



DUVAL COUNTY ELECTION ADVISORY PANEL

PRELIMINARY MINUTES

(These minutes are unofficial until reviewed and approved by the Election Advisory Panel at a future meeting.)

**April 17, 2024
3:00 p.m.**

**Don Davis Room
1st floor, City Hall**

Attendance: Austin Kwikkel (Vice Chair); Robert Maldonado, Robert Phillips, Carmen Martinez (arr. 3:18), Lanelle Phillmon (arr. 3:19)

Excused: Ray Pringle (Chair)

Absent: Daniel Henry, Ingrid Montgomery

Also: Jerry Holland - Supervisor of Elections Office; Jeff Clements – City Council Research Division

Vice Chair Austin Kwikkel called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m. and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

Approval of Minutes

Consideration of the minutes of the November 15, 2023 and January 17, 2024 meetings of the Election Advisory Panel were deferred due to lack of a quorum.

Supervisor of Elections update

2024 election preparations: Supervisor of Elections Jerry Holland said there are 125 days until the primary election in August and 202 days until the November presidential election. The presidential preference primary in March was a good practice run for staff and equipment. His office expanded from 19 to 24 early voting sites for that election, although only 19% of registered Republicans turned out to vote in the closed primary. There were no real problems on primary day, with only a couple of EVIDs (Electronic Voter ID machines) needing to be replaced. Poll worker training starts in May for the August primary. Mr. Holland said his goal is to try to have an early voting (EV) site within 4 miles of every voter in the city. His office will do mailings to all voter residences within 4 miles of the new EV sites providing addresses and hours of operation. The SOE will utilize all 24 EV sites during the whole election cycle through November to see how they perform.

Mr. Holland reported that City Council had made an emergency appropriation of funds for purchase of new ballot-on-demand printers. The ExpressVote system was used for the presidential preference primary but a change in the state's poll worker procedures manual requires that ballot-on-demand printers be

available at all EV sites so two printers will be available at all EV sites in the August and November elections.

Robert Phillips of the Supervisor's Office said they are upgrading the SOE's GIS (geographic information system). The current system operates on a street segment basis encompassing all addresses from lowest number to highest number in a particular block. The new system will be a point space system that will be more accurate with a specific address for every location, not a range of addresses on a block. This would catch fake addresses submitted in the voter registration process. There are approximately 900,000 addressable points in the county. The SOE will run both systems through the November election before shifting completely from the old to the new system next year.

Supervisor Holland said his staff is constantly updating the voter rolls to reflect deceased voters, changes of address, etc. Receipt of returned mail to a voter by the U.S. Postal Service starts a 30-day process after which, if there is no updated address, the voter is moved to the inactive list. In order to vote at a subsequent election, the voter would need to provide a valid current address and be assigned to the correct precinct. Failure to vote in 2 more general elections then triggers a move from inactive to ineligible status, thereby requiring re-registration. Mr. Holland said there were over 666,000 registered voters in 2020 and there are now 644,000 as the rolls are continually maintained, as new registrants are being added but these additions are offset by more voters moving, dying, etc. If an inactive voter appears at the polls on election they may have to go to another precinct if they have changed addresses. An inactive or ineligible voter can always vote a provisional ballot and the Canvassing Board will decide if they could have voted or not.

EAP nominee Gloria Einstein asked how No Party Affiliation (NPA) voters will know that they can vote for the School Board races during the primary election in August. Mr. Holland said they will get a sample NPA ballot that shows what races they can vote on.

Robert Maldonado asked about voter reaction to the ExpressVote system in the March election. Mr. Holland said less than 2% of voters insisted on filling out a manual ballot. He reiterated that the state poll worker procedure manual was changed to require ballot-on-demand availability at all EV sites. He said they have added privacy screens over the ExpressVote machines so no one standing behind or beside a voter can see what a voter is selecting. They have adjusted the sensitivity of the touchscreens so the privacy screen does not impact the pressure needed to record the vote.

Mr. Maldonado asked about poll worker numbers and training. Mr. Holland said they had great turnout of new poll workers this year. State law says poll workers in a precinct can't all be of the same party, but doesn't require that they represent each of the two major parties – they could be registered as NPAs or smaller third parties. His goal has been to get at least 2 Democrat and 2 Republican workers in each precinct and that was achieved for the presidential preference primary. They are seeing a good sign-up rate to work in the fall elections. In response to a question from Mr. Maldonado about why the new voter ID cards aren't perforated and had to be cut out using scissors, Mr. Holland said it was a cost savings measure.

Carmen Martinez asked about the cost of the new voting equipment. Mr. Holland said about \$200,000 for two ballot-on-demand printers for each precinct, which included the paper and toner supplies.

Mr. Holland talked briefly about the legal settlement of the Equal Protection Clause challenge last year to the distribution of precincts among City Council districts and the reduction of the number of precincts that resulted to ensure equity citywide.

