**Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration**

**Decatur County Elections Office, Courthouse Annex**

**122 W. Water St.**

**Bainbridge, GA 39817**

**August 10, 2021**

**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 6:29 p.m., and stated that the meeting had been duly advertised in the newspaper, and on the appropriate building properly identifying the meeting date, time and location as required by governing laws.

**Public Participation**: None.

**Board Members present: Staff and others present:**

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

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

Board Members Gina Burke, Dan Margaret Bryant, office staff

Provence and Johnny Brown Poll workers Melba Andrews, Emma Sales, Becky Harrell, Evelyn Severson, Suzan Yates and Tracy Moten

Democratic Party state liaison Meghan Heckman

**Approved Minutes**

Board Member Dan Provence made a motion to accept the minutes from the May 11, 2021, regular meeting. Board Member Johnny Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Budget**

Chief Elections Official Carol Heard reviewed the 2020-2021 budget. The current fiscal year that ends June 30 is 15 percent over budget, exceeding the budget by $46,131.99. She said the items over-budget include contract labor, elections and operating supplies, and overtime. Heard said those particular items have been addressed in next fiscal year’s budget. The county was reimbursed for the Special ESPLOST election from the Decatur County Board of Education. Heard said the county allocated an additional $111,000 to the Elections Office budget for a total of $415,590.

**Old Business**

1. **Precinct updates**

**Splitting Coliseum Precinct**

CEO Heard said the Coliseum Precinct has approximately 5,500 voters, which required 22 voting booths. The proposal is to split the Coliseum Precinct where the U.S. 27/84 Bypass is – with voters living inside – or north – of the Bypass remaining in the Coliseum Precinct. Voters living outside – or south – of the Bypass would be moved into the new and county’s 10th precinct located at the Kirbo Center. Following Hurricane Michael, there was discussion of moving the Coliseum Precinct to the Kirbo Center; however, there was concern from some voters with disabilities about their ability to travel to the Kirbo Center. Heard felt by splitting the precinct where the Bypass is would help alleviate some of those concerns. Board Member Dan Provence said he thought the split makes sense. Heard said the proposed new Coliseum Precinct would have approximately 2,280 voters, and the proposed new Kirbo Center Precinct would have approximately 3,351 voters.

Board Member Beverly Holmes asked how out-of-precinct provisional ballots would be counted. Heard said state law only allows out-of-precinct provisional ballots cast after 5 p.m. to be counted. Chairman Sellars asked how the out-of-precinct provisional ballots will be handled. Heard said the poll worker handling provisional ballots will need to document the time the ballot was cast on the state-mandated “Provisional Ballot Numbered List.”

Heard requested the Board instruct staff to proceed with splitting the Coliseum Precinct if there is no November municipal election within the City of Bainbridge. Chairman Sellars said he would entertain a motion to proceed with splitting the Coliseum Precinct as proposed as soon as possible if there is no Bainbridge municipal election. If there is going to be a city election in Bainbridge, the start date would be Jan. 1. Board Member Gina Burke made the motion, and Board Member Johnny Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

CEO Heard reported on her conversation with Kirbo Center Director Susanne Reynolds, and Heard said Reynolds was very gracious and helpful.

1. **Changing West Bainbridge Precinct location to VFW**

CEO Heard said the change of the West Bainbridge Precinct is a change of location, from the old School Support Center to the county-owned Veterans of Foreign Wars building located at 1602 Pierce St. Chairman Sellars said he would entertain a motion to proceed with the change depending on if the City of Bainbridge has a municipal election. Board Member Dan Provence moved on the motion, and Board Member Gina Burke seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**New Business**

1. Tasia Porter’s resignation and last day, Aug. 27

CEO Heard offered only positive comments on Clerk of Voter Registration Tasia Porter’s tenure with the Elections Office, saying Ms. Porter has defined the role and it would be hard to replace her. Board Members Dan Provence, Gina Burke, Beverly Holmes and Johnny Brown each wished her well and thanked her for the good job she did for the office and for serving the voters in the county exceptionally well. Chairman Sellars made positive comments about her tenure here and thanked her for the excellent job she did.

Ms. Porter thanked the board members and said she won’t be a stranger.

1. Resolution honoring Billy Ward

Chairman Sellars announced the sad news that Billy Ward passed away from Covid. He said Mr. Ward was an outstanding and important member of the Elections Office team. Chairman Sellars announced the establishment of an award named in honor of Mr. Ward to be given to a poll worker each year. Chairman Sellars read the resolution establishing the Billy G. Ward Sr. Outstanding Poll Worker Award. Board Member Dan Provence moved to approve the resolution and award. Board Vice Chairman Beverly Holmes seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

1. Wheelchair lift bids.

CEO Heard said the Elections Office received two bids for an outside wheelchair lift. Albany Elevator Service bid $29,900, and H.E. Hodge Company bid $37,690. Chairman Sellars said Albany Elevator has a good reputation in South Georgia. Vice Chairman Holmes offered a motion to move forward with the bid from Albany Elevator Service. Board Member Provence seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

1. Student Ambassador Program at Bainbridge High School

CEO Heard said new information came from the Secretary of State’s Office on the Student Ambassador Program. She said the office had great success with students working the polls, and the Ambassador Program would be a great addition. Heard asked what the next steps would be to get the program started. Board Member Burke said to get in touch with her to see about setting up the program.

**Adjournment --** The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.