

BOARD FOR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

MEET: Time 6:00 9/6/22

Where: Community Room at the Police Department

Present: Grace Grundhauser, Michelle Lefkowitz, Kate Baldwin, Helen Rock, Annie Schneider, Larry Granillo, Thea Knight, Karen Rowell, Elisabeth Mickenberg

Absent: Charles Cashatt, Mike McGarghan, Martha Gile

Also Present: Sarah Montgomery, Associate City Clerk; Gene Bergman, Ward 2 City Councilor

Meeting called to order by Chair Grace Grundhauser at 6:02pm

Agenda: Grace Grundhauser suggested moving public forum up to allow Gene Bergman to speak first. Thea Knight made a motion to approve agenda as amended. Seconded by Lis Mickenberg. Approved unanimously.

Public Comments: Gene Bergman, Ward 2 City Councilor and Chair of the Charter Change Committee, joined to share information about two election related items that the Charter Change Committee is addressing: All legal resident voting and siting of polling places. As charter currently reads, polling places must be located within each ward. There are sometimes difficulties finding appropriate polling places within a ward which is why the committee is taking up the issue of the of siting polling places. This difficulty may be added to when the city redistricting happens and the redistricting committee asked the charter change committee to look into the flexibility of the siting of polling places – could they potentially be placed outside of the ward where voters live? The charter change committee has also discussed consolidating polling places, such as combining ward 4 and ward 7 into a single location, but has since directed the conversation toward the siting of polling places instead. This could potentially allow a polling place to be placed within proximity of a ward instead of requiring it be in the ward. A charter change would be required to allow for this. Discussions have been had in consultation with ward clerks and inspectors and also staff from the clerk's office.

Thea Knight asked is this being looked at because of challenges with availability or for economic reasons. Gene Bergman replied that he is not entirely sure since he wasn't involved in the initial conversations that brought this about. His sense is that it is a combination of the two things, but mostly it is from a need to find appropriate locations for polling places. BRV members asked: haven't the polling places been the same for years? Gene Bergman answered, yes, but the city redistricting is going to add additional stress to finding suitable polling places within a ward. For example, in the redistricting, ward 6 may no longer contain Edmunds to use as a polling place. The charter proposal would not set any polling places, but it would allow the BCA or City Council, in consultation with the clerk's office, to make the decision to designate a polling place outside of a ward.

Grace Grundhauser asked if it was correct that either way the polling places could change as a result of city redistricting, but that what the proposed charter change would allow is for a polling place to be

designated outside of the ward if needed. Gene Bergman answered, yes, but the current proposal language does not have language that states polling places would only be located outside of the ward *if needed*. That would be more limiting language and if that is something the BRV board would like to see included, that would be an important distinction.

Helen Rock commented on the timing of the charter proposal. Gene Bergman explained that the charter change would require a city wide vote and then, if approved by the city, it would go to the legislature. He also noted that the city will be voting on the city redistricting lines in March and that the siting of polling places would be a separate charter change proposal that would work in tandem with the redistricting to allow for polling places to be found.

Helen Rock and Lis Mickenberg both noted there had been challenges to finding polling places in the past.

Grace Grundhauser asked Gene Bergman if the board can discuss it more at the next meeting and communicate back to him after that. Gene Bergman agreed that would work and that it would be most powerful if the board could communicate as a group, but the charter change committee would also welcome individual comments from members.

Previous Meeting Minutes: Lis Mickenberg noted that the August election schedule was not accurate and asked that it be removed from the minutes. Thea Knight made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Kate Baldwin seconded. Unanimously approved.

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

Approval of Applications: Sarah Montgomery reported:

August - New Registrations 450, Transferred out of Town 353, Purged 142

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

Clerk's Report:

Sarah Montgomery reported 9,251 votes were cast at the recent primary election. The clerk's office is now preparing for the upcoming election on November 8th. The general election ballot will include all state candidates and questions, as well as a local school bond question and our Burlington Justice of the Peace candidates. This ballot will be automatically mailed to all active registered voters no later than September, 26th. In addition to this ballot, there will be a separate ballot with a single CSWD Bond vote question on it. This ballot will not be mailed to voters automatically and voters who would like to have it mailed to them must request it – online at mvp.vermont.gov or via the city clerk's office. While this is something that may be confusing for voters, CSWD was unable to mail their ballot automatically due to restrictions in statute.

