**Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration**

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

**203 W. Broughton St.**

**Bainbridge, GA 39819**

**August 12, 2016**

**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 6:31 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 Vice Chairman Willie Lamb informed staff ahead of the meeting that he would be absent, and Gina Burke was absent.

**Public Participation**: None

**Board Members present: Staff present:**

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

Keith Sellars Linda Walton (Clerk of Voter Registration)

Beverly W. Holmes Elections Staff Margaret Bryant, Carla Robinson and Janelle Nelson, and poll managers and workers Charlie Laing, Emma Sales, Evelyn Severson-Stubbs, Danny Harrell, Suzan Yates, John Wheeler, LaShawn Close, Megan Phillips, Billy Ward and Hudson Holley.

**Approve Minutes**

Board Member Keith Sellars made a motion to accept the minutes of the June 14, 2016, meeting. Board Member Beverly Holmes seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

**Old Business**

**(A) Budget** – Chief Elections Official included copies of a budget that the Board of Elections members received in their June 14 packet and a copy of the final budget that the Decatur County Board of Commissioners passed with a couple of items highlighted.

Chairman Wendell Cofer explained some of the differences, saying he will inquire about a line item for food that he thought was requested but was not reflected in the budget.

Liability insurance is $3,467 that was $2,374, which would include the Annex and Fairgrounds. Cofer said the new water and sewer line item of $1,500 for the Fairgrounds was pushed down from the County Administration’s budget.

Salaries were decreased from $97,596 to $94,867; overtime was decreased from $5,000 to $2,500, and benefits was decreased from $7,849 to $7,449. Also, the Chief Elections Official was moved to an hourly position from a salaried position.

The overall budget as first presented was $260,780. The final version passed by County Commissioners was $252,947.

**New Business**

**(A) July 26th Runoff Election**

 **(a) Election Night Duties –** Chief Elections OfficialHeard submitted a proposed list of duties and timeframe for the July 26th Runoff. Heard said the May 24th Primary went really well, thanks to the poll managers and temporary IT Sterling Widner. Heard said one thing that was effective and that KSU recommended was to accumulate by precinct instead of upload each card. Heard and Board Member Gina Burke ended the elections on the advance voting machines, and it seemed to work well and was less confusing. Heard said she would like Clerk of Voter Registration Linda Walton to take over the Early Tabulation duties for this election. Heard said last election, results from the reporting website were projected on the back wall of the conference room and this seemed to work well. Board Member Beverly Holmes said the May 24th Primary Election Night was smooth and that it was one of the best ones she had been associated with. She said everyone had duties and they all performed them well.

 **(b) Precinct Assignments –** Chairman Cofer briefly went over the assignments for July 26. The number of registered voters listed on the assignment sheet is active and inactive.

 **(c) Security and access concerns at Coliseum, and to lesser extent, West Bainbridge –** CEO Heard said when she went to assist with the set-up of the DRE machines at the Coliseum for the May 24th Primary, she was concerned with the lack of security for the DRE machines and there were several persons coming in and out of the area where the DREs were located. The Coliseum machines were left there after we were assured by janitorial staff at the Bainbridge Middle School that the area would be locked and secured after the various students and groups were done with their activities. Board Member Beverly Holmes, who was also there that afternoon, said something needs to be done because there was an awful lot of traffic in the front part of the Coliseum where voting takes place. Heard said the main concern is between the times the machines are set up and the time the precinct is opened by the poll workers. As for West Bainbridge, Heard had arranged with inmate supervisor Anthony Strong to set up the DRE machines prior to the 6 a.m. deadline.

Chairman Cofer made a motion authorizing him to hire school resource officers for security for the night of July 25. Motion passed unanimously.

Cofer also said that once the new school superintendent gets settled in that members of the Elections Board and staff should meeting with him. CEO Heard also mentioned that she would like to bring up a program between Bainbridge High School and the Secretary of State’s office, and that the Decatur County Board of Elections would like to assist with and participate in if possible.

