

Minutes of Worcester Board of Election Commissioners Meeting, September 22, 2014

Call to order by Chairman Winant at 6:00 PM

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Commissioners present:

Commissioner Joseph Carlson

Commissioner Richard Duffy

Commissioner Diane Mohieldin

Chairman Robert Winant

Commissioners absent:

Commissioner Mary Moule

The first order of business was the acceptance of the minutes from the July 7, 2014 meeting. The minutes were unanimously accepted.

**Voter List from Primary** – Commissioners discussed the printing error on the voter list from the September primary where voters who did not have a status requiring them to show proof of identity appeared on the list with an “ID” next to their name. Although the problem was identified quickly and the correction was communicated to all of the poll workers, Chairman Winant asked what would be done to prevent a similar problem in the future.

City Clerk David Rushford explained how the voter lists are extracted from the state census lists and how he and the Assistant Director of Elections will review the lists going forward to ensure that voters that need to show ID are appearing correctly on the list.

Commissioner Mohieldin asked for clarification on how voters who were not required to show ID yet had ID next to their name would be identified as the procedure described by the City Clerk would only be testing for voters required to show ID. She suggested that a sample of voters with “ID” next to their name in each book be looked up in the state database to determine if they had voted previously. If so, they should not be on the list with “ID” next to their name.

Commissioner Carlson asked about the timing of the printing of the list. City Clerk Rushford explained the data gathering and printing process. The list is requested the Thursday before an election and printed and bound on Friday, and the lists are checked Friday and Saturday.

**Poll Worker Availability** – Chairman Winant asked about the size of the poll worker pool and the ability to have back up poll workers to cover for those who call in sick the day of the election. City Clerk Rushford said that based on the availability of student poll workers for the November election that staffing would not be a problem. However he said that September and March primaries may still continue to be a problem.

City Clerk Rushford said that he contacted other cities in the Commonwealth, including Springfield, Quincy and Cambridge and found that many of them pay poll workers higher wages than Worcester pays. He also said most of them draw nearly all of their poll workers from their residents.

City Clerk Rushford said he planned to work out a priority list for poll workers with the new staff person. Currently the poll worker list is a subset of the voter list and it does not prioritize poll workers based on their previous experience or experience as Inspector, Clerk or Warden.

Chairman Winant asked about possibility of advertising the need for poll workers several weeks before an election. City Clerk Rushford pointed out that it is on the city website, printed on the annual census, and on the census response website.

City Clerk Rushford stated that some city councilors asked about Worcester's rate of pay for poll workers and the councilors thought it was a bit low. City Clerk Rushford stated that compared to other cities, Worcester falls in the middle range of pay (\$150 for Clerk & Warden, \$120 for Inspector).

Commissioner Carlson moved to ask the City Clerk to research increasing the poll worker pay to \$180 for Clerks & Wardens and \$150 for Inspectors for the next fiscal year (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016), Commissioner Mohieldin seconded, and the motion unanimously passed.

**Accessibility of Polling Locations & Automark Machines** - Discussion surrounding handicap accessibility in several polling locations and issues related to Automark machines being positioned so that there is no privacy for the voter. Chairman Winant asked if it was possible to make a special booth to surround the Automark machine. City Clerk Rushford believes the problem is just at a few locations where space is limited and a few locations where the poll workers did not understand how the Automark machine functions. City Clerk Rushford said he would ask other communities how they are handling the Automark privacy issue and will report back to the commission. Commissioner Carlson asked that the Automark issue be emphasized in the next round of training.

**Training for November Election** – City Clerk Rushford pointed out that this was already done in August for this election season and that training is only budgeted for once per year. City Clerk Rushford said he would have the new election staff person gather poll worker emails and increase communication to poll workers by email and mail and use those methods to improve poll worker training and awareness.

**Update on New Voting Machines** – City Clerk Rushford reported that other commonwealth communities have not purchased the new machines individually. They are setting up collective purchasing arrangements. City Clerk Rushford says Worcester will participate in the Quincy cooperative bid and purchase the voting machines using that method after the first of the year.

**Election Room Relocation** – Move from the old election room to the new election room will not take place before the November election due to delays in the related moves/renovations that need to take place in the basement of City Hall first. Commissioner Carlson asked if the new voting machines would fit in to the new space and City Clerk Rushford confirmed that either of the new machines that the city may purchase is about the same size as the current ones.

**Relocation of Ward 4 Precinct 4 (Friendly House)** – Other buildings in the area have been considered as replacement locations for Ward 4 Precinct 4, but for various reasons none worked out. Another consideration is the way a move would impact the surrounding precincts. City Clerk Rushford asked the

commissioners about moving Ward 5 Precinct 2 (EcoTarium) elsewhere and to consider moving Ward 4 Precinct 4 to the EcoTarium. Commissioner Carlson asked why there is a need to move Ward 5 Precinct 2. City Clerk Rushford explained that there have been complaints about how far the walk is from the parking lot, but he stated it has not impacted voter turnout. The issue appears to be that it is outside of the Precinct. Commissioner Carlson asked about the use of the American Legion as it appears to be handicap accessible. City Clerk Rushford also asked the commissioners to consider the change in voting that will occur in 2016 allowing early voting and the impact it might have on the traffic at all of the voting locations.

**Ward 3 Precinct 2 (Worcester Art Museum)** – ramp will not be ready for the November election so voting will take place in the café again. There was positive response to the new location in the September primary both at the new location and at the former location where Ward 4 Precinct 3 remained at 40 Belmont Street.

Next Meeting Date: November 17, 2014 6:00 PM.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:01 PM.