**Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration**

**Decatur County Elections Office, Courthouse Annex**

**122 W. Water St.**

**Bainbridge, GA 39817**

**September 10, 2019**

**Call To Order**

**Administrative Notes and Announcements**

The regular meeting of the Decatur County Board of Elections and Voter Registration was called to order by Board Chairman Keith Sellars at 6:30 p.m., and stated that the meeting had been duly advertised in the newspaper, and on the appropriate building properly identifying meeting date, time and location as required by governing laws.

**Public Participation**: None

**Board Members present: Staff present:**

Board Chairman Keith Sellars Carol P. Heard, Chief Elections Official

Board Vice Chairman Beverly Holmes Tasia Porter, Clerk of Voter Registration

Board Member Johnny Brown Margaret Bryant, office staff

Board Member Gina Burke Poll workers Billy Ward, Suzan Yates, Melba Andrews

Board Member Dan Provence and former poll worker Charlie Laing

 James Conger, representative of the state Democratic Party

**Approved Minutes**

Board Member Gina Burke made a motion to accept the minutes from the August 13, 2019, regular meeting. Board Member Johnny Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Budget**

Chief Elections Official Carol Heard said the current 2019-20 fiscal budget is presently at 88 percent, and the ideal amount is 82 percent. CEO Heard said the advertising line item has 25 percent remaining. The line item is down because of the legal obligations to advertise two special called elections for the City of Bainbridge and the qualifying dates and time. Furthermore, the cities are obligated to reimburse the county for the advertising costs even if their elections had been cancelled. The travel budget is being used heavily; 68 percent remaining. For example, Clerk of Voter Registration Tasia Porter and CEO Heard were in Atlanta for 4 ½ days for training on the new voting system. The state said they will reimburse the county for that travel; however, that reimbursement will be to the county’s general fund and not reflected in the Elections Board budget.

Chairman Keith Sellars said those allocations are significant and could put the Elections Board over budget. He was hoping that those type expenditures that are later reimbursed from other sources would at least zero-out our budget instead showing negative expenditures.

CEO Heard said the board needs to consider adding funds to the budget for a hotly contested presidential election and a federal run-off election in January 2021.

**Old Business**

1. **State Elections Board case 2016-016.**
2. **Case sent to Attorney General’s office.**

CEO Heard said the case involved a situation during the last week of Advanced Voting during the March 2016 Presidential Preference Primary in which Heard believed was an honest mistake. The poll worker reported it to CEO HEARD several minutes after it happened, and the Elections Board reported it to the state within three hours after it happened. It was an unfortunate case of confusion between two Sarah Griffins and their respective combo numbers that ultimately allowed a voter to vote twice. It didn’t have an impact on the election. After speaking at the State Elections Board meeting in Atlanta, the SEB members voted to bind the case over to the Attorney General’s Office.

Chairman Keith Sellars said there is no doubt in his mind that this was an honest mistake and that no criminal intent was ever established. Chairman Sellars said in his mind the local elections office did as best it could and was surprised the SEB turned the case over to the Attorney General’s Office. He said he felt the case was completely unwarranted to refer it to the Attorney General’s Office.

Board Member Gina Burke said she was in complete agreement with the Chairman’s sentiments.

CEO Heard said she did have a conversation with State Elections Director Chris Harvey, and he suggested we bring up these concerns with the Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials. Heard said in her opinion that there needs to be an intermediate step where more constructive measure could be taken in a timelier manner. Heard said she is going to suggest to the Association that there be some type of intervention, arbitration or audit right after an incident is reported instead of an inquisition by the State Board on changes that may have taken place more than three years ago.

Chairman Sellars emphasized that the poll workers and the elections staff still must self-report any violations. But he said with the actions the State Elections Board took may discourage others from self-reporting.

1. **Resignation of Carla Robinson and elimination of part-time position.**

Chairman Sellars said because of the SEB Case, part-time staffer Carla Robinson has resigned. That part-time position is now eliminated.

1. **Scheduled Open House on Oct. 9 with Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger.**
2. **Invitations to local legislative delegation**

CEO Heard said on Monday, Sept. 9, her and Clerk of Voter Registration Tasia Porter were in the conference room planning the layout for Advanced Voting when Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and two members of his staff stopped by after visiting The Post-Searchlight. He did confirm that he will be here for the Open House on Oct. 9 from 5-7 p.m. The plan is to invite the local legislative delegation, local elected officials and the public, but make sure it’s a non-partisan event. The aim is to introduce the new voting equipment.

Chairman Sellars said he would like to get a list of those who are invited to encourage them to attend.

1. **What we want to accomplish with Open House, etc.**

There was lots of discussion on what the Board wants to accomplish with the Open House, such as educate the public on the new equipment, changes as a result of HB316, the advanced voting’s location is now only the office and the change of polling location for West Bainbridge.

1. **What we know about the new voting equipment.**

CEO Heard briefly outlined the timeframe for when the new equipment is scheduled to arrive, and what to expect for poll worker training.

**New Business**

1. **Registration for Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials conference.**

CEO Heard said the brochure for the conference is out and there are four rooms reserved in Savannah. At the time of the meeting, Chairman Keith Sellars and Board Member Johnny Brown are scheduled to attend along with CEO Heard and Clerk of Voter Registration Tasia Porter.

**Adjournment --** The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.