

BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

MEET: Time 6:00          6/7/22

Where: Community Room at the Police Department

**Present:** Elisabeth Mickenberg, Grace Grundhauser, Michelle Lefkowitz, Jim Rader, Kate Baldwin, Helen Rock, Annie Schneider

**Absent:** Charles Cashatt, Martha Gile, Larry Granillo, Mike McGarghan, Thea Knight, Youth Member Rebecca Cunningham

**Also Present:** Councilor Sarah Carpenter

**Meeting called to order by Chair Elisabeth Mickenberg at 6:05pm**

**Agenda:** Approved unanimously. Helen moves to move City Councilor Sarah Carpenter's presentation up to public comment. All in favor, none opposed.

**Meeting Length:** The meeting length was set for 1 hour.

**Minutes:** Kate moves to accept minutes from 5/3/22. Michelle seconded. All in favor. None opposed. Minutes approved.

**Public Comments:** Sarah Carpenter, Ward 4 City Councilor, spoke about resurrecting the issue of non-citizen voting. That first came up in end of 2019. At beginning of COVID, decision on council to defer. There it sat for two years. New council interest in bringing forward. Subsequently Montpelier and Winooski have enacted it as Charter Change approved by legislature. We can look at their language. Montpelier doesn't do schoolboard members - theirs is narrow. Burlington's will look more like Winooski. Charter change committee committed to do more outreach in cooperation with CEDO Trusted Community Voices program (translating services). Intended for March 2023 election.

Helen asks, did Winooski and Montpelier work with attorneys for language? Sarah Carpenter responded: our city former city Attorney Dan Richardson came from Montpelier and essentially wrote their ordinance. As happens, charter committee also has two attorneys - Gene and Ben.

The current version of the charter change language is a draft. If the final version is approved in March 2023 it won't get out of legislature till May 2023. Then the council has to affirmatively adopt the change and any other ordinance language that goes on it. There probably won't need to be ordinance language around this, but rather there will need to be administrative procedures developed within the city clerk's office. Sarah Montgomery spoke to the clerk's from Winooski and Montpelier and learned that they do not have huge numbers of people signing up. She did learn that it has been a bit of an administrative burden on the clerk's office –but not huge. We also know that non-citizen voters cannot be incorporated into the Vermont Election Management System (VEMS) since these residents would only be permitted to vote in local elections. The soonest a noncitizen voter could vote is after July 1, 2023.

Lis Mickenberg asked if the ballots would be translated into more language for this population. Sarah Carpenter responded that she doesn't know yet, but the charter change committee is in communications with the Trusted Community Voices, and she hopes they will move forward to increase translations.

Jim Radar asked if there can be alternative language instead of calling them "non-citizen" voters. Could they be called city voters? BRV suggests to Sarah that they use more inclusive language. Annie suggests "all resident voting" as Winooski uses. Jim asks if there can be language about acknowledging Burlington citizenship. Lis expresses that BRV wants language to be positive and sensitive to how it plays out in public. Annie shares an issue that has come up in Winooski is many worry about a question in the citizenship interview about whether one has ever voted in an American election, and if they answer yes, they can't be citizens. The numbers of people voting this way are very low because of this concern. An attorney Winooski consulted confirmed this is a gray area. Technically they can answer no to this question because it's not a federal election but local, but it is a gray area and a cause for some concern.

Sarah expresses that this is helpful feedback she plans to use in preparing a FAQ. Annie cautions that FAQs are of limited use to non-English-speaking population. Sarah clarifies this document could be for trainers or volunteers, NPAs. Annie and Helen recommend Sarah check out resources available through VT Secretary of State. They and Lis recommend live events with translators to get info to public. Parent University at Burlington High School could be a good resource, as could the VTSOS.

Helen asks Annie to recount the issue in Winooski about these voters being required to vote at City Hall because of a separate checklist. Flagged as potential issue. Purpose was to check status, and not have outside volunteers handling paperwork. These voters needed to produce two forms of residency proof and to show these to City Clerk directly. Sarah asks, don't we have to do that in Burlington. BRV: no. Helen clarifies that you don't have to show documentation of residency to register to vote unless you mail in registration. If you register in person or online, you don't have to produce documentation proving address. Annie says Winooski offered this same-day, but had City Clerk sitting there doing it all day. Winooski polls are one place. This would not work in Burlington. Lis thinks this is a good point; people should be able to vote this way and same-day register. Sarah concludes by encouraging folks to contact her or Gene Bergman. They are coming up with outreach plan over summer and fall.

