

Minutes of Worcester Board of Election Commissioners meeting March 4, 2013

Call to order by Chair Mohieldin at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Commissioners present:

Chairperson Diane Mohieldin
Commissioner Mary Anne Dube
Commissioner John Goggins
Commissioner David LaPierre
Commissioner Robert Winant

Commissioners absent:

The first order of business was the acceptance of the minutes from the January 7, 2013 meeting. Commissioner Dube moved to accept and Commissioner Goggins seconded. The minutes were accepted.

Old Business:

The first order of Old Business was an update on the funding for additional personnel for the Elections Commission Office. Mr. Rushford has been informed that funding for permanent personnel during the current fiscal year is not available. However, he has been authorized to utilize \$3000.00 of pool money to hire personnel on a temporary basis and will attempt to hire personnel who are already experienced in the operations of the Election Commission to work during the upcoming special elections period.

Regarding funding for the next fiscal year, he will be meeting with budget personnel on March 12 to begin discussions and is optimistic that there will be funds allocated to provide additional full time personnel to the office.

The next order of Old Business concerned an update on the special elections. Mr. Rushford provided a report on the efforts of the Election Commission Office regarding certification of candidates for the elections. He noted that all poll workers from the November, 2012 election have been contacted to return for the elections to be held this year, the absentee ballots are being prepared and all other normal activities related to preparations for an election are in process. He also noted that the City Council has approved the election calendar for this year's Municipal Election.

New Business:

The first order of new business was a report on the progress of the 2013 Street Listing. The mailings had gone out in the latter part of February and the responses are being processed as rapidly as possible so the voter information can be updated in time for the April 30, 2013 Primary. Chair Mohieldin requested a report at the next meeting on the percentage that responded electronically and the percentage that responded via mail. She also requested a breakdown of how many responses via mail were changes versus confirmation of the information.

Chair Mohieldin also inquired what the cutoff time would be for voter activation prior to the April 30th Primary. Mr. Rushford noted that they will continue processing until it is time to print out the voter list for the Primary.

The next order of new business was a discussion related to the items requested from the City Council at the February 12, 2013 meeting. The items are:

- A. Order requesting the Board of Election Commissioners and the City Clerk implement six days of early voting on the second floor of city hall October 30, 2013 through November 4, 2013 to encourage Worcester voters to participate in the upcoming municipal election. (Item is currently being held)
- B. Resolution that the City Council of the City of Worcester hereby goes on record in favor of the initiative to enhance participation in election being put forth by president Obama that will require all states to provide online voter registration and at least 15 days of early voting. (Item is currently being held)
- C. Order to request the City Clerk to report to the City Council what would be the estimated costs for holding six days of early voting. (Approved)
- D. Order requesting the City Manager request the City Solicitor to provide a legal opinion concerning the feasibility of implementing early voting. (Approved)
- E. Order request the City manager request the Secretary of State consider using Worcester as a pilot for early voting for the April and June 2013 state elections. (Approved)
- F. Order request the City Manager request the Board of Election Commissioners to provide a report concerning whether or not waiting in lines to vote was an issue in previous municipal elections for the last decade. (Approved)
- G. Order request the City Manager request the Board of Election Commissioners to report the number of absentee ballots cast for the past ten years for municipal elections. (Approved)

Mr. Rushford provided a breakdown of the items and noted that items A and B were being held under privilege and the relevant items were C through G.

Regarding item C, he noted that the implementation of early voting would most likely be done at City Hall during regular hours and thus no additional expense would be incurred. He did note that if it were to take place during evening hours on a weekend, there would be the expense of personnel overtime for those hours.

Regarding item E, Commissioner Goggins had several inquiries as noted below:

1. If the Secretary of State has the authority to allow early voting.
2. If the City Council had the ability to make early voting possible given they have the authority to set election dates and times
3. If there had been any response from the Secretary of State's Office regarding the request.

Regarding the first inquiry, Mr. Rushford stated he did not know and he was simply bringing to the Board's attention what was voted by the City Council. Regarding the second inquiry, Mr. Rushford stated he did not know but, given the special elections coming up are State elections, they would most likely not have that authority. Regarding the third inquiry, Mr. Rushford noted he was not aware of any response.

Regarding item D, it was noted that the City Solicitor had not yet provided an opinion.

Regarding item F, it was noted among the Commissioners that it was unlikely that the data requested could be gathered, as there has been no precedent to keep such data over the time period requested and any evidence would be purely anecdotal. In addition, Mr. Rushford noted that he believed the impetus for this item was the long lines at several polling locations during the 2012 elections and that this is a common occurrence during Presidential elections and the Board could respond as such. It was also noted that the request was specifically for Municipal Elections and that long lines are usually not an issue for such elections.

Regarding item G, the Election Commission Office will be providing that data.

Commissioner Goggins moved to have Mr. Rushford draft a response to the City Council delineating the following:

1. The estimated cost for early voting given the one location site at City Hall
2. Provide data per item G for Municipal Elections for the past ten years and also include additional information for the 2008 and 2012 Presidential years and the 2010 Congressional years.

Commissioner Dube seconded the motion and the motion was adopted.

Commissioner Goggins then motioned that the Board wholeheartedly endorse any attempt to shorten voting lines, to engage in early voting if practicable, and we would welcome the opportunity if the State so chose to be a pilot program for such measures as long as it is legally possible. A detailed discussion followed with reservations being expressed on whether there is a need for early voting and the logistics involved. It was also noted that implementation of early voting would most likely need approval by the State Legislature. After the discussion, Commissioner Dube seconded the motion and Chair Mohieldin asked for each member to cast their vote individually. The votes were as follows:

Commissioner Goggins in favor

Commissioner LaPierre abstained

Commission Dube in favor with the condition that such bodies that need to be involved in approval of early voting do approve such actions.

Commissioner Winant abstained

Chair Mohieldin opposed

Further discussion ensued and Commissioner Goggins then tabled the motion until the City Council takes further action on items A and B.

Mr. Rushford will provide a response to the City Council regarding items C and G coupled with the report regarding the response to the voter list mailings over the past 2 years. Regarding Item F, the response will be that while there have been issues with long lines during Presidential Election years, there have not been such issues during Municipal Elections.

The next meeting will be held on April 8, 2013 at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Dube motioned for adjournment and Commissioner Goggins seconded. The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.