**Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration**

**Decatur County Administrative Offices’ Meeting Room**

**203 W. Broughton Street**

**Bainbridge, GA 39819**

**May 12, 2015**

**Call To Order**

**Administrative Notes**

The monthly meeting of the Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration was called to order by Vice Chairman Willie Lamb Jr. at 6:30 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. Chairman Wendell Cofer was absent.

**Board Members present: Staff Present:**

Burke, Gina White, Doris (Chief Election Official)

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

Vice Chairman Lamb, Willie, Jr. Walton, Linda (Ethics Technician)

Sellars, Keith

Three guests, *The Post-Searchlight* publisher Jeff Findley, Ted Snell and Basil Lucas.

**Approve Minutes**

The minutes of the April 14, 2015, regular meeting and the November 6, 2014, meeting that decided on provisional ballots were unanimously approved as presented.

**Old Business**

1. Voter Information Brochure. Jeff Findley, publisher of *The Post-Searchlight*, was introduced by Vice Chairman Lamb. Sellars thanked Mr. Findley for working with the Elections Office staff for publishing news releases and feature stories. Mr. Findley said he wants to work with the Elections Board in trying to better inform voters and to get citizens to become more involved in voting. Mr. Findley, Post-Searchlight General Manager Mark Pope and Heard met several months ago with the idea of producing a voter information brochure fashioned after a Leon County Elections Office brochure. Mr. Findley said *The Post-Searchlight* can do it several different ways. One would be to do a type of turn-key brochure where the Elections Office provides the information and the brochure is the Elections Board’s product. Thirty-pound paper is about the weight of the regular newspaper, which would cost $1,425 to print; and, 50-pound is what most special sections are printed on, would cost approximately $2,030. It would be $800 for composition for creating the booklet. The postage amount depends on what the rates are, depending on the weight and the number of mailings, which Mr. Findley said a similar piece was about $2,000 to mail. Mr. Findley said this way, the Elections Board would be a print customer of *The Post-Searchlight*.

Mr. Sellars asked how the printing costs might be affected if they wanted to print the brochure in subsequent elections. Mr. Findley said the composition charge would be different depending on changes. Mr. Findley and Heard had talked about doing it for the 2016 Primary and General elections.

The other way is *The Post-Searchlight* make it their product where it would realize the profit from selling advertising in it and it would not cost the Elections Board anything. The newspaper would control the content and potentially mail the brochure to each voter’s household. The Elections Office would provide them with whatever public information is requested. It doesn’t have to be Elections Office-endorsed information, but just general knowledge, public information.

Sellars said one concern from the Elections Board is that it doesn’t want to appear to be partial nor appear to endorse any candidate, party or question in the election. Mr. Findley said the information in the brochure is public record. Mr. Findley said he would let the brochure be previewed prior to publication, which is very rare. As his product, Mr. Findley said *The Post-Searchlight* would pay the postage for the brochure to be mailed to voters.

Heard asked Mr. Findley if there was an advertisement in it that the Elections Board would not want, would he work with the Elections Board on disallowing any advertisements from potential candidates, partiers or issues? Mr. Findley said he would not want to produce the publication with any limitations including who he could sell advertising to.

Mr. Findley said there essentially are only two options, the Elections Board being a print customer or *The Post-Searchlight* producing it, and the Elections Board simply providing the public information.

1. Poll Worker Recognition Awards. Ethics Technician Linda Walton said the list of awards and who receives them has changed since the last Board meeting. She added some to the 40-year award, and took some off of the 20-year award lists. Walton said she selected different gifts based on those changes. The estimated cost for the new set of gifts was $603.01, which was a decrease from $710.90. Sellars said he is money well spent, saying the poll workers deserve the recognition.
2. Scanners. Vice Chairman Lamb said the two new scanners have been purchased for a cost of $1,305.93.
3. Vice Chairman Lamb said the next two items, the security system at the Fairgrounds and the next fiscal year budget, are to be tabled because these items haven’t been finalized.

**New Business**

1. Report on GEOA meeting in Savannah. White said since this was Heard’s first meeting that White wanted the report to come from her. Heard said the classes were packed full of information, pointing out the ethics class, the push by the state to count absentee ballot early, and the need for standard operating procedures and emergency plans. Heard also mentioned that the Secretary of State is starting an ambassador’s program for high school students, and that voters can print out or email their own precinct cards from My Voter Page.

White said the Board needs to start thinking about emergency plans and to develop plans with neighboring counties in case the GEMS aren’t available. White said there needs to be alternative polling locations in case the set polling places are damaged or destroyed, and that way voters know where those set locations are. Sellars said accessibility issues also have to be looked at.

White said the Board needs to have agreements with neighboring counties in case the GEMS goes down on election night, and the Board would still need to upload the election results to the Secretary of State’s Office. Sellars said he would ask the staff to request the surrounding counties for some type of a template to develop these emergency plans. Burke said that these emergency plans could be added in the voter education brochure.

Heard said the attendees of the conference encouraged Board members to become certified and to attend the conferences that are held. Burke said she would like to attend some because this is all new to her. White said most of the classes to become certified are online, with the exception of the technical classes. There is no cost. Board members requested the staff to send them a link to the online courses and firefly.

**Other Business**

1. Heard said Chairman Wendell Cofer had mentioned a poll worker newsletter that wasn’t discussed but is part of the “Getting the word out to vote – action plan.” She also mentioned the beginning of confirmation notices.
2. Basil Lucas asked how many voters are registered to vote. Heard said there are about 13,000 who are active and about 3,000 more listed as inactive. The state, as part of its legal obligation to maintain a voter list, tries to notify voters who have not been in contact with the local elections office for at least two general elections. Lucas asked if there is a way volunteers can help with getting voters to not be purged from the electors’ list. Board members said the voter information brochure would also help with getting the word out. Sellars said there is a need for volunteers, especially during the time of elections.
3. Ted Snell said when the Republican and Democratic parties must meet candidate qualifying deadlines and to not allow a party chairman to come in after a deadline to submit names of potential candidates. White said the office has never allowed that. Sellars, who was past Republican Party chairman, said the party is extremely strict about not allowing candidates to qualify after the deadline. Sellars added that the Elections Board would never allow the Elections Office to extend past the deadline for candidates to qualify. White said the parties get their declarations of candidacy to the Elections Office, and then the parties have to figure out their monies, etc. White said the parties may get the actual paperwork to the Elections Office after the deadline, but that has nothing to do with the deadline of qualifying candidates that is set in law. Snell said the parties should take that processing time into consideration. Snell said he thinks the Election clerks should time stamp the paperwork of the candidates instead of the political parties.

The Board adjourned by 7:20 p.m.