

DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections

Meeting Minutes

August 20, 2022
Porter Sanford Performing Arts & Community Center
Start Time: 10:20 a.m.
End Time: 3:25 p.m.

Board Attendees: Chair Dele Lowman Smith
Vice-Chair Nancy Jester
Susan Motter
Karli Swift

Other Attendees: Keisha Smith, Executive Director
Julietta Henry, Deputy Director
Twyla Hart, Registration Supervisor
Erin Austin, Outreach Coordinator
James Catherwood, Board Liaison
Terry Phillips, Deputy County Attorney
Andrew Wells, Wells Family Initiatives

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Lowman Smith called the meeting to order at 10:20 a.m. Mr. Catherwood read the roll by calling each board member by name. All members except Mr. Lewis were in attendance.

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Ms. Motter, to approve the agenda. The motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Catherwood read the rules for public comments. The following citizens provided public comment:

- Margaret Arnett
- Jane Mezoff
- Vivian Moore
- Sheryl Sterling

ITEMS FOR DECISION

A) Chamblee Election Day Location

Director Smith asked the board to defer this item.

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Ms. Motter, to defer the item to the board's next meeting.

The Director reported that the North DeKalb Senior Center was willing to serve as the Chamblee / Chamblee 2 polling location. The change would be published in the legal organ for two weeks and the board could vote on that location at its next meeting.

In response to a series of questions from the Vice-Chair, the Director reported that both Chamblee and Chamblee 2 were to have been housed at the Public Safety Building; that prior to their temporary move to Chamblee Library, they had been housed at the Public Safety Building for a year; and that to her knowledge, there had had not been any complaints about the location before the last meeting.

Ms. Motter asked for the precinct IDs of the two precincts in question. Mr. Catherwood responded that Chamblee is CE and Chamblee 2 is CZ.

Ms. Motter commented that when she visited the Public Safety Building, she had been concerned by the number of police cars in the parking lot, and that civil rights activists in the sixties had campaigned against such things.

Ms. Motter asked if there would need to be signs directing Chamblee voters to one part of the building and Chamblee 2 to another. Mr. Catherwood responded that the two precincts would vote in the same room on the same equipment.

The motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

B) Advance Voting Change

Director Smith asked to defer this item.

Motion by Ms. Swift, seconded by Ms. Motter, to defer the item.

Director Smith reported that discussions with sites were ongoing and that not all the intended sites had been confirmed. Sites in Stonecrest and the Wade Walker YMCA were being explored.

Ms. Swift referred to a list of sites she had proposed and asked how many sites were ultimately planned. The Director responded that had not seen Ms. Swift's list but that she intended to have between fifteen and twenty.

Ms. Swift asked about the timeline for finalizing the sites. The Director responded that the department would work to finalize the list before the September 9 meeting, which would meet the legal requirements.

Ms. Swift asked if notice had been published for the existing thirteen locations. The Director responded that they had not, but that advance voting locations did not need to be published in the legal organ.

Mr. Phillips amplified the Director's point, stating that election day locations needed to be published in the legal organ, whereas advance voting locations merely needed to be approved by the board at least two weeks in advance.

Vice-Chair Jester asked what sites were being considered beyond the fifteen already mentioned. Ms. Swift responded that there were at least three locations she would send to the department.

Chair Lowman Smith asked about the impact of expanding locations and hours on the department's staffing. The Director responded that ten staffers would be allocated to each site. In the future, the department could consider a model used by some other counties in which separate teams would work on alternate days. However, currently staffers work the entire election.

The Director also reported that staff was in discussions with the ACLU about a pop-up site. Deputy Director Henry added that the discussion so far involved three days of voting at Georgia State. Ms. Austin added that the Decatur Campus was the most likely site.

Ms. Motter raised the issue of drop box allocation. The Director responded that each county is allowed one drop box and an additional box per 100,000 active registered voters. She reported that the county has had six drop boxes and is working to maintain that level through registration activities.

The motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

C) Contracts

i. Integrated Communication Services

Director Smith requested approval and authorization to execute an agreement in a form approved by the County Attorney.

Motion by Ms. Swift to that effect. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Jester.

The Vice-Chair asked if this agreement was to restart the department's relationship with Erik Burton's firm. The Director responded that it was. The Vice-Chair asked if there had been any other bids. The Director responded that she was working with the Director of Procurement on a long-term strategy for this function. However, it was judged that in the short term only Mr. Burton's firm had the existing elections knowledge to begin work immediately.

Mr. Phillips stated that in the view of the Procurement Director, there was an emergency need for an expedited purchase due to the upcoming election.

The Vice-Chair asked how long the contract would last. The Director responded that it would expire in January. The Vice-Chair asked if there would be a competitive bid when this contract expired. The Director responded that there would, and that the department would also pursue hiring a public relations manager internally.

Ms. Motter stated for the public that the contract language had been published with the agenda materials on the department's website and that the exact expiration date of the contract was January 22, 2023.

Ms. Motter mentioned an incorrect address in the contract. Mr. Phillips responded that details of that type could be corrected as part of the County Attorney's approval process given in the motion.

Chair Lowman Smith commented on the difficulty of hiring this type of service and hoped the board could discuss how to maintain continuity in this area without violating procurement guidelines.

The motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

ii. Election Management System

Director Smith requested approval and authorization to execute an agreement with one of two vendors in a form approved by the County Attorney.

Motion by Ms. Swift to that effect. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Jester.

Ms. Swift asked if there would be a presentation on the vendors beyond the items in the agenda materials. The Director responded that none was planned.

Ms. Swift asked if the agreement could wait until the next meeting. The Director responded next meeting would be too late for this election. She stated this was part of the department's effort to identify systems to mitigate manual errors. There had been five vendors considered, and the two

given had been identified over the course of several meetings and with input from the IT Department.

Ms. Swift asked if the Law Department had reviewed the documents. Mr. Phillips responded that a member of the Law Department had done so, but that he had not seen what changes had been recommended, if any.

Ms. Swift asked about two provisions in one document involving confidentiality and Virginia law. Mr. Phillips responded that provisions of that type would be flagged by the Law Department prior to approval due to the necessity of complying with Georgia election law and open records requirements.

Vice-Chair Jester asked if open records requirements would prevail regardless of the terms of any contract. Mr. Phillips responded that they would. A vendor's only option would be to obtain an order from a Georgia court releasing the department from open records requirements.

The Vice-Chair thanked the Director for bringing this request to the board and asked for more information about future procurements, including when they had been advertised, a complete list of vendors who responded, and a rubric listing what criteria were used to judge the responses including the weights given to each criterion.

The Director responded that in this case, the department had not had the funds to pursue this project earlier and in fact still did not have final approval for the funds in the mid-year budget. Given the timing of the request relative to the election, this procurement had also been pursued on an emergency basis. However, she could provide a list of vendors who had been considered and the criteria that had been expected.

Ms. Motter asked for a side-by-side comparison of the vendors including various important features. She asked if the Director preferred one of the two options. The Director responded that there were differing opinions in the department, but that the two systems were similar.

Ms. Motter asked if the board was being asked to choose which option would be selected. After a discussion, Vice-Chair Jester offered a friendly amendment to clarify that the board would authorize the Director to select one of the two options given. Ms. Swift accepted the amendment.

The motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

Motion by Vice-Chair Jester, seconded by Ms. Motter, to recess for five minutes in preparation for the facilitated discussion. The motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

FACILITATED DISCUSSION: STRATEGIC PLANNING

Motion by Ms. Swift, seconded by Vice-Chair Jester, to resume the meeting. The motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

For the remainder of the meeting Andrew Wells facilitated a discussion of the department's strategic objectives. Mr. Wells addressed the board's vision, values, and mission, followed by inspiration and implementation of the beginnings of a strategic plan.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Swift, seconded by Vice-Chair Jester, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried by a vote of 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

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