

Minutes of Worcester Board of Election Commissioners meeting May 14, 2012

Call to order by Chair Mohieldin at 5:35 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Commissioners present:

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

Commissioners absent:

Commissioner John Goggins

The first order of business was the acceptance of the minutes from the February 6, 2012 and April 18, 2012 meetings. Commissioner Dube made a motion to accept the minutes and Commissioner LaPierre seconded. The minutes were accepted unanimously.

Old Business:

The only order of old business was a report on the progress of the Street Listings. The returns from the first mailing have been received and Mr. Meduna is working with the vendor to draft the form of the card to be used for follow up. These reminders to be mailed out to individual voters who did not respond with a postage paid return card for response. It will be in English and Spanish with clear language indicating to the voters that they will be placed on the inactive list if they do not respond.

A brief discussion followed on possibly using the newspapers or other means of mass communication to make the voters aware of the need to respond to the mailings. Mr. Rushford will communicate with Nick Kotsopoulos of the Telegram and Gazette and with his contacts in other communications media to request their assistance to publicize this information.

New Business:

The first order of new business concerned a letter received from James McKenna of Millbury requesting retention of ballots from the September 2010 Primary after the statutory limit. The discussion focused on the possible repercussions of retaining the ballots and the need to make sure write-ins are properly recorded.

Commissioner Dube made the point that the issue did not seem very pressing because so much time had passed. Commissioner LaPierre emphasized the need to make sure poll workers are properly trained in the procedure of recording write-ins. Mr. Rushford noted that once the Warden and Clerk sign off on the write-in sheet, the Elections Office is bound to accept the information as factual. He proposed the sections in the training manual regarding write-ins be reviewed by the Board to determine if there is any way to make the procedures clearer to the Wardens and Clerks. This will be added as an agenda item for the June meeting. After the discussion was concluded, it was proposed that a letter be drafted advising Mr. McKenna the ballots would not be retained. The City Solicitor will review it prior to the Chair signing it. Commissioner Dube made a motion to draft such a letter and Commissioner Winant seconded it. The motion was unanimously accepted.

The next order of new business was a discussion on the current polling locations and possible alternatives for 2-5, 3-2, and 5-3.

Regarding 2-5, Chair Mohieldin noted that she had fielded several calls in the last election complaining about having to vote in Great Brook Valley, due to the redistricting. Mr. Rushford noted that the majority of complaints he received after the notices were sent to the households affected by the redistricting also were focused on same issue. After a discussion regarding the number households affected, the safety concerns expressed by the residents, and the possible negative impact of moving the polling location out of Great Brook, it was determined that there is adequate lighting, excellent police protection, and easy access to the polling location located there and there would be no need to move it.

Regarding 3-2, Mr. Rushford provided a brief history of the attempts to obtain polling locations located in the precinct after the original polling location was no longer available, culminating in the eventual location in the Anna Maria Annex on Prescott Street. However, due to concerns about adequate handicap access and the tenant not willing to accommodate the polling location there, the decision was made to move the polling location to 40 Belmont St. While it is an inconvenience to voters to have to vote outside of their precinct, there is currently no viable alternative at this time.

Regarding 5-3, Commissioner Dube had requested that North High be researched as a possible alternative to the Ecotarium, which is the current polling location. Mr. Rushford spoke with the principal and it was determined that, because of the access restrictions in the school, it was not feasible to allow unfettered access to the public during elections. As there are no other alternatives available at this time, the polling location will stay where it is for the time being.

Commissioner LaPierre queried how long it would take to relocate a polling place and notify the voters affected if the need was determined due to issues that could

not be overcome. Mr. Rushford responded that it could be done in a timely manner with minimal issues.

Chair Mohieldin queried about the upcoming construction on Shore Drive and how it might impact the access to the polling place for Precinct 1-1. Mr. Rushford will check into it and provide an update.

The next order of new business was a discussion on the poll worker recruitment, training, and appointment process. Commissioner LaPierre had determined in the last election that only 34 registered Republicans were working at various polling places and has been working with various leaders in the Republican Party to try to recruit more Republicans to work on election days. Paul Franco, the new chair of the Worcester Republican City Committee spoke on the efforts of the Committee to recruit more workers. At this point, they have 65 people committed to work in the next 2 elections. He will continue to work with other Republican leaders in the city to find more people willing to work in upcoming elections. He is committed to expanding the number of workers available from the Republican Party and hopes to build up a good pool of experienced workers over the coming years. He will be providing a list of the workers to the Elections Commission Office by June 1 so that office can contact them to make the necessary arrangements.

A brief discussion followed regarding the necessity for training, the responsibilities of the workers, and how workers can be assigned to different polling locations.

The next meeting will be held June 11, 2012 at 5:30p.m.

Commissioner Dube made a motion for adjournment and Commissioner Winant seconded. The meeting adjourned Adjournment at 6:25 p.m.