**Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration – Special Called Meeting**

**Decatur County Board of County Commissioners Meeting Room**

**203 W. Broughton St.**

**Bainbridge, GA 39819**

**September 15, 2016**

**Call To Order**

**Administrative Notes**

The monthly meeting of the Decatur County Board of Elections and Voter Registration was called to order by Board Chairman Wendell Cofer at 6:34 p.m. and stated that the meeting had been duly advertised in the newspaper and on the appropriate buildings properly identifying meeting date, time and location as required by governing laws. Board Member Gina Burke had notified staff prior to the meeting that she was out of town on business.

**Public Participation**: None

**Board Members present: Staff present:**

Board Chairman Wendell Cofer Carol P. Heard (Chief Elections Official)

Board Vice Chairman Willie Lamb Jr. Elections staff Margaret Bryant

Board Member Beverly Holmes Poll workers Charlie Laing and LaShawn Close

Board Member Keith Sellars

Members of the public: Brock Washington

**Approve Minutes**

Board Member Keith Sellars made a motion to accept the minutes from the August 9, 2016, meeting, and Board Vice Chairman Willie Lamb seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Board Vice Chairman Willie Lamb made a motion to accept the minutes from the Sept. 13, 2016, workshop. Board Member Beverly Holmes second the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Budget**

Chairman Wendell Cofer said the ideal percentage of the budget remaining is 80 percent and the Elections Office has 81 percent remaining.

**Old Business**

**(A) Overtime hours, etc., policy for Board of Elections staff, etc.**

Chairman Wendell Cofer said elections staff needs to flex time out when working over during a week. However, during an election cycle with two advance voting locations open concurrently that it is hard to flex time out for elections staff. Chief of Elections Carol Heard said the upcoming weeks will also be heavy in overtime because of poll worker training, voter outreach and preparation of absentee ballots.

Board Member Keith Sellars made a motion to accept the overtime policy. Board Vice Chairman Willie Lamb seconded the motion.

Board Member Beverly Holmes expressed concern about the flex time hours and the possibility of leaving the office open when Chief Election Official (CEO) or Clerk of Voter Registration is not present, especially during critical times near an election. Holmes said it is almost impossible for CEO and Clerk of Voter Registration to take flex time when they are really needed in the office.

Chairman Cofer said it was his understanding of the policy that during non-election cycles that staff adhere to the flex time policy and avoid overtime. During election cycles and the weeks preceding an election, that the board understands there will be overtime and that the board will pay for that overtime.

CEO Heard said it was her understanding that the CEO and Clerk of Voter Registration will in good faith attempt to take flex time as much as possible without jeopardizing the function of office. Heard also mentioned that there may be something pressing outside an election cycle that overtime may be authorized if it is authorized ahead of time as is spelled out in the policy. Heard also mentioned that travel time to mandatory conferences are sometimes on a Sunday, and flexing that time out may be difficult. Cofer said even flexing out a portion of the time would help with the budget’s bottom line. Cofer said it comes down to trusting the CEO and Clerk of Voter Registration in using flex time versus overtime.

Motion passed unanimously and policy is adopted.

**(B) Hours of Early Voting**

Board Chairman Wendell Cofer said the board discussed standardizing early voting hours. CEO Heard said the state mandates early voting hours for the first two weeks at 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, the third and final week of voting from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and a Saturday of voting from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. State law says those hours are the minimum and each county may decide to extend those hours. Heard said the reason the board is looking at extending the hours is because during the last two presidential elections, voter turnout was approximately 75 percent and during the last presidential election, the majority of voters took advantage of early voting.

By increasing the hours, a tentative budget of $9,500 for contract labor during early voting is anticipated. Cofer said he thought those costs could be absorbed.

CEO Heard said a tentative schedule was the following: First two weeks of voting be Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.; on the Saturday, go to 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday voting is still a question; and, the final week of voting go to 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Cofer said the tentative schedule gives voters an extra 33 hours to vote beyond the state-mandated amount.

Board Member Keith Sellars asked if this is just dealing with the weekdays and Saturday, and not Sunday. Cofer said the board has not moved to the level of discussing Sunday voting.

