

**BOARD MEETING**  
**BALTIMORE CITY BOARD OF ELECTIONS**  
**JUNE 20, 2024**

The meeting of the Baltimore City Board of Elections was held at the Baltimore City Board of Elections Warehouse at 301 North Franklinton Road, Baltimore MD 21223

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Scherod Barnes, Board President  
Terrence Threweatt Jr, Board Vice President  
Maria Vismale, Board Member  
Sam Novey, Board Secretary

**ABSENT**

Hope Williams, Board Member

**ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL**

Thomas Chapman

**STAFF**

Armstead B.C. Jones, Election Director  
Abigail Goldman, Deputy Election Director  
Sabrina Graves  
Tamara Debnam  
Wendy Page

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Scherod Barnes, Board President at 4:39 pm and declared a quorum. Mr. Novey made a motion to approve the agenda and April minutes that was seconded by Mr. Threweatt. The motion passed.

**BOARD PRESIDENT REMARKS**

Mr. Barnes thanked the staff, board members, and contractors who worked diligently and faithfully to pull off the primary election. Out of 182 polling places we went to and visited, we did good together as a board and staff to support all these places.

Mr. Barnes did acknowledge that there were some flaws which we heard about at the listening session and said the board would address those concerns at the appropriate times. Mr. Barnes also specifically commended Ms. Abigail Goldman and Ms. Lisa Stanley for their extraordinary leadership stepping up as the Acting Director and Acting Deputy Director during much of the preparation for the May primary.

Mr. Barnes also expressed his welcome to Director Jones on his return to work.

Ahead of the Director's Report, Mr. Barnes also shared that he and Mr. Jones spoke about the board process for submitting questions in writing ahead of board meetings and the board's expectation of receiving answers back in writing.

Mr. Barnes asked Mr. Novey if written answers to the questions had been provided. Mr. Novey said that he had not received a written response at that time.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Mr. Jones acknowledged that there was a request for the answers to come in writing. Mr. Jones shared that many staff had been on vacation and so he asked staff to come to this meeting to verbally address issues that come under their purview.

Mr. Novey asked if it would be possible to just get the answers in writing ahead of the July meeting. Mr. Jones said it would be better to ask the questions now with staff present. Mr. Novey asked questions about technicians that did not show up for the primary election. Mr. Jones said that the relevant staff person was not present.

Mr. Novey followed in regards to data from the state board of elections that board members had requested in order to benchmark city elections' performance against statewide outcomes. Mr. Jones said that board members would need to follow up directly with the state to get that data and that city election staff would not be proactively doing that outreach.

Mr. Novey and Mr. Barnes asked about recruitment and training for election judges in the fall. Ms. Graves and Mr. Jones both reiterated the importance of city government partners in recruiting and the importance of having judges (and especially chief judges!) retrain for every election.

Mr. Barnes asked the other board members if it would be ok to discuss Mr. Jones responses to some questions at the June meeting and then discuss responses to outstanding questions that were not dealt with at the July meeting. The board members agreed to resubmit questions that had not yet been answered ahead of the July meeting.

Ms. Vismale asked about the process of outreach to election judges. Ms. Graves expressed her feeling that improved vetting of election judges (and especially chief judges) would be helpful in addressing some of the issues that emerged in the primary. Ms. Graves clarified that introducing a "post test" for election judges would be at the discretion of Mr. Jones.

Mr. Jones shared that there is consideration of going back through University of Baltimore for the training. Ms. Goldman shared her feeling that the trainers at UB are "educators" and are positioned to do a good job.

Ms. Vismale asked if there could be a day of “refresher” for election judges on election day morning. Ms. Debnam said that would not be practical given the amount of work that needs to be done on site before the polling place opens.

Ms. Graves shared that the state is working on how-to videos for election judges to supplement the election judge manual. This would only be available to chief judges as the other election judges are not allowed to use phones in the polling place.

Ms. Page provided the number of provisional ballots rejected by code number as requested.

Mr. Novey asked about changes to procedure to try and avoid inaccurate unofficial returns. Staff expressed their impression that the issue with the unofficial result was a state software error. No proposal for changes to procedure from the primary were expressed.

Mr. Barnes asked about challenges with recruiting technicians. Mr. Jones said the staffing agency with SBE tends to send people from outside Baltimore.

Mr. Novey expressed his gratitude to the staff for all the support answering questions from all board members and community members who expressed them following the primary election.

Ms. Vismale asked staff for feedback on how the board could do their jobs better in the future. Mr. Jones shared that in the past old board members had come back to shadow new board members and help them on election day and suggested the board consider that in the future.

Mr. Barnes asked about who has the most recent updates on the move. Ms. Goldman confirmed that the city had signed a letter of intent to go forward with the move to the new warehouse and that issues related to an ongoing maintenance fee were being resolved.

Ms. Vismale asked if we were still on track to move in November. Mr. Jones confirmed that is still on track.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Barnes shared that we had received a list of questions from the Baltimore City Democratic State Central Committee which he asked the board to review. Mr. Barnes said we should follow up with a response. Mr. Novey suggested getting a single response together to all questions from the primary and follow up. Mr. Barnes confirmed that Mr. Jones would coordinate a response to the Democratic State Central Committee.

## **ATTORNEY GENERAL REMARKS**

Mr. Chapman had no comments at this time.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Thrweatt shared an update on the staff survey. Mr. Thrweatt and Mr. Barnes clarified for Mr. Jones how the survey was connected to the performance evaluation process for the election director. Mr. Thrweatt emphasized that the evaluation period would only be for days that Mr. Jones was not on FMLA.

Mr. Chapman shared SBE's feeling that the board should not do this survey. Mr. Barnes confirmed that the city board of elections intended to go forward with the survey.

Mr. Thrweatt and Mr. Barnes clarified the process for collecting the responses to the survey from staff.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Novey shared that he would be joining by phone or video link for the July meeting.

Mr. Barnes suggested that the board consider meeting in July to cover the evaluation and then not meet in August. Mr. Novey expressed his opinion that the board should meet in August. Ms. Goldman also said that there are some early vote locations that need to be voted on by the board in August. Mr. Barnes confirmed that the board would meet on August 15 at 4 pm.

Ms. Goldman shared an update on efforts to move the Farring-Baybrook early vote center to more popular and accessible location in November

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Barnes adjourned the meeting at 5:26 pm.

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The Board minutes were approved at the Boards July 18, 2024 meeting.