**Decatur County Board of Elections and Registration**

**Decatur County Board of Commissioners Meeting Room**

**203 W. Broughton Street**

**Bainbridge, GA 39819**

**May 10, 2016**

**Call To Order**

**Administrative Notes**

The monthly meeting of the Decatur County Board of Elections and Voter Registration was called to order by Interim Chairman Willie Lamb at 6:31 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:**

Interim Chairman Willie Lamb Jr. Carol P. Heard (Chief Elections Official)

Beverly W. Holmes Linda Walton (Clerk of Voter Registration)

Keith Sellars Guest: Sonja T. Noble

Gina Burke Poll Managers: Janelle Nelson, Carla Robinson, Margaret Bryant, Charlie Laing, Evelyn Severson-Stubbs and Emma Sales.

**Approve Minutes**

Board Member Keith Sellars made a motion to accept the minutes of the April 12, 2016, meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

**Old Business**

**(A) Budget**

The Board’s budget has 34 percent remaining while there is 17 percent of the fiscal year remaining. The Board also was presented with a copy of the next fiscal year’s budget. Board Member Keith Sellars asked why the proposed retirement contribution is zero. Chief Elections Official Carol Heard said her nor Linda are vested yet. Advertising budget is generous for next year. Board Member Beverly Holmes asked about the overtime budget, which is currently over extended with more overtime hours possible. Holmes asked if we may be deeper in the hole on that line item, and Heard said yes considering the Primary/Nonpartisan General Election is still yet to come. Heard said county officials said the Clerk of Voter Registration needs to stay hourly but there needs to be sufficient overtime in the budget to cover the July and November elections. Heard said elections staff Margaret Bryant, Carla Robinson and Janelle Nelson have been working diligently in making sure not to go into overtime even if they work a 40-hour week.

**New Business**

**(A) Conversation with Secretary of State Inspector Bradford Jones**

Heard reported a conversation with Georgia Secretary of State Inspector Bradford Jones on May 2 in which he said the Secretary of State’s Office has been getting calls about the Sheriff’s race and three persons connected to the Elections Office and the Sheriff. Heard said Chairman Wendell Cofer has recused himself during the last board meeting, and IT manager Roy Reynolds recused himself on May 5 in a letter. Linda Walton is an employee who is married to Sheriff’s Investigator Redell Walton.

Heard had a draft letter to our liaison with the Secretary of State, but didn’t want to send it to the Secretary of State without the board’s and county attorney’s consideration.

Linda Walton expressed her concerns with working in the Elections Office while Investigator Walton works for the Sheriff’s Office. She wanted some direction from the board on whether to recuse herself or to continue working.

Board Member Keith Sellars said the issues raised by those who expressed concern to the Secretary of State’s Office were totally unfounded. Sellars said he is not in support of anyone recusing themselves because the process has checks and balances in place to avoid any conflicts.

Interim Chairman Willie Lamb said board members have taken an oath and they do their jobs diligently. Lamb said he is in agreement with Board Member Sellars.

Board Member Beverly Holmes said members of the board understand the limits of what they can do and know; however, she understands the concerns of Chairman Cofer, Reynolds and Walton in order to keep talk – no matter how unfounded or untrue – at bay to avoid even the appearance of a conflict.

Board Member Gina Burke agreed with Sellars on how ridiculous the concerns raised to the Secretary of State are. She said realty is not what the public sees, but the perception. However, Burke said she didn’t want Walton to recuse herself because this is her job.

Walton said she doesn’t think she should be separated from her job in order to satisfy an unfounded perception.

Holmes said the choice is up to Walton.

After Walton asked Heard her opinion, Heard made the suggestion of not having Walton involved in early tabulation and minimize her duties after 5 p.m. on Election Day. Heard said she is trying to minimize a candidate or candidates questioning the Elections Board or its staff of how we do our jobs based on misconceived notions.

Burke, Sellars and Lamb recommended there be no formal action and the staffing needs on Election Day remain under agreement between Heard and Walton. Heard asked for direction from the board on whether to consult with the county attorney or contact the Secretary of State. The board recommended a meeting with the county attorney be arranged and no letter be sent to the Secretary of State.

On Sunday, May 15, Sterling Widner and Heard are to go to KSU for training on May 16. The board said the training is necessary as a good back-up.

**(B) Election Night Assignments**

 Revised assignments with early tabulation was discussed.

**(C) Changing post-election meeting**

 Board confirmed that Friday, May 27, will be the post-election meeting at 5:30 p.m.

The Board adjourned by 7:15 p.m.