Cofer asked if the poll workers in the audience had any thoughts. Coliseum poll manager Charlies Laing said he was surprised by the number of voters who vote early for presidential elections. Laing said in previous elections the county had one location and they handled it, but added that 10,000 voters in Decatur County is a lot. Laing said it can’t hurt to extend the hours. Margaret Bryant said there have been voters who would come in just before 5 p.m. to vote. Heard said during the last week of voting that voters come in at 8 a.m. thinking the hours of the previous weeks are in effect. Laing said standardizing the hours is good.

Board Member Keith Sellars said ideally it is a good thing to extend the hours but be balance with the cost, which should be the guiding principal.

Board Chairman Cofer asked board members their thoughts on standardizing the 8 a.m. start time on all three weeks. He asked if the board agrees to standardize the ending hour to 6 p.m. during all three weeks. All board members verbally agreed. Cofer asked if the hours on that Saturday should be extended to 6 p.m. Board Member Keith Sellars said he objected. Board Member Beverly Holmes advocated the same – or standard -- hours throughout.

Cofer asked for individual motions. Cofer made a motion to standardize the opening hour for all three weeks of early voting including the Saturday to 8 a.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Cofer offered a motion to standard all the closing hours for all three weeks to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Motion passed unanimously.

Cofer offered a motion to open the polls on the one Saturday at 8 a.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Cofer offered a motion to close at 4 p.m. on the Saturday voting. Board Member Keith Sellars voted in favor. Board Members Beverly Holmes, Willis Lamb and Wendell Cofer voted no. Motion failed.

Cofer offered a motion to close at 6 p.m. on the one Saturday. Board members Beverly Holmes, Willie Lamb and Wendell Cofer voted in favor of the motion. Board Member Keith Sellars voted to oppose the motion. Motion passed.

Cofer asked the board members if they wanted to set these hours to become permanent board policy on all elections going forward. Board members agreed to table this for future consideration.

**(C) Tablets for Election Day and Package from Secretary of State**

Chief of Elections Carol Heard said the ExpressPoll 5000s would work for the line managers and as a backup for our ExpressPoll inventory. Heard said there is a special sale on refurbished ExpressPoll 5000s. Heard said of the 26 ExpressPolls, at least three are inoperable. During the workshop on Sept. 13, Board Members Gina Burke and Beverly Holmes had advocated buying 11, which would be $5,610. There is $6,000 in the budget for equipment and machines.

Board Member Keith Sellars made a motion to purchase 11 ExpressPoll 5000s. Board Member Beverly Holmes seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Heard said the Secretary of State is offering a package of one TSX voting machine, one optical scanner and three DREs for $150. Board Member Willie Lamb made a motion to order at least one package as well as a second package and extra DREs. Board Member Beverly Holmes seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Following the meeting, the Secretary of State authorized Decatur County one package and Heard traveled to KSU to accept them.

**(D) Tentative Election Day poll worker schedule**

Chief Elections Official Carol Heard included a tentative Election Day poll worker schedule in board members’ packets.

Chairman Wendell Cofer offered a motion to hire school resource officers to serve as security at the Coliseum and West Bainbridge from 6 p.m. prior to Election Day until 6 a.m. on Election Day. Board members approved the hire of security.

Board Member Beverly Holmes suggested to contact the Bainbridge Middle School basketball coach Heath Maxwell to double check the schedule of basketball and Election Day. *(Heard contacted Mr. Maxwell and he said the 8th-grade basketball team is out of town on Nov. 7 and Nov. 8. He also suggested we write Bainbridge Middle School Principal John Wooten to confirm this and to close the gym for practices, etc.)* Heard also needs to contact Grace Christian Academy on its basketball schedule.

**New Business**

**(A) Status of IT Manager Roy Reynolds**

IT Manager Roy Reynolds said he would like to tender his letter of recusal for the November General Election because a write-in candidate for Sheriff qualified.

Board Chairman Wendell Cofer said he will also recuse himself in November and will recuse himself from voting on this item. After going over the upcoming events, Cofer turned the meeting over to Vice Chairman Willie Lamb, and said Mr. Lamb will handle all duties as chairman in November.

After Mr. Lamb read Mr. Reynolds’ letter, Board Member Beverly Holmes made a motion to accept Mr. Reynolds recusal. Board Member Keith Sellars seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**(B) Authorization for overtime during this election cycle.**

Chairman Wendell Cofer said the Board has already dealt with this issue.

The workshop adjourned at 7:33 p.m.