**Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration**

**Decatur County Administrative Offices’ Meeting Room**

**203 W. Broughton Street**

**Bainbridge, Ga. 39819**

**August 11, 2015**

**Call To Order**

**Administrative Notes**

The monthly meeting of the Decatur County Board of Elections and Voter Registration was called to order by Chairman Wendell Cofer 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.

**Board Members present: Staff present:**

Chairman Wendell Cofer Carol P. Heard (Acting Chief Election Official)

Gina Burke Linda Walton (Ethics Technician)

Beverly W. Holmes

Willie Lamb Jr.

Keith Sellars

**Poll Managers** Margaret Bryant, Charlie Laing, Wanda Mathews, Janelle Nelson and John Wheeler.

**Assistant Poll Managers** Zack H. Calhoun, Travis Carver, Ethel G. Fuller and Anna R. Washington.

**Approve Minutes**

Board Member Keith Sellars made a motion to accept the minutes of the July 14, 2015, regular meeting as presented. Member Beverly Holmes seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Old Business**

1. Fairgrounds Security System. Acting Chief Elections Official Carol Heard reported Roy Reynolds has been working on a security system and it should be in place by the beginning of advance voting on Oct. 12.
2. Budget. Chairman Wendell Cofer said he recently meant with County Administrator Alan Thomas to review the budget, which it is anticipated that the budget will be adopted on the fourth Tuesday of August. The budget the board members received in their meeting packets is what the County Commissioners presently have in their budget packets. Thomas told Cofer no changes are expected. Cofer also said the Elections Office spent 22 percent less than was budgeted from last fiscal year.

**New Business**

1. Reopening Courthouse Annex for purpose of receiving absentee ballots. Acting Chief Election Official Carol Heard said this issue and the others under new business were issues that were discussed as ideas or brought to the Elections Office staff’s attention from personnel in the Georgia Secretary of State’s Office. Heard said state Elections Manager Erica Hamilton had mentioned to staff that Decatur County is only one or two counties in the state that does not have as its main office as an advance voting location. The Courthouse Annex was at one time used for advance voting, but there were two issues with that location; one being parking and two that it impacted the operations of the Office of District Attorney, which shares the building with the Elections Office. Board Member Beverly Holmes made a motion to get an opinion from the County Attorney on whether the Board of Elections must use the Courthouse Annex be used as the primary advance voting location. Member Gina Burke seconded. The motion unanimously. Based on the motion, Board Chairman Wendell Cofer directed the staff to compose a letter to be sent to him so he may forward a request to Thomas so he may forward to the county attorney to provide a legal opinion on that question.
2. Challenge hearing for voter whom may have listed business as residency. Christopher Hines Dean registered to vote on Sept. 11, 2014, through DDS with the address of 1305 E. Shotwell St. in Bainbridge, the same address as Dean Chrysler auto dealership. On Nov. 20, 2014, the Elections Office sent him a letter to that address stating that address doesn’t meet the state residency requirements and enclosed a new voter registration application. No response. Board Chairman Wendell Cofer said the board has to offer him a hearing. Acting Chief Election Official Carol Heard said that is the only voter that she knows of that may require a challenge. She has sent each municipality a copy of their electors list to look over. She said the board should act on this challenge prior to the Oct. 5 registration deadline for municipal elections. Cofer said he would meet with staff on the issue and notify the county attorney on this issue as well.
3. “The Rabbit Concept.” Board Chairman Wendell Cofer said the board and staff will have to work on this some more considering there are specific code and rules that say the poll manager and one more poll worker must bring back the memory cards from the DREs. It might work in the bigger polling locations, Cofer said.
4. Early opening and counting of absentee ballots. Acting Chief Election Official Carol Heard gave a summary of what the early counting of absentee ballots would entail. Board Chairman Wendell Cofer said time to receive absentee results will be shortened as well is by cutting off the long report on the optical scanner and going directly to the zero and short reports. Cofer said the board and staff will have to put together a workshop in September to deal with the early counting issue and other things.

**Other Business**

Board Member Beverly Holmes gave a summary of the Voter Registrars Association Conference held in early August in which staff members Carol Heard and Linda Walton also attended. Holmes said the workshops were very informative. One in particular was provisional ballots, and how the staff and board needs to have a workshop on provisional ballots and other issues. Holmes was also very complimentary of state Elections Manager Erica Hamilton, who had worked at the Decatur County Elections Office.

There was also an update on the upcoming qualifying period for municipalities and a review of the upcoming dates listed on the agenda.

Acting Chief Election Official Carol Heard said there are codes relating to having poll manager and part-time office workers needing to an oath if they are going to handle voter registration applications. She recommended all poll managers be sworn in as deputy registrars in the event they receive voter registration applications or similar documents.

**Executive Session**

 Board Member Beverly Holmes made a motion to go into executive session. Board Member Willie Lamb Jr. seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The Board went into executive session at 7:04 p.m.

 The Board returned from executive session at 7:21 p.m.

 Board Member Beverly Holmes made a motion to move Carol Heard up to Chief Election Official and Linda Walton up to Clerk of Voter Registration. Board Member Gina Burke seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

The Board adjourned by 7:24 p.m.