Helen brings up another concern, about confusing among general voting population in Burlington especially students about voting in local elections versus their home state. Helen's experience is that many are told incorrectly they can vote in both, e.g. for a city council race. Once you register in Burlington you can't vote in home state. It's a concept that confuses people. Annie asks if someone is on a noncitizen list in Montpelier and moves to Burlington how we would manage that. Helen thinks this would really impact a voter who may not realize they have to reregister after moving. Sarah asks if city clerks notice clerks outside Vermont of voters moving here and BRV answers yes, they do. Michelle clarifies when people register they answer a question about where they registered last.

Helen asks Sarah whether there is a plan to directly reach out to people in populations who would vote this way. Sarah responds that they are trying to use networks to reach these people directly, with help

from Jillian at CEDO. Helen asks if Mohammed is still involved and Annie responds no, he moved out of state. Sarah asks us to keep an eye out for volunteers.

### **Approval of Applications:**

Sarah Montgomery was absent but sent a report prior to the meeting:

May - New Registrations 154, Transferred out of Town 136, Purged 52

Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to accept the numbers as presented, seconded by Helen Rock. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Application Signing Schedule:**

Lis moves us on to application signing schedule. Grace signs up for the 9<sup>th</sup>, Kate for the 30<sup>th</sup>, Helen for the 16<sup>th</sup>. Nobody can make the 23<sup>rd</sup>. We hope Sarah can put email out for people to respond about the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Clerk's Report**

Lis notes point in Sarah's report about interactive maps changing, and that this will be interesting for the BRV and elections. We don't know what it looks like yet. If they do 12 wards, the size of the BRV will increase. That gets done through a charter change. Helen asks if this is being discussed in the Ward 2 3 NPA and Lis says she thinks so.

Helen asks when VTSOS is sending postcards and whether we know that state is managing them and whether city will not. Lis thinks it would be confusing for two cards to be sent. Jim agrees. Lis notes potential for another round of address discrepancies with the return service requested. Helen worries people are used to ballots being mailed automatically. Lis wonders if Sarah and City of Burlington will publicize info beyond the postcards. Helen thinks CEDO's FPF post buried the info last election. Helen suggests postcard should say prominently "we are not mailing ballots." Lis points out that it's confusing to people that they will need to mail all party ballots back they receive in primary, voted and unvoted. BRV thinks that's a good question—whether they contact that person about potentially spoiled ballot. Annie believes a lot of people are going to throw out unused ballots. Helen wants the BRV to do everything we can as far as outreach. Grace asks whether BRV officially encourages City of Burlington to make announcements to supplement State materials and to do what we the BRV can for outreach. Yes. Annie asks whether BRV can issue press releases. Lis would like to put this question to Sarah.

### **New Business**

Lis brings up question of next meetings. The election is actually second Tuesday of August, so we CAN have meeting before election. BRV thinks July meeting is still a good idea, to enact some of the election outreach. Everyone present other than Jim will be able to work August 9 election.

Jim takes opportunity to say how much he has enjoyed being on BRV and he really feels good about new membership.

Michelle wonders if we should do something as a board for Amy for the new baby. BRV says yes.

Kate suggests moving July meeting to second Tuesday so more BRV members can attend. First Monday isn't good because of the holiday. BRV would like Sarah to shift the meeting to July 12 and post the required notice. Please also notice the August 2 meeting.

### **Board Appointments**

Lis: now we go to Board Chair discussion. Lis doesn't remember the process. Kate reminds us that we discussed last meeting that July is when we will nominate. Lis says if we don't have a quorum we can do the following meeting. Michelle can run meeting in Lis's absence if necessary since she is Vice Chair. Grace expresses interest in serving as Chair. Kate thinks until next Chair is established, new board will have this discussion with the new Chair about rotating the Chair role. The new Chair will decide whether to bring it up as an agenda item.

Helen wonders about appointment of new members. Do we have any info and how process works? Lis says they do interview people but not always. There are four openings and four applications. Helen reached out to people trying to drum up more diverse candidate than herself and nobody could think of anyone. Tried reaching out to several people and places. Grace also did some outreach, to some interfaith communities wondering about Republican interest. Helen reached out to find people of different backgrounds, regardless of political affiliation. Lis reminds us that Republican membership—three—is necessary.

Lis wants to say her role of coordinating coverage of election has nothing to do with her chair role, so she wants to continue doing that. Lis encourages BRV members to see if they have people to help with election. Lis asks us to let her know a little earlier than usual about our helpers for the August election. Member have no idea what polls are going to be like. Helen imagines a bigger turnout and Annie agrees. Helen expresses hope people running for office will do outreach.

Helen asks did Rebecca convince anyone to take her place? Lis believes that's a CEDO task. BRV unsure.

On a motion by Kate Baldwin, seconded by Grace Grundhauser, the meeting was adjourned.