

Election Board Meeting
September 6, 2023

The Monroe County Board of Elections held a meeting on September 6, 2023 in the Commissioners' Public Meeting Room at the Monroe County Administration Center with the following present: Chairperson John R. Moyer, Board member Lauren Peterson, Board member Peter Gardner, Solicitor John Dunn, Director of Voter Registration Sara May-Silfee, Deputy Director of Voter Registration Penny Robson, and public attendees.

Chairperson Moyer called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Chairperson Moyer explained that the Election Board meetings will be video recorded on a trial basis until December 2023. In January the new Board of Commissioners can decide if it would like to continue with video recording or it can go back to the way it was previously.

Chairperson Moyer stated that Mrs. May-Silfee had spoken to the other counties in the Commonwealth regarding who hold monthly public Election Board meetings. There are only three other counties who have monthly meetings. Most of the counties only have 4 Election Board meetings a year. Chairperson Moyer stated that the new Board of Commissioners can decide if it would like to continue having monthly or possibly less frequent Election Board meetings. Chairperson Moyer stated that the meeting will be video recorded from the beginning until the end, including public comment. The video recorded is not accessible while it's being recorded, but it will be posted to the website after the meeting.

Motion by Board member Gardner, seconded by Board member Peterson to approve the minutes of the Election Board meeting held on August 2, 2023. Motion carried.

Mrs. May-Silfee stated that she is working on the ballots and she is waiting for the state to certify, which is expected by the end of September. Once the state certifies, the ballots will be prepared and mailed; she would like to have the ballots mailed out during the first week of October. The party chairs will be informed if the ballots will be mailed earlier or later than the first week of October.

Mrs. May-Silfee stated that she has received complaints from 4 polling places regarding the "I Voted" stickers handed to voters, because some of the stickers wind up being stuck to the floor and are not cleaned up. One of the proposed Middle Smithfield splits, which would result in a polling place at the Middle Smithfield Presbyterian Church, is meeting resistance because of the Church's concern with the I Voted stickers. Mrs. May-Silfee stated that she informed the church that she would have the floor cleaned if needed. She is waiting to hear back from them as the Church was going to have another meeting regarding whether we would allowed to use their facility as a polling place. Board member Gardner asked Mrs. May-Silfee if she could possibly hand out a piece of paper with I Voted on it instead of a sticker in facilities expressing this concern. Mrs. May-Silfee stated that would possibly work. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the I Voted stickers. Chairperson Moyer stated that the stickers can be handed out where there are no issues and an I Voted card can be handed out at the 4 polling places who have issues with the stickers.

Chairperson Moyer asked Mrs. May-Silfee for an update on splitting Middle Smithfield East, Middle Smithfield West and Tunkhannock. Mrs. May-Silfee stated that she is waiting a call back from Linda Sue Lewis from the Middle Smithfield Presbyterian Church to let her know if the elections could be held at their facility. If the Middle Smithfield Presbyterian Church will allow us to use their facility Middle Smithfield East would be split into 2 polling locations, which would be at the Middle Smithfield Community Center and the Middle Smithfield Presbyterian Church. Middle Smithfield West would be split into 2 polling locations, which would be at the Middle Smithfield Municipal Building and the Church of Saint John's. Mrs. May-Silfee stated that on August 31st she and Penny Robson went to the Church of Saint John's to look at the room, which is large enough to have the elections held in it, and the voters would have their own entrance from the parking lot. Tunkhannock would be split into 2 polling locations, which would be at the Tunkhannock Township Municipal Building and the Tunkhannock Township Fire Company. Mrs. May-Silfee stated that the new polling locations would take effect in 2024.

During public comment, Theresa Pesce expressed a concern that the Electronic Poll Books can be hacked, exposing voter information online. Ms. Pesce cited a section of the Election Code regarding the need for accuracy and security. She further expressed a belief that information is placed online on Election Day, and if the poll books are not online, why is money given to Cyber Security. Mrs. May-Silfee stated that Patricia Clancy, Director of the County IT Department would be able to answer her IT questions. However, Mrs. May-Silfee stated, the electronic poll books are not hooked up to the internet. Ms. Pesce stated her research indicates that the poll books are hooked up to the internet and have been hacked in the past. She will provide her research to Mrs. May-Silfee to review. Board member Gardner asked Mrs. May-Silfee if the Department of State approved the Electronic poll books. Mrs. May-Silfee stated that the Electronic poll books are certified by the Department of State. Chairperson Moyer asked Ms. Pesce to provide her research to Mrs. May-Silfee and she will share this information with the Election Board and the Department of State.

Ms. Pesce next stated that there are several grievances to be addressed regarding poll watchers. Mr. Dennis McMahon stated that he has been a poll watcher at the Polk polling place for several years, but the watchers are placed too far away to hear the voters' names. He also stated that he wanted to help assist counting votes but the Judge of Elections wouldn't allow him. Chairperson Moyer stated that watchers are allowed to know the totals, but not allowed to participate in counting votes. Solicitor John Dunn stated that poll watchers are to be placed 10 feet away from the table where voters are checked in. Mr. McMahon stated that he was placed more than 10 feet away from the table checking in voters. Mrs. May-Silfee stated that she will speak with the Judge of Election at Polk. She also stated that poll watchers can contact the office to speak with her or Mrs. Robson on Election Day if they experience problems. Ms. Dooner stated that she had seen that the Judge of Election was not nice to the poll watchers. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the poll watchers guidelines.

Motion by Board member Gardner, seconded by Board member Peterson and carried to adjourn at 11:07 AM.

Sara May-Silfee, Director of Voter Reg.
