

CITY OF SUFFOLK ELECTORAL BOARD MINUTES
MARCH 9, 2021

CALL TO ORDER:

Erin Rice, Chairman, called to order the telephone conference call meeting of the City of Suffolk Electoral Board at 9:05 a.m., on Tuesday, March 9, 2021. This meeting was monitored by Charlie Harcum, Network Manager of the Information Technology Department for the City of Suffolk. The telephone call was necessitated by the Covid-19 virus and under the guidelines presented by Governor Northam.

ROLL CALL:

The following persons were in attendance on the conference call:

Erin Rice, Isaac Baker, Beverly Outlaw, Lester Ward, Susan Saunders, James Banks, Miller Carey, Jimmy Larue, Ashley Mercer, Debbie Williams and Charlie Harcum as monitor of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:

Ms. Saunders read the minutes from the February 2, 2021 meeting and Rev. Baker moved that the minutes be approved as read. Ms. Outlaw seconded the motion.

Ms. Saunders read the minutes from the February 12, 2021 Special Meeting and Ms. Outlaw made a motion to approve the minutes as read and Rev. Banks seconded the motion.

Ms. Rice requested that Ms. Saunders relay to the Board information regarding electronic recording of the minutes. Ms. Saunders responded that she had contacted both the city's IT Department and the Media Department and was advised that the minutes would be recorded electronically and be available on the department's website after the meeting was concluded.

Ms. Outlaw made a motion that the Board change the order of the agenda in order to allow Ms. Deborah Williams, Enterprise Systems Manager for the City of Suffolk, an opportunity to advise the Board of new designs and updates to the Registrar's website. Rev. Baker seconded the motion. Ms. Williams reported that she coordinated her efforts with staff member, Ms. Cameron Butler and Ms. Saunders, to make the department's website more user friendly and easier for viewing from the general public. Ms. Outlaw thanked Mr. Miller Carey for bringing to the board's attention issues that could be improved upon, thus prompting action for a positive, productive redesign of the site.

Ms. Rice made a motion that the agenda be changed to allow Mr. James Banks to report on the status of the Holland Precinct. The motion was seconded by Ms. Outlaw. Mr.

Banks stated that he had been in contact with Mr. Holland and Councilman Tim Johnson and they advised that they had discussed this with the School Superintendent and determined that Pioneer Elementary School would be a good site for a polling place. Ms. Outlaw thanked Mr. Banks, but pointed out the decision for polling site locations is determined by city council. She stated that she hoped the Holland Community House site would be available for the June Primary and moved for the November Election. Mr. Banks stated that it would not be available for any more elections. Ms. Outlaw instructed Ms. Saunders to coordinate with Azeez Felder, the interim Chief of Staff for the City of Suffolk (incorrectly identified as Al Moor, then corrected) and made a motion for Ms. Saunders to obtain the forms in order to begin the process of changing the site, including having the item placed on the agenda for the next city council meeting. Rev. Baker seconded the motion and the motion carried by a vote of 3-0.

Ms. Rice inquired as to the Salvation Army location of the Olde Towne Precinct. She pointed out that there was an issue in November. Ms. Saunders stated that the issue was concerning a food distribution at that location at the same time as the election. She will follow up with a call to the Salvation Army.

Ms. Rice reported on the Risk Limiting Audit conducted on February 24, 2021 in the Voter Registration Office. She stated that she was in attendance and participated in the process, which results confirmed the results of the November 3, 2021 Election for Suffolk. The statewide results may be viewed on the Department of Elections website.

Ms. Rice addressed the use of ballot drop boxes. Ms. Saunders will check with the Department of Elections to see if in the situation of a dual party primary election, there needed to be one ballot box per election. One designated for the Democratic Election and one designated for the Republican Election.

Ms. Rice directed the Board's discussion to temporary and/or satellite offices for voting prior to elections. Ms. Outlaw suggested that it was not needed for the upcoming Primary, as the turnout is lower than during a general election and to have further discussion on the subject at the next meeting.

Ms. Rice stated that there will be a work group to determine how to breakdown votes received in early/absentee voting and how that break down occurs.

Rev. Baker inquired as the status of the redistricting and if there would be any changes prior to the November 2021 Election. Ms. Saunders stated that she had not received any information from the Department of Elections regarding the redistricting. Ms. Outlaw and Ms. Rice replied that they had not received any official statements.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Rice asked if anyone had any public comments.

Mr. Miller Carey identified himself and stated that he spoke with Ms. Beverly Outlaw regarding the taking of the minutes of the Electoral Board meetings. He said that in accord with the Code and Handbook, the minutes should be taken by the Secretary of the Electoral Board and should reflect the performance of the Registrar and staff and it is the closest the public can have for accountability of the Registrar and staff. As far as delegating duties, he referred to Code Section 24.2-114, where it says that the Registrar shall carry out other duties as prescribed by the electoral board in her capacity as the director of elections for the locality in which she serves. He further stated that if there are public concerns they should be memorialized in the minutes. Ms. Outlaw commented that the registrar was taking the minutes prior to her being appointed as secretary of the board so it was already established when she took the office. Further, this issue was brought up in a meeting four years ago before a panel of attorneys and it was determined that Registrars would be able to take the minutes of an Electoral Board meeting. She also commented that the State Board was contacted after this issue was brought up and they replied that the registrar could be delegated to take the minutes. Ms. Saunders will forward the email response from liason, Zakia Williams of the Department of Elections to the Board and Mr. Carey. Rev. Baker suggested that this issue be tabled and discussed at the next board meeting in order to do further research.

Ms. Rice asked if there were any additional comments from the public. Mr. Carey replied that he did have an additional question regarding the availability of an electronic recording of the minutes. Ms. Saunders replied that it would be posted on the website immediately after the meeting. Mr. Carey thanked everyone for all they do and thanked Ms. Saunders for updating the website, adding that it was improved and now user friendly.

There being no additional comments from the public, Ms. Outlaw moved that the Electoral Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia convene in closed session pursuant to Section 24.2-653(B) of the Code of Virginia for the purpose of discussing matters concerning personnel issues. Mr. Baker seconded the motion and the motion carried by a vote of 3-0.

Ms. Outlaw moved that the Electoral Board for the City of Suffolk, Virginia, certify that the only matters discussed in the closed session just concluded were the matters concerning personnel issues as directed by Section 24.2-653(B) of the Code of Virginia, and as identified in the motion to close the meeting pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

ADJOURNMENT:

Rev. Baker made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Outlaw seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m. The next Electoral Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 9:00 a.m., via a telephone conference call.

Erin Rice, Chairman

Rev. Isaac Baker, Vice Chairman

Beverly Outlaw, Secretary