



DUVAL COUNTY ELECTION ADVISORY PANEL

MINUTES

July 20, 2022

3:00 p.m.

Don Davis Room
1st floor, City Hall

Attendance: Robert Maldonado (Chair), Robert Phillips, Ingrid Montgomery, Daniel Henry, Ray Pringle, Austin Kiwkkel

Excused: Charles McWhite

Absent: Nancy Chrisman

Also: Jeff Clements – City Council Research Division

Chairman Maldonado called the meeting to order at 3:08 p.m. and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 16, 2022 meeting of the Election Advisory Panel were **approved unanimously as distributed**.

Supervisor of Elections update

Robert Phillips of the Supervisor's office said that the registration books close on July 25th for the August primary election. Vote-by-mail ballots have gone out and 4,700 have been returned to date. Tabulation of vote-by-mail ballots starts August 1st at 8 a.m. The voting machine logic and accuracy test will be conducted on July 29th. Poll worker training will be wrapping up this week. Various outreach efforts are underway with local sports franchises (Jumbo Shrimp, Icemen, Sharks, Jaguars), which are possibly unique in the country. Mailers have gone out to vote-by-mail requestors whose request orders have expired informing them of the need to renew their request. Voter registration stations in libraries will be temporarily removed when the registration books close so that voters aren't confused about their eligibility to vote in the August primary and so they don't try to leave vote-by-mail ballots there. The SOE will be widely distributing an 8.5x11 color flyer with all sorts of voting-related information (early voting sites, vote-by-mail instructions, SOE website address) to help inform voters about the primary election on August 23rd. Supervisor of Elections Mike Hogan requested \$800,000 in the Mayor's upcoming budget for the purchase of additional ExpressVote machines for use at early voting sites, which he hopes is included when the Mayor makes his budget presentation to City Council tomorrow morning.

Mr. Phillips reported that Senate Bill 90 passed by the Florida Legislature during the last session requires voters performing transactions remotely (via internet or telephone, not face-to-face) to have specific verifying information (either a driver's license or the last 4 digits of the voter's Social Security number) on file with the local SOE's office for verification purposes. The office has identified 34,000 such voters and they have all been sent letters saying they need to provide that information to continue doing remote transactions. They are mostly voters who have been registered for many years and voted in person and never had to make any changes to their information but need to supply that information now pursuant to state law to make requests by computer or phone. Judging from the initial reaction to the letters, there was some suspicion among voters and the media about why this was being done. The SOE was trying to be proactive by informing voters before they start applying for vote-by-mail ballots and find out that there is a problem.

Ray Pringle asked how much additional capacity will be added by the addition of the new ExpressVote machines. Mr. Phillips said it's hard to say without some experience of the machines being in widespread use. The biggest bottleneck in the early voting process currently is waiting for the printer to print the ballots, which will be faster with the ExpressVote system. Voters don't have to use them but the SOE hopes voters will try it and like it. Early adopters of new technologies and the tech-savvy will likely transition to it easily, as well as voters with disabilities for whom the system was originally designed. There is a mistaken impression that it is a full touchscreen voting system, but the ExpressVote prints a paper ballot that runs through the tabulator like any other hand-marked ballot. Mr. Phillips said he thought it will probably work better for the August primary than for the November general election because of the several constitutional referenda on the November ballot.

Chairman Maldonado asked how many poll workers are available and how many polling locations will be used for the fall elections. Mr. Phillips said they have gone from 199 to 186 precincts after the redistricting process was completed. City Council members were invited to come to the SOE office and see exactly how the precinct boundaries and polling locations changed. Currently the SOE has 117 poll workers in excess of baseline need as training comes to a close, so that provides a good buffer.

Daniel Henry said he has heard from several voters that they were confused about the purpose of the identification notification letter and threw it away because they didn't understand what it was about. He felt it would have been helpful for Supervisor Hogan to have gone to the media (particularly TV and radio talk shows) in advance of the mailing to let people know to expect it and what it's all about. He believes that would be most useful when unusual events arise, i.e. the new ID requirement, new voter ID cards resulting from the redistricting process, etc. Advance warning and an explanation would go a long way toward lessening suspicion among voters. Mr. Phillips said he would pass that suggestion along to Mr. Hogan as a way to be proactive about allaying voters' fears.

