



## DUVAL COUNTY ELECTION ADVISORY PANEL

### MINUTES

February 15, 2023

3:00 p.m.

Don Davis Room  
1<sup>st</sup> floor, City Hall

**Attendance:** Robert Maldonado (Chair, arr. 3:30), Robert Phillips (via telephone), Ingrid Montgomery, Daniel Henry, Austin Kiwkkel

**Excused:** None

**Absent:** Nancy Chrisman, Charles McWhite, Ray Pringle

**Also:** Jeff Clements – City Council Research Division

Daniel Henry called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m. and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

#### Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the September 21 and November 16, 2022 meetings of the Election Advisory Panel were **deferred to a future meeting** since a quorum of members was not physically present as required for voting.

#### Supervisor of Elections update

Robert Phillips of the Supervisor of Elections office reported that training is ongoing for the upcoming City elections in March and May. The biggest factor impacting on preparations for the March first election was the redistricting lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the new districts drawn by the City Council in 2022. Approximately 187,000 voters were affected by redistricting and new voter ID cards are being mailed to those voters this week and next week. The sample ballot for the March election will be mailed out shortly. The Mayor, Property Appraiser and 3 City Council members are the only countywide offices on the ballot. 40,000 vote-by-mail (VBM) ballots have been put in the mail to date compared to 43,000 in 2019. The SOE anticipates getting over 50,000 VBM requests for the March election. The logic and accuracy test of the tabulators for the March election will be next Friday. The Canvassing Board for the upcoming election will be composed entirely of judges because all City Council members are either in contested elections or are campaigning for other candidates so are ineligible to serve. Supervisor of Elections Mike Hogan's son is also on the ballot so Mr. Hogan is prohibited from serving by state statute. This will be a first for Jacksonville. Judges Michael Khalil (Chair), Dawn Hudson and Michael Bateh have been appointed by the Chief Judge Mahon to the board and 2 alternate judges will be needed.

Mr. Phillips said he anticipates about a 35% voter turnout since there are relatively few countywide races on the ballot and several of the City Council races have unopposed incumbents. There have been very few VBM ballot requests that have encountered problems with the request system. The cost of VBM ballots was about \$31,000. Mr. Henry asked if there is sufficient budget to send another mailing to persons who have previously requested VBM ballots in this election cycle. Mr. Phillips said there is not because the SOE's printing and mailing budget took a hit with the 187,000 new voter ID cards required to be printed and mailed due to redistricting.

In response to a request from Mr. Henry, Mr. Phillips said that precinct locations that changed due to redistricting will have new signage posted and the City's Traffic Engineering Division has been at work to produce the signs at its expense (not the SOE's). In response to another question from Mr. Henry about the upcoming transition in the SOE's office between Supervisor Hogan and incoming Supervisor-elect Jerry Holland, Mr. Phillips said that since Mr. Holland previously held the office, he has a good understanding of the operations of the office and some of the personnel. He is already reaching out to the staff to discuss pending issues. Mr. Henry asked if Mr. Hogan would be coming to the Election Advisory Panel's April meeting to make his annual personal appearance or if he would leave it to Mr. Holland to come to the August meeting for his first appearance of his new term. Mr. Henry also asked if there are any legacy projects that Mr. Hogan is working on before his term ends in June. Mr. Phillips said he was not aware of any since the consolidation of SOE operations from two locations into the Imeson operations center has been put on hold.

#### Old Business

Redistricting lawsuit: Mr. Phillips said Aries Torres of the SOE office did a great job of handling the re-precincting process following the redistricting decision by the federal court. 187,000 voters were impacted and new voter ID cards are going out now. The effort kept as many precinct boundaries and voting locations the same as possible and changed only the precinct numbers where possible. All voters will receive a sample ballot with their appropriate candidates listing and updated precinct information. In response to a question about whether there are any contingency plans in place in case there is a new ruling by a court sometime in the next few months that would change the council districts, Mr. Phillips said he can't envision a judge making a ruling at this point that would impact the March or May elections. Something may happen later that would impact the next Congressional elections in 2024. Chairman Maldonado asked what the SOE has to do and change when these court cases happen. Mr. Phillips said the SOE tells the court when they need to have a decision in order to properly prepare for the next election. Staff uses GIS software to import the shape files of the new districts and overlay them over the existing precinct map to determine where adjustments are needed. Because of the changes brought about by the latest map ordered by the judge, about 11,000 people have been put into one voting precinct in Oceanway because of the changes made to the boundary between District 2 and District 7 (now renumbered as District 8). All of these changes have to be conveyed to voters in a timely manner. In response to a question from Mr. Henry about whether the Supervisor of Elections has to consent to actions in the court cases (authorizing appeals, etc.) because he is a named party to the litigation, Mr. Phillips said that he does, but does so in consultation with Office of General Counsel which represents the City and the Supervisor.

#### New Business

Election of Officers: deferred to the next meeting due to a lack of quorum.

Chairman Maldonado said he has drafted and will send letters to the Mayor and Council President requesting replacement members to fill their vacancies and he will provide copies to staff.

Mr. Henry said the Panel needs to take action to officially declare the seats held by Nancy Chrisman and Charles McWhite to be vacant due to excessive absences in order to make obtaining a quorum easier with a reduced membership. That issue will be on the agenda for April meeting.

Mr. Henry said the Panel should discuss work issues for the upcoming year. Mr. Maldonado said that will be on the agenda for discussion at the April meeting.

Austin Kwikkel announced that he will need to be excused from the April meeting as he will be out of the country at the time.

#### Public comment

Joy Burgess asked about the filling of vacancies and if there are people who have applied but not been appointed. Mr. Maldonado explained that the appointments are made by the Mayor, Council President and SOE (3 each) and the panel doesn't have any influence over who those persons choose to nominate. The vacancy problem has been a relatively recent issue. Ms. Burgess said the vacancies don't paint a positive picture of the City's leadership and is discouraging to citizens. She asked what citizens could do to make a difference. Mr. Maldonado suggested getting in touch with the leadership and telling them how important it is to fill those seats. There seems to be general pattern of unfilled seats across numerous boards and commissions. Mr. Henry said the change of administrations after the spring elections will offer a new opportunity for new people to take a new view of appointments. Directly contacting the elected officials and going to a City Council meeting to advocate during public comment could prompt action. Mr. Kwikkel suggested approaching the mayoral campaigns and urging them to make filling vacancies a campaign pledge. Mr. Maldonado said that citizen input and pressure would be appreciated.

Mr. Henry asked if there are any boards or commissions that appoint their own members. Jeff Clements said he was not aware of any, but some boards suggest people they know who might be interested in filling vacant seats to persons with appointing authority. He explained the process by which applications are received and processed in the Council office and appointments are made. Mr. Henry and Mr. Kwikkel described their appointment experiences. Mr. Maldonado invited panel members to talk to friends about serving on the board.

#### Next meeting

April 19, 2023

Mr. Kwikkel asked about changing the meeting date so that he could be present at the April meeting. He will be out of the country that week. Chairman Maldonado asked staff to look at room availability on April 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

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Posted 4.17.23 11:30 a.m.