Application Signing Schedule:

The Board set the following schedule until the next meeting is held: September 8th: Michelle; September 15th: Grace; September 22nd: Larry; September 29th: Karen

Primary Election Review

Grace Grundhauser and Larry Granillo both noted that it was a busy day. Michelle Lefkowitz agreed and said that she had some difficulty with VEMS – she wanted to get set up on two devices, and was able to login to her computer, but then unable to login to her iPad. Helen Rock said that she was able to login to two separate computers with her single login. Thea Knight said that she got through her first day on her own and was very grateful for the help and support of Arianna who was with her. Helen Rock noted that there seemed to be some confusion among election officials when directing voters to their correct district. Some workers were trying to deduce it based on the maps rather than the street listings and were making some errors causing voters to be bounced around. Michelle Lefkowitz told about a situation where a voter insisted they should be registered in one district but the interactive map indicated they were in a different district. The map was correct. Larry Granillo noted that the higher volume of voter challenges that has been done recently has led to more voters coming to a ward that they are no longer eligible to vote in since they need to sign the affirmation of residence before voting. Michelle Lefkowitz asked about the legality of where a voter can vote. Helen Rock stated that there is some confusing language in the draft procedures about where a voter is eligible to vote. Lis Mickenberg asked how the helpers worked out for the BRV members and wondered what folks anticipate needing for help in November. Helen Rock noted that it would also be helpful to hear from the helpers how their experience was. Annie Schneider noted that an election official in the ward she was working in thought a voter needed to fill out a voter registration form and an affirmation of residence form because they had a manual that said that. She told them that was not necessary. Helen Rock asked if BRV members need to have voters fill out an affirmation of domicile form and an address change form if they have moved to a new address within the city. Sarah Montgomery answered no, just the affirmation form is enough and the address will be updated if there is a new address listed on that form.

Michelle Lefkowitz made a motion to continue the meeting beyond the hour so the discussion could continue. Seconded by Kate Baldwin. Unanimous.

Larry Granillo further explained scenarios of when and how to use the affirmation of domicile form. Ex: If a ward 3 voter is challenged, but still resides at the same address, they just need an affirmation of domicile form. If a ward 3 voter is challenged and lives at a different address within ward 3, they will be all set after completing an affirmation of domicile form. If a ward 3 voter is challenged, has a new address in ward 1 where they are trying to vote, they need an affirmation of domicile form and the BRV member also needs to do a BRV to Ward Clerk form so they can be added to the ward 1 checklist.

Lis Mickenberg and Kate Baldwin asked: who should be doing the affirmation forms? BRV members or ward clerks? Grace Grundhauser noted that this may be a similar case to who can do same day registration – the authority is specifically outlined. Sarah Montgomery will look into who legally holds this authority to do so. Larry Granillo noted that one of the logistical considerations of this is that there

are now many more challenged voters so this comes up more than it used to, and also that it may streamline the process if it is BRV members who are handling the affirmations.

Helen Rock asked if the board could talk about when to ask for identification from a voters and wants to make sure all members are well trained on how to speak to voters and respond to certain questions. Grace Grundhauser said voter identification will be a topic discussed more thoroughly at the next meeting.

Michelle Lefkowitz noted that there were some strange glitches happening in VEMS on Election Day. Helen Rock agreed – she found errors on two voters’ dates of birth.

Larry Granillo noted a unique situation in his ward where a voter died after submitting a defective ballot. Because of the death notice the voter was purged from the checklist, but needed to temporarily be added back on Election Day to account for his ballot.

Kate Baldwin said she had a former Burlington resident who had just moved that she had to turn away because she was no longer a Burlington resident. This brought up discussion about when a former resident becomes ineligible to vote after they have moved. Sarah Montgomery will look into this.

New Business

Grace Grundhauser announced that Martha Gile has given her resignation from the board.

On a motion by Michelle Lefkowitz, seconded by Karen Rowell, the meeting was adjourned at 7:24pm.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Sarah Montgomery, Associate City Clerk