Mr. Henry asked how many new ExpressVote machines would be purchased. Mr. Phillips said about 200 more; they had 1 in every precinct and 2 in every early voting site already and will now have up to 10 per early voting site if space in the precinct allows. In response to a question from Mr. Henry about how much the information verification letters cost, Mr. Phillips said about \$7,000 to print and mail. The cost of return postage won't be known until the envelopes come back. Mr. Henry said he's always advocated for providing paid postage in all mailers which the SOE has declined to do and wondered why the decision was made to pay return postage this time. Mr. Phillips replied that it was because the new law was a one-time issue, affected a relatively small universe of voters, and didn't have a great potential cost. Providing return postage for every vote-by-mail ballot request incurs a lot of cost and the political parties already send voters vote-by-mail request forms with postage paid to encourage them to vote by that method, so it would be a duplication of effort. The SOE is redesigning the vote-by-mail request form and the new form will include lots of explanatory information. He said that voters performing election-related

tasks themselves online is much easier and more accurate than SOE staff handling paper applications and doing the data input in the office.

Mr. Henry suggested the use of QR codes to take voters with smartphones where they need to go on the SOE website. In response to a question from Mr. Henry about when the new voter ID cards will go out, Mr. Phillips said it will be next week after the registration books close. Mr. Henry said that Nassau County's supervisor of elections created a mobile app that provides all kinds of voting-related information, which seems creative and helpful. Mr. Phillips said the SOE has done digital ads in local media and might consider the app option as well. Mr. Henry said he understood that the SOE had decided that the federal lawsuit challenging the validity of the City's new council district needs to be settled by this November in order for preparations to be made for the March and May City elections and asked about the basis for that deadline. Mr. Phillips said it was determined by how long it would take to prepare precincts and ballots for whatever districts the election will be based on.

Ingrid Montgomery asked for information about the new election "police force" recently created by the governor. Mr. Phillips said that "election police" is a misnomer and from what he understands they won't be in the field at polling places during voting; they're an investigative body whose role is to investigate reports of suspicious activity taking place during elections. They are assigned to the Secretary of State's office, with some Florida Department of Law Enforcement investigators providing additional manpower. In the past if there was suspicion of some wrongdoing in an election in Jacksonville, the SOE turned the matter over to the State Attorney; in the future it will probably be referred to both the State Attorney and this new state entity. The SOE has not received any direction yet from the Secretary of State's office about how this new entity will operate.

Chairman Maldonado asked about voter registration trends. Mr. Phillips said the number of third party/no party affiliation registrations is growing rapidly both statewide and locally. There are currently about 645,000 registered voters in Jacksonville, and that is anticipated to increase to about 660,000 by the November election.

Regarding election-related legislation, Mr. Phillips noted that the City Council has approved the new polling places for the fall elections. There will be a special non-partisan City election to fill the office of Sheriff that will be on all ballots; Congressional District 5 is a universal ballot (3 Republicans appearing on Democrat and NPA ballots since there is no Democrat candidate); and the City Council Districts 7 and 9 special elections to fill vacancies will be held based on the current districts, which has the potential to be confusing. In all there are 45 different ballot variations across the county for the August election.

Old Business

ExpressVote equipment purchase support resolution: given the discussion earlier about inclusion of funding in the Mayor's proposed budget it was decided that there is no need for the Election Advisory Panel to take any action.

New Business

- Election Advisory Panel 2021-22 annual report: Chairman Maldonado recommended that specific meeting dates be included; that meeting minutes and handouts be attached to the report; that the bullet points be grouped by topic area (fraud, registration, legislation, election mechanics); and that the meeting list note that the Panel had held one meeting at the Imeson Election Operations Center.
Motion (Henry) – approve the FY21-22 EAP annual report with the changes/additions suggested – **approved unanimously.**
- Election of officers: will be scheduled as an agenda item for the September meeting.
- EAP membership vacancies: the group discussed the number of vacancies and to which appointing authority (Mayor, Council President, Supervisor of Elections) they belonged.

Motion (Henry) – the EAP directs the Chairman to write a letter to the Mayor’s Office pointing out the vacancies existing in his slots and requesting that nominations be made to the City Council to fill those seats – **approved unanimously**.

Public comment

Lanelle Phillmon asked how many of the 34,000 voter who were sent letters regarding updating their identification information are seniors. Mr. Phillips said he did not know offhand but could look that up. Ms. Phillmon suggested getting information out to older voters via senior centers, the media, pharmacies, and other entities that regularly deal with senior citizens and whom they would trust. In response to a question from Ms. Phillmon about how a voter could go about providing their required ID information for remote transactions, Mr. Phillips said they could go to the SOE office or could put it in a voter registration drop box at a library. The can’t provide it over the phone or online until that identifying information is in the SOE database for verification purposes.

Next meeting

September 21, 2022

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

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