**Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration**

**Decatur County Administrative Offices’ Meeting Room**

**203 W. Broughton Street**

**Bainbridge, GA 39819**

**April 14, 2015**

**Call To Order**

**Administrative Notes**

The monthly meeting of the Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration was called to order by Chairman Wendell Cofer at 6:31 p.m. and stated that the meeting has been duly advertised in the newspaper and on the buildings properly identifying meeting date, time and location as required by governing laws. Cofer welcomed Ethics Technician Linda Walton, both to the staff and as a regular attendee for the Board meetings.

**Board Members present: Staff Present:**

Burke, Gina White, Doris (Chief Election Official)

Cofer, Wendell (Chairman) Heard, Carol (Clerk of Voter Registration)

Holmes, Beverly W. Walton, Linda (Ethics Technician)

Lamb, Willie, Jr.

Sellars, Keith Two guests from the Civics 101 group.

**Approve Minutes**

The minutes of the March 10, 2015, regular meeting was unanimously approved as presented.

**Old Business**

1. Poll Worker Recognition Award. Chairman Wendell Cofer said the poll worker recognition awards are an attempt to reward and recognize the county’s poll workers with more than 20 years of service. The total for the gifts to be given to the 13 poll workers who have more than 20 years of service is $710.90, which includes purchasing and engraving. Cofer said he would like to proceed with recognizing those poll workers at the next scheduled meeting on May 12. Cofer said he would also like to have news coverage arranged or have photos taken and a news release submitted.

**New Business**

1. Install Security System in Chamber 1, Fairgrounds Polling Place, from 2014-2015. Cofer said he requested staff get some information on installing a burglar and fire alarm system at the Fairgrounds Polling Place. He said there are some security issues with the location considering that DRE machines stay in the building for more than three weeks at a time during elections. Cofer said he also wanted to “harden” the building by replacing the regular door locks with deadbolts. The estimate costs to install the security system was $300 to $400 and $27 a month for monitoring. The monitoring could be turned on during election months and turned off while not in use. Each time the monitoring is turned on, it is an additional charge of $5. Lamb asked what company it is with, and Cofer said it is through Reynolds Computer Services in Bainbridge and SecureSense. A deadbolt is about $50. Cofer said he would like to pay ahead of time for those months the DREs are at the polling location instead of monthly. The whole system would cost less than $1,000. Sellars made a motion to purchase the security system and pursue the increased security measures. Holmes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Cofer asked that staff follow-up on the motion.
2. Proposed Budget 2015-2016 and Ballot-on-Demand explanation. Two budgets were presented to the Board members, the difference being an item for the proposed purchase of a ballot-on-demand printer and computer. Cofer said Georgia law requires Election Offices purchase paper ballots that mirror the electronic ballot for every active voter in the county, which there are approximately 12,000 active voters in the county. Typically, Cofer said the office will go through approximately 600 to 700 paper ballots during big elections, and approximately 100 during smaller elections. The office has to purchase several thousand that are then shredded after the election. In the proposed budget without the ballot-on-demand printer, the office has budgeted $40,000 to print ballots. Each paper ballot printed on the ballot-on-demand printer is 45 cents each with a $250 set-up fee for the entire election. The price for the ballot-on-demand printer is $14,675, and the five-year lease option is $3,490. Cofer said the board members need to decide which of the budgets they want to move forward with. Sellars asked what the drawbacks of purchasing the ballot-on-demand printer. Cofer said there is a learning curve with it. Sellars said the board is looking at an approximately $43,000 cost versus an approximately $20,000 cost. White said the office purchases about 50 to 60 percent of the paper ballots. She said if the Board purchased every ballot for the next fiscal year’s elections, the Board would spend more than $51,590. White said the printer could be purchased with SPLOST money. She added that it will be much more secure by not having an election official accidentally sending a voter a wrong ballot. Storage of the ballots would not be an issue as well, White said. Cofer said SPLOST does not collect until the end of 2015, and there won’t be any money in the bank until the end of 2016. Cofer said he would like to see the Board buy the ballot-on-demand printer outright and buy it prior to the November municipal elections. Sellars moved the Board submit the budget that includes the ballot-on-demand printer. Holmes seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Purchase Scanner. Staff is requesting the purchase of a Kodak Alaris i2400 scanner from Provantage for an estimated cost of $639.94. White said the staff uses the scanners for voter registration forms. White said the office needs two. Cofer said the Board has $1,500 remaining in the small equipment line item. Cofer said he would like to see each computer, which there are three in the office, have a scanner, which would be $1,280. Burke said she thought it would be good to buy two so everyone has their own. Holmes made a motion to purchase two scanners and it was seconded by Burke. Motion passed unanimously.
4. Proposed 2015-2016 budget. The first five items dealing with personnel services were deferred until after the executive session. Cofer enumerated details of the budget:
* Board appointments remains at $13,200.
* Technical ES&S goes from $11,000 this year to $2,000 next year, that’s a decrease of $9,000. White said the decrease is due to ballot-on-demand printer.
* Also remaining the same are the following: Software support, $750; equipment repairs and maintenance, $3,000; rental of postage machine, $2,056; telephone, $3,800; dues and fees, $250; operating supplies, $4,500; small equipment, $1,500; and, indirect cost allocation, $9,417, which Cofer said the county administrator adds into the budget and the Board doesn’t have much control over.
* Budget items that would potentially increase contingent on the ethics technician position going from part time to full time are the following: Workers compensation insurance would go from $1,167 to $1,751; travel would increase from $4,000 to $6,000; and, education and training would go from $2,000 to $3,000.
* Postage increased from $6,000 to $8,000. White said postage would increase because of confirmation notices required by the state, mail-in advanced voting postage requirements and other mail. Cofer said so far this year, the office has spent $150, but there have been no elections in this calendar year.
* Advertising could increase from $4,000 to $8,000. Heard said part of that increase was the voter education action plan that was sent out to Board members as a draft and had not been discussed yet. Some of those proposals are for digital advertising, voter education brochure, etc. Heard said the printing of the brochure by *The Post-Searchlight* is about $1,400 with another $800 to mail out to voters. However, Jeff Findley, the publisher of *The Post-Searchlight*, said he would consider producing the brochure as a special section if he could sell advertising for it. That could raise ethical questions if some of the advertising could be deemed to favor a candidate, question or party. Sellars said a potential problem could also be if a potential candidate owns a business and buys an ad that is not necessary asking for votes but could be seen as a type of endorsement in the brochure. Sellars was hesitate about any advertising in the brochure. Cofer said if staff could invite Findley to the next Board meeting in May, flush some details out and talk about the brochure. Board members also asked about other ideas in the draft of the “Getting the word out to vote -- action plan.” The Board members said the digital sign is too expensive, but the banner is OK and perhaps building their own portable billboard.
* Contract labor goes from $26,000 to $67,200. White said the increase is due to poll workers for the three elections scheduled for the fiscal year. Also, two part-time workers will be moved to contract labor beginning in July.
* Machinery and equipment goes from $3,000 to $18,000, which is due to the ballot-on-demand printer. Sellars wanted to make sure the County Commissioners realize the relationship with ballot-on-demand printer and the Technical ES&S costs.

