**Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration**

**Decatur County Elections Office, Courthouse Annex**

**122 W. Water St.**

**Bainbridge, GA 39817**

**January 11, 2022**

**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. Board Member Gina Burke notified staff that she would be unable to attend.

**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 Margaret Bryant, office staff

Board Members Dan Provence Poll workers Melba Andrews, Becky Harrell, Edith Miller and Johnny Brown and Suzan Yates.

Sterling Widner, owner of Sterling IT Solutions

**Approved Minutes**

Board Member Dan Provence made a motion to accept the minutes from the Nov. 5, 2021, regular meeting. Board Member Johnny Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Budget**

Chief Elections Official Carol Heard reviewed the current budget. The ideal remaining should be 50 percent, but the Elections Office budget stood at 71 percent. Heard said there are still some big-ticket items that are in the works.

Heard said the elevator is pretty much done. We are awaiting a final inspection so they can turn the keys over to the Elections Office. She said the county will begin working on the VFW building next week.

Heard also said the board needs to begin planning for the next fiscal year budget, and one of the main items to look at are the job classifications and descriptions under personnel.

CEO Heard said that Margaret Bryant makes $14.25 an hour. Heard complimented Margaret for being a good, loyal employee who does a lot for the office and the county’s voters. Heard proposed that Margaret’s rate increase to $15 an hour, even if it is in the middle of a budget year. Provence made a motion that Margaret Bryant’s hourly wage be increased to $15 an hour. Board Member Johnny Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

CEO Heard said since this marks the midway point for the budget, she proposed that the board redefine staffing titles and descriptions. For example, the office has a Clerk of Voter Registration, which Heard said Margaret’s duties fall more in line with a Clerk of Voter Registration than what former employee Tasia Porter. Heard said the next budget should have Chief Elections Official and Assistant Chief Elections Official, so the duties and title would better reflect what requirements of the job. Part of that requirement would be the Assistant Chief Elections Official stepping in as Chief Elections Official if necessary.

**New Business**

1. **County Commission Resolution to renew TSPLOST transportation tax for the May 24th General Primary ballot.**

CEO Heard said the Board of County Commissioners approved a resolution to renew the TPSLOST that would be in conjunction with the May 24th General Primary. Board Vice Chairman Beverly Holmes made a motion to accept the County Commission’s resolution to hold the TSPLOST renewal on the May 24th General Primary. Board Member Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

1. **Qualifying fees for 2022 Election Cycle.**

CEO Heard presented to the Board the qualifying fees and the public notice.

1. **Consider proposal to rewire internet for the Elections Office.**

Sterling Widner surveyed the internet wiring of Annex. He tested the internet speed and said it was good. There is an old switch upstairs that is slowing the speed of upload and download when it comes time for updating the Poll Pads. He didn’t think there is a need to do any rewiring of the building, which is sufficient. But he proposes to redo the switches and wireless portions throughout the building. He proposes to set up separate channels for all the internet needs in the building, and another channel for the Poll Pads.

Widner said he and Heard had talked about an estimated cost several months ago. Heard said the preliminary estimated of $5,000 is in the budget, which Widner said he didn’t anticipate spending that much.

Heard requested that all the work be done by April. Widner said that should not be a problem.

Board Vice Chairman Beverly Holmes made a motion to proceed with the proposals outline by Mr. Widner. Board Member Dan Provence seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

1. **Contract with Southern Regional Technical College to use the Kirbo Center as a polling location.**

CEO Heard said the representative from the Kirbo Center sent over a contract to use it as a polling location. The contract specifically stated a dining room, and not the solarium. Board Chairman Keith Sellars said the contract is acceptable and that going forward Heard would renew the contract for each election as needed. Board Member Provence asked about the insurance. Suzanne Reynolds later clarified that the Board of Elections **did not** need insurance as stated on Page 7 of the contract.

1. **Recognition of the Billy G. Ward Sr. Outstanding Poll Worker Award for 2021.**

CEO Heard said there is a plaque that recognizes poll workers who have worked for very long times, some as long as 40 years. The plaque was rewritten to reflect a more open timeframe for long-term poll workers and not just those who have worked more than 40 years.

CEO Heard said the Billy Ward was one of those poll workers who did everything. He was a manager of a precinct, on the deployment team, held voter registration drives and was a member of the Civics Club. Heard said we lost Billy last year. We have established the Billy G. Ward Sr. Award to honor poll workers for being a devoted, dedicated and civic-minded poll worker. Going forward in 2022, the recipient of the Billy G. Ward Sr. Award will be nominated by fellow poll workers. Edith Miller was chosen as the 2021 recipient because she was beside Mr. Ward through all those times of working for the Elections Office.

Board Chairman Sellars said Billy always had a smile and was always in a good mood. He really set the bar high for future recipients of the award. He said our heart was broken when hearing the news of Billy’s passing.

CEO Heard asked the Board how it wanted to proceed with the vacant full-time position.

Chairman Sellars said they will need to begin thinking about it and get back with the office.

**Adjournment --** The meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.