

The Macon-Bibb Bd. of Elections meeting, usually held monthly on third Thursdays, was held by Zoom video on 1/28/21 at 4:00 p.m.. Board members Mike Kaplan (Chair) and Dr. Henry Ficklin were present throughout, along with several management/staff members. It was agreed to discuss the agenda items although there were not enough Board members present for a quorum for voting.

By approximately 4:25, members Sandra Powell, Rinda Wilson, and Herb Spangler were reportedly still unable to sign on because of technical problems. Eventually Ms. Powell was able to attend by remote audio through Dr. Ficklin's connection. Not clear to me whether the other current Board members were eventually dialed in.

During introduction of visitors, Teresa Harris raised concerns re. hazard pay for several poll workers, and the difficulty she reported having in her attempts since November to communicate with Elections board and personnel re this.

In addition, Monica Hodges, identifying herself as a poll observer for the ACLU, reported 7 voters having been turned away - inappropriately, in her opinion - from one voting site on 1/5/21. She expressed her belief that more training is needed for poll workers, especially re. voter disenfranchisement, with more consistent performance by workers expected as a result.

Jeanetta Watson, Supervisor, gave updates re. many issues: Ongoing process of salary/payscale development; need for more managers for the increasing numbers of poll watchers and observers, especially for hotly contested elections like the most recent; need for improved policies/procedures re. same; issues around handling the increase in absentee and on-site voting; handcount audit and recounts; difficulties related to keeping realtime election-day votecount reporting updated; and need for increased help with increased number of open records requests.

Some discussion of census and redistricting, re-allocating of voters among polling locations, and some locations (smaller churches, e.g.) now being too small to serve the number of voters assigned to them.

More technicians are needed to service the more than 1700 pieces of equipment - now far beyond the ability of one person to maintain.

Discussion of the training of poll watchers - who are appointed by political parties and organizations, which (rather than the Bd. of Elections) are responsible for the training and supervision of their watchers.

Lengthy discussion of grant applications and requirements, for training, and regarding the payment of workers.

Many difficulties getting ballots to voters through USPS in a timely manner, plus slow delivery back to Bd. of Elections according to mailing date on ballots.

Discussion of City ordinance and Board policy re. personal temperature checks.

Darius Maynard and Karen Evans-Daniel were welcomed as new Board members to begin serving on April 1st. Discussion of proper procedure for selecting the fifth, at-large, board member, to be chosen by the other four.

Further information and specifics will be available in the official board minutes, to be posted on their website <https://www.maconbibb.us/board-of-elections/>

Claudia Kirkwood

1/31/21