 **(B) Surplus inventory of various modems, laptop computer, etc. –** Chairman Cofer said Board members have a list of surplus items, such as modem cards and a laptop computer that doesn’t turn on. In order to sell these items as surplus by the Decatur County Board of Commissioners, members of the Board of Elections must approve it. Chairman Cofer offered a motion that those items listed be forwarded to County Administration for future disposal. Board Member Beverly Holmes seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

 **(C) Overtime hours, etc., policy for Board of Elections staff and other staff policy changes.**

**(a) Change in Chief Elections Official’s status from salaried to hourly, and new compensation for CEO and Clerk of Voter Registration –** Chairman Wendell Cofer said the U.S. Department of Labor has issued new guidelines on salaried employees to take effect Dec. 1, 2016, but the county administration asked Cofer to address the new rule. Cofer said based on a series of tests to determine eligibility for being salaried, Chief Elections Official Carol Heard didn’t meet one of the tests, and she was switched to hourly.

This change in status also led to the need for the development of an overtime policy. Chairman Wendell Cofer said in the many conversations with the county administration that the Board of Elections adopt a no-overtime rule except during those times directly tied to an election cycle, most particularly during the week of an actual election. CEO Heard had developed a draft policy. Cofer said the Elections staff works a 40-hour week, and overtime and flex time must be taken within that 40-hour week. Cofer said contract workers also need to be added to the overtime policy.

Clerk of Voter Registration Linda Walton asked if extra hours worked such as to attend board meetings must be flexed out within that week. Cofer said that is his understanding. CEO Heard asked about the period of advance voting because there are Saturdays involved as well as some extra hours involved in the election. Cofer said there is a certain budget the board has to meet. There are going to be times when there are weeks when emergencies arise and must be flexible when flex time is not feasible. Cofer said the administration has asked the board and its staff to prevent unnecessary overtime.

Board Member Beverly Holmes said the policy did account for the approval of overtime ahead of time with proper approval. She asked if there are opportunities to plan ahead and get approval to earn overtime.

Board Member Keith Sellars said the board needs to have enough discretion to plan ahead and so staff can get paid overtime during the election periods and advance voting. Chairman Cofer asked as an example, this week with advance voting and part-time staff, if it’s possible to flex time. Heard explained some of the limitations on using only flex time during advance voting period and during an election because she schedules the part-time staff as poll managers and workers during advance voting and on Election Day.

Chairman Cofer said the county and board will have to work through each election cycle.

CEO Heard said county Accounting Manager Michele West asked how Heard earned her comp time. Heard said that it was a year ago that she was named Chief Elections Official, and there have been three within the past 12 months since July 2015. Also, Heard said on New Year’s Day she volunteered her time to assist the county with coverage of the flood, claimed comp time after speaking and attending the Martin Luther King Jr. Day event and worked on President’s Day as part of the Presidential Preference Election. Heard also said West told staff that travel time to and from state-mandated conferences is not to be accounted for. However, Heard said she and Clerk of Voter Registration Linda Walton both took comp time for traveling to conferences on Sundays in order to attend the Monday morning starts in Savannah and Athens. Board Member Keith Sellars asked if he understood that staff cannot get compensated for travel time if they travel on a Sunday to arrive in time for a conference on Monday. CEO Heard said that was her understanding. Sellars said he had a problem with that, and that travel time should be compensated. Cofer said elections staff should get compensated for traveling to conferences if traveling on the weekend.

Chairman Cofer said the staff must deal with the three-week election cycle as one part. Cofer said it would be hard to convince him that non-election cycle time can’t be flexed out. He said we should plan as much as possible in advance.

Cofer said the draft of the overtime policy needs to include contract labor. The paragraph dealing with working through a lunch hour and not being able to use some of that as flex time should have the wording “on a routine basis” added to it.

Board Member Beverly Holmes said she wanted to see how this election cycle goes. She said she was dubious of the flex time, but will want to see how it works considering the county mandate to control overtime expenses.

**(b) CEO’s accumulated comp hours –** Chairman Cofer said CEO Heard had approximately 63 hours of comp time when they originally talked. Cofer said Heard had requested that 40 hours be used after the 2016 Election season but prior to the end of the new fiscal year on July 1, 2017, for a tentatively planned trip, and use up the remaining hours as soon as her schedule allows. Heard was down to 51 hours at the time of the meeting. Heard was instructed by Cofer to draft a memo for the Board’s final approval.

**(c) Consideration of further certification for CEO –** Chairman Cofer asked the CEO Heard to explore any other certifications beyond the state certifications. Cofer said he received a link to a national certification website from Heard. He would like to explore the possibility of additional training and instructed CEO Heard to develop a proposal to bring back to the board for further consideration.

The upcoming events were enumerated and discussed.

Board Member Keith Sellars said he has conflict during the week of the Runoff Election, and must be out of town for work.

The Board adjourned by 7:28 p.m.