Sellars made a motion to submit the budget as is, pending executive session for personnel services, to the County Commissioners. Lamb seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Other Business**

Holmes asked about Voter ID cards. Lamb said there was a question at a Democratic Party meeting about Voter ID cards. Cofer said Voter ID cards are made at the Board of Elections Office for free. White said the voter needs to bring certain documentation that is outlined by state law and they need to be a registered voter or register to vote when they apply for a Voter ID card. The Voter ID card is only good for voting, but it may be used anywhere in the state.

**Executive Session, Personnel**

Chairman Cofer requested a motion be made to enter into Executive Session. Motioned by Holmes and seconded by Sellars that they enter into Executive Session. The Board voted in favor and excused themselves at 7:20 p.m. for Executive Session.

The Board returned at 7:58 p.m. after 38 minutes of closed discussion. Upon returning, Chairman Cofer said the board met to discuss salaries for the proposed budget and that was all that it discussed.

Cofer said items discussed were the following: An email received from Chief Election Officer Doris White requesting pay raise for the current fiscal year; making Linda Walton’s position of Ethics Technicians full time and setting a salary; and, some of the insurance and other related issues that go with a new full-time position.

Sellars made a motion that the Board request in the proposed budget that the Ethics Technician position held by Linda Walton be full-time with the salary at $12 an hour that would include all benefits. Motion passed unanimously. Cofer said the Board members also discussed the financial position of the county, and he said the Board authorized him to negotiate with the commissioners, and he would start with $12 an hour.

Holmes made a motion that Chief Election Officer White’s salary be increase 6 percent at the beginning of the next fiscal year, not during the current fiscal year. Motion passed unanimously.

Sellars made a motion regarding the salary of Clerk of Voter Registration Carol Heard that in light that she just received a raise that was performance based that the Board recommend in the proposed budget to maintain that current salary. Holmes seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

The Board adjourned by 8:05 p.m.