happy to mail that particular voter an Absentee Ballot and even assist the voter with enrolling in the permanent Absentee Ballot list;
h. If there is any voter that needs to be driven to church, within the 45-day early voting timeframe, the voter should be able to arrange one single time when their driver can transport the voter to the Registrar's Office to early vote or drop off their Absentee Ballot;
i. It would be interesting to assess the voting history (Absentee Ballot, In-person voting, no vote) of those voters requesting Sunday Voting as their only option;
j. Elections are extremely taxing on the Registrar Staff and the staff deserve to have at least one day per week off from work to be with their families and have some down-time. The Registrar Staff largely provide the CAP Precinct with its staffing requirements throughout the 45-days of early voting.

The Vice Chair commented that in order to staff the CAP Precinct for Sunday Voting will require the hiring of additional staff which further increases to cost of conducting early voting in addition to the significant expense of 6-days per week of existing early voting. The Vice Chair also emphasized that the vast majority of U.S. States do not even offer early voting. Finally, the Vice Chair noted that voters have ample opportunity to vote and that the expansion of early voting even further is unwarranted. Finally, the Vice Chair noted that the Electoral Board had discussed the topic of Sunday Voting last calendar year and decided at that time that the Board would not support Sunday Voting, despite the fact that a formal motion was not made, nor a formal vote taken.

The Secretary commented that he agreed with the Vice Chairman's assertion that voters have ample opportunity to vote. The Secretary noted that he cannot deny the convenience for elderly voters already being transported to/from their places of worship and already aboard a transport vehicle to simply swing by the Registar's Office on a given Sunday to vote, and then transported to their personal residence. However, given the 45-day early voting timeline, there more than adequate time for voters to arrange for someone to transport the voter to the polls.

Finally, the Secretary reminded everyone of the Governor's "Secure Your Vote Virginia" permanent Absentee Ballot enrollment initiative. Therefore, it is imperative that the Electoral Board look out for our Registrar Staff and grant them at least one day per week of time off 'down time' throughout the election season.

The Chairman expressed her thought that the Electoral Board consider permitting a 'trial run' of Sunday Voting by selecting one Sunday and assessing the community's interest and support of the Sunday Voting option. The Secretary suggested the Chairman express her proposal in the form of a 'motion'. The Chairman then moved that the Electoral Board authorize a 'test case' of Sunday voting to determine the community support of opening the CAP Polling Place on two Sundays prior to an election. The Chairman's motion failed to secure a second. Accordingly, the motion failed.

The Secretary then moved that the Electoral Board not approve Sunday Early Voting in light of the ample opportunities for the community to vote during the current 45-day early voting timeline, coupled with all of the itemized reasons articulated by the GR, Vice Chairman and Secretary and documented herein. The Vice Chairman seconded the motion. The President acknowledged that the motion had been properly advanced and seconded. The President called for a voice vote. The motion was approved by 2 'Yea' votes and 1 'Nay' vote.

The Vice Chairman thanked our Electoral Board guests for bringing their concerns before the Board and advocating for their congregations.

The Secretary advised our Electoral Board guest that if they wished to appeal the decision of the IOW Electoral Board (noting that no formal appeal process of an Electoral Board decision is addressed or provided in the Virginia Code) that the Pastors consider bringing their concerns before their elected officials such as their member of the House of Delegates and/or their State Senator. Reverend Willie Williams indicated he did not believe such an action was necessary or desired and expressed that he was extremely pleased by the diligence and consideration of the Electoral Board.

3. The Vice President reported that the Monthly Update on our Security Checklist is that there is "No Change" this month. However, the IOW IT Lead has reported that Annual IT Security Training is forthcoming (date not solidified).

Good of the Order.

1. The Vice Chairman noted the return of COVID is occurring and asked what the impact will be on our elections if the virus gets out of hand again. The President reported that the election will move forward as scheduled. Masks will likely be required, but "the election goes on."

There being no further business, meeting adjourned by motion and second at 3:04 PM

Inetha Holmes, Chairman Rod Hallum, Vice-Chairman Geoff McFather - Secretary