**Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration**

**Decatur County Administrative Offices’ Meeting Room**

**203 W. Broughton Street**

**Bainbridge, Ga. 39819**

**July 14, 2015**

**Call To Order**

**Administrative Notes**

The monthly meeting of the Decatur County Board of Elections and Voter 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.

**Board Members present: Staff present:**

Chairman Cofer, Wendell White, Doris (Chief Election Official)

Holmes, Beverly W. Heard, Carol (Clerk of Voter Registration)

Sellars, Keith Walton, Linda (Ethics Technician)

Vice Chairman Willie Lamb Jr. and Member Gina Burke were absent. (Lamb participated in the discussion via text message of the executive session vote.)

**Approve Minutes**

The minutes of the June 9, 2015, regular meeting was unanimously approved as presented.

**Old Business**

1. Voter Information Brochure. The brochure would give voters detailed information on various election-related topics such as the various ways to vote, polling locations, how to fill out an absentee oath, etc. However, when the idea was presented to Post-Searchlight publisher Jeff Findley several months ago, he offered to board members during their May 12, 2015, meeting the following options: The Elections Office produce the product itself and the Post-Searchlight print it at a cost of more than $2,000; or, the Elections Office furnish and suggest any information on these topics to The Post-Searchlight, but the brochure and its contents would be the product of The Post-Searchlight. The Post-Searchlight said it could distribute the brochure to the county’s voters via mail if so desired. Member Keith Sellars and Chairman Wendell Cofer said they would feel more comfortable with not having any control or endorsement of the brochure if advertisements are included. Cofer said the Board should let The Post-Searchlight do its own thing and the Elections Office staff assist in anyway. Member Beverly Holmes said she thought Findley said he would work with the Elections Board and would allow for Election Board staff to review the contents of the brochure. Cofer said the direction of the Board is that the Elections Board staff provide The Post-Searchlight and Jeff Findley with anything and everything that the Elections Board and its staff have and give any advice that the Elections Office can as to the proper presentation, but the Board of Elections and Voter Registration does not pay for anything and it is not responsible for anything The Post-Searchlight does with that information.
2. Fairgrounds Security System. Cofer said Roy Reynolds has been working on a security system that the Board hopes to have in place in two to three weeks. Reynolds has ordered it based on directions from staff.
3. Civics Day (Constitution Day is Sept. 17 and National Registration Day is Sept. 22.) Clerk of Voter Registration Carol Heard updated the Board with a recent meeting among her, Elections Board members Cofer and Holmes, and Bainbridge State College professor Dr. Michael Kirkland. He suggested a panel of speakers that included Alec Poitivent, Cathy Cox, Dan Ponder, Gerald Greene and John Monds. Dr. Kirkland was going to contact each of those individuals on the College hosting a Civics Day tentatively on Constitution Day, which is Sept. 17. Possibilities include having the DRE machines there and having a quiz on the Constitution, recruiting students from the Student Government Association, Honors Program and Model UN act as poll workers during that mock quiz. Heard said Sept. 22 is National Registration Day and staff was thinking about having an open house at the office. Cofer said what he took from the meeting is that Drs. Kirkland and Dave Nelson, who was not at that meeting, have already talked with Heard and had a lot of good ideas and that they need permission to start working on some of them. Cofer said he wanted this item on the agenda to loop the other board members in because it’s been the practice of the Board that directives to staff come from the Board as a whole and not from individuals on the Board. Cofer said the staff needs to run ideas between the parties and put the program together as they best see things without coming back to the Board for decisions. Cofer, after seeing if fellow board members had any feedback, is to allow staff work with the college on the program and get back with the Board if anything is required.
4. Budget. Cofer said the budget is in a lot of flux with no pay raises currently being considered in budgets presented to staff. Cofer said the line item on salaries doesn’t reflect any pay raises. Cofer said the Board budgeted Walton for $12 an hour for the full-time position, but what he heard from Michelle West is that Walton was in line for full-time employment but with her current rate of $10.50. White said her pay raise was not included in the presented budget either. The ballot-on-demand machine for $18,000 as well as the $324 for security system are in the budget.

**Other Business**

White asked if any of the board members would like to attend the Voter Registrars Association of Georgia conference from Aug. 2-5 in Savannah. Each board members said they had to look at their schedules.

Cofer announced that the Chief Election Official had just delivered to the Board her resignation. Cofer asked for comment. Sellars said it was extremely short notice. Sellars said she has a right to resign, and her work has been tremendously appreciated and the county has benefitted from her service. He added his concern is of the short notice. White said two weeks is acceptable in any job. Holmes said she was shocked, and said she didn’t think the pay difference was that close between Heard and White. Cofer said he felt the board has done its best in trying to take care of staff as best it could and that it did request a 6 percent increase for the chief election official. Cofer said he appreciated White’s service, but added that no one knew of White’s resignation plans.

Sellars made a motion to amend the agenda to include an executive session to discuss personnel. The motion passed unanimously. The Board went into executive session at 7:01 p.m. (At this time, White left the meeting.)

**Executive Session**

Cofer said the board members discussed the letter of resignation dated July 14, 2015, by Chief Election Official Doris White. She offered her resignation Aug. 1. Sellars moved that the Board accept her resignation effective immediately. Holmes seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Holmes made a motion that Clerk of Voter Registration Carol Heard be appointed to acting chief election official until a permanent replacement could be found. Sellars seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

The Board adjourned by 7:14 p.m.