



PICKENS COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS & REGISTRATION

July 19th, 2022

Board of Elections & Registration Chair Joe Walker called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

I. ATTENDANCE

Board:

Joe Walker
Mike Carver
Rebecca Cantrell
Larry Brown
Terry Franzen (Via Facetime)

County Staff in attendance:

Phil Landrum- County Attorney
Stacey Godfrey- Supervisor

Others in attendance:

Max Caylor- Pickens County Progress
Mari Livsey- KnowPickens
David Oles
Gary Norman
Patrick Chkoreff
A host of other Pickens County Residents

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pickens County Board of Elections led the pledge of allegiance.

III. MINUTES

A motion was made by Larry Brown, seconded by Rebecca Cantrell, to adopt the minutes from the June 8th Regular Scheduled Meeting, June 23rd Special Called Meeting, and the June 30th Special Called Meeting. Members Mike Carver, Rebecca Cantrell, & Larry Brown voted 3 (Yes), to 0 (No) to approve the minutes. Terry Franzen abstained.

IV. AGENDA

A motion was made by Mike Carver, seconded by Larry Brown, to amend the agenda under new business, item D & E, to add the language “to be written by council to unseal the May 24th Primary ballots”. A motion was made by Mike Carver, seconded by Larry Brown, to approve the proposed agenda. Members Mike Carver, Barbara Terry Franzen, Rebecca Cantrell, & Larry Brown voted 4 (Yes), to 0 (No) to approve the agenda. The vote was unanimous.

V. OLD BUSINESS

NONE

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. City of Nelson Special Election

Supervisor Stacey Godfrey informed the Board that Martha Tipton resigned from the Nelson City Council. After looking reviewing the city’s charter, it has been concluded that a Special Election will be necessary to fill her position. The request for the municipality to ask for this Special Election in conjunction with the November General Election is within the correct time frame. Ms. Godfrey asked the board to put it to a vote.

A motion was made by Larry Brown, seconded by Rebecca Cantrell, to hold the Special Election for the City of Nelson in conjunction with the November General Election. Members Mike Carver, Terry Franzen, Rebecca Cantrell, and Larry Brown voted 4 (Yes), to 0 (No) to approve the Special Election. The vote was unanimous.

B. Risk Limiting Audit Results for June Runoff Election

Supervisor Stacey Godfrey presented the board with the results from the Risk Limiting Audit for the June Runoff. She explained that the audit was done through Arlo which is the company contracted by the SOS. The audit was done on the Democratic ballot because it was the only ballot that was in all twelve precincts for the runoff election. The ballot had four races and we selected the race at random which ended up being the Secretary of State. Because there was such a low turnout of voters for the runoff election all the Democratic ballots had to be counted. In all, 170 votes were tabulated for that ballot. The final tabulation that we had once the audit was completed was 169 votes. Ms. Godfrey said the difference was one and could have been due to human error in counting. She provided the board with an audit guide provided by Arlo to help with any questions they might have in reading the results.

C. Board Discussion on Executive Sessions & What Is Discussed

Attorney Phil Landrum explained the reasons why a board would need to go into Executive Session. He said that you cannot take any action in Executive Session unless it pertains to real estate. Mr. Landrum said minutes are taken for the Executive Session and kept confidential and can only be opened under a judge’s order.

D. Board Discussion on Court Order to Be Written by Counsel to Unseal the May 24th Primary Ballots

Mike Carver addressed the board and the public stating that this board took an oath to ensure that elections are fair, accurate, and completed with the highest level of integrity. He stated that he had been in contact with Cherokee County on the process in which they went about getting a judge to sign off on an order written by their legal counsel. Mr. Carver implored the board to search their hearts in the name of voter confidence and voter transparency and to not let the fear of the unknown stop them from doing what is right. He then said unsealing the ballots should be a difficult decision and a rare event, and that future requests should only be granted on a case-by-case basis and not because of unpopular results.

Terry Franzen said the election has been properly done and the results have been certified. The law requires that the elections office test all the equipment before the election, and it was found that all machines were tabulating correctly. Ms. Franzen said there are many procedures to ensure the security of the machines and the elections. While she understands that there are some people who do not trust the machines, this is the law, and she does not feel like it is up to Pickens County to decide that our county will do this audit. Ms. Franzen then stated that doing this tabulation would not change the results of the election and she does not think that it is authorized under the law as a board to ask to petition the court when there has been no showing of fraud or mistake.

Larry Brown stated that people are just not comfortable with this equipment. He said by us asking the court to open the ballots to allow us to do this, the county would verify the results and set peoples mind at ease.

E. Board Vote on Court Order to Be Written by Counsel to Unseal the May 24th Primary Ballots

Mike Carver made a motion, seconded by Larry Brown, to write a court order to be written by legal counsel to unseal the May 24th Primary ballots. Members Mike Carver, Rebecca Cantrell, and Larry Brown voted 3 (Yes), to Terry Franzen 1 (No) to have the order written.

VII. STAFF COMMENTS

Supervisor Stacey Godfrey notified the board that we now have a new liaison, Akyn Bailey, who was a previous Elections Director from White County. Ms. Godfrey said she and Rhonda Waggoner would be attending a regional meeting in Gordon County on Wednesday. She let the board know that qualifying for the Nelson City Council Special Election would start on Monday August 1st at 8:30 am and continue until Wednesday August 3rd at 4:30 pm. Ms. Godfrey reminded the board and the public that the 1st day to accept Absentee Ballot Applications for the November General Election would be August 22 at the new office on Camp Road. She then gave an update on the progress of the new office. Lastly, Ms. Godfrey wanted to congratulate Rhonda Waggoner on her milestone of one year working for the Pickens County Board of Elections and Registration Office.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

David Oles congratulated the board on taking this important step.

Gary Norman said that the board tonight enhanced their trust and credibility with the citizens of Pickens County.

Patrick Chkoreff stated that the decision the board made was not futile. He said we need to find out if there are any problems. If there are no problems, that information is valuable too.

IX. BOARD COMMENTS

Chairman Joe Walker thanked Phil Landrum for all the work he has put into researching this matter.

Larry Brown said the board members had put in a lot of hours, phone calls, and discussion to get to the point of having the vote tonight.

X. ADJOURN

Motion made by Larry Brown, seconded by Mike Carver, to adjourn the meeting at 7:06 p.m. Members Mike Carver, Terry Franzen, Rebecca Cantrell, & Larry Brown voted unanimously 4 (Yes), to 0 (No) to adjourn the meeting.