Mr. Holland said the SOE uses Office of Vital Statistics death records and returned mail from the Postal Service as the major ways to update voter rolls. In response to a question from Ms. Martinez about

whether there is a way to get monthly registration application totals, Mr. Holland said the SOE can provide monthly registration figures and names upon request. The actual registration forms have protected information like Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers and signatures, so the forms themselves can't be shared, only names and total numbers.

Ms. Martinez asked about new election-related legislation from the 2024 legislative session, particularly HB 135 and its impact on how voters registering to vote when getting their driver's license are assigned to a party or to NPA. Mr. Holland suggested asking Tax Collector Jim Overton to come to a future meeting to talk about how party affiliation gets selected when doing "motor voter" registration. His understanding is that if a registrant doesn't check a specific box, then the registration system defaults to NPA. Ms. Martinez asked if the Tax Collector asks for proof of citizenship when a motor voter registration takes place. Mr. Holland said the registration process is basically done on the honor system and his office processes and sends to the state whatever the registrant checks without further investigation. It's the job of the State Division of Elections to determine voter eligibility, not the county SOE or Tax Collector offices. Ms. Martinez said that Florida Secretary of State Cord Byrd said at a legislative subcommittee meeting in December that essentially their office couldn't guarantee that they all get checked. She asked what the counties could do to ensure that illegal aliens, convicted felons without full restoration of rights, etc. are not voting. Mr. Holland reiterated that the county SOE's have no authority in that area and the responsibility lies with the State Division of Elections. He did note that several years ago the state law changed and voter registration cards now say that the voter is ultimately responsible for knowing their eligibility status. Applying for and getting a voter registration card is no guarantee that they are eligible to vote and they could be prosecuted if they aren't eligible and vote.

Ms. Martinez said she has heard that there are over 1 million illegal voters on the voter rolls today and asked what a citizen could do to help tackle this problem. Mr. Holland said that's a matter to be taken up with the people who are responsible for the integrity of the election system – the Division of Elections and Florida Department of State. He has not seen any evidence that illegal registration or voting is taking place in Jacksonville. Registration to vote requires either a driver's license number or a valid Social Security number and that's the primary line of defense to determine citizenship. Lanelle Philmon noted that the Governor and Secretary of State have the newly created Office of Election Crimes and Security which has arrested and referred for prosecution 19 people for ineligible voting. She cautioned that there are no official statistics or evidence that back up Secretary of State Byrd's allegation about the 1 million illegal voters so that number should not be taken as a proven fact. She said has faith that Secretary Byrd would use every resource at his disposal to deal with a million illegal voters if that was determined to be factual.

Ms. Martinez said that recently U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas was reported as saying that he is not responsible for identifying illegal aliens to prevent them from voting, that elections are not under his purview. She said she also has faith that Secretary of State Byrd is doing what he can to prevent illegal voting, but doesn't know what powers or resources he has to accomplish that. She questioned whether Florida could adopt more stringent registration requirements or if the federal government would control the conditions for registration because that would impact federal elections. Mr. Holland reiterated that everyone wants secure elections and is doing what they can do to make that happen. Different states do things different ways. Even if you don't have an official form of identification, in Florida you can vote provisionally and the SOE will match the signature on that ballot to the registration records and see if there is a match and therefore an eligible voter.

Lanelle Philmon asked about voter reaction to the ExpressVote system in the March election. Mr. Holland said 2-3% of voters wanted to manually fill out a ballot with pen and paper. Robert Maldonado asked about the low turnout for the presidential preference primary. Mr. Holland said the lowest turnout was in precincts that are predominantly not registered Republican since it was a closed Republican primary. Ms.

Philmon said voters probably felt there was no need to vote since the race was largely decided before Florida got its chance to vote.

Vice Chair Kwikkel asked what's being planned for voter turnout promotion for the fall elections. Mr. Holland said over the years many things have been tried in the way of publicity, but the biggest motivator for turnout is the candidates and how they connect with voters. He said he speaks to any group or media that will have him to promote voting. In response to a question he said he isn't convinced that the previous outreach via promotions with sports teams has made any difference. The SOE will be sending out voter information cards to everyone in a new precinct as a reminder of their polling place. Jacksonville will be working with 3 adjacent counties to promote early voting for the November election. Mr. Holland said he wants as many people as possible to vote early by some means to reduce the congestion in the precincts on election day. There's a better chance that people will give up and go home without voting if they show up at a precinct and find there's a long line than if they take advantage of early voting opportunities. He said he anticipates 25-29% turnout in August and 75% in November for the presidential election. The voter turnout percentage is affected by how many ineligible people are on the rolls, which reduces the apparent percentage of those who do vote. Ms. Philmon asked if there has ever been a calculation made of the dollars-to-vote ratio in elections. Mr. Holland did some quick calculating and estimated about \$25 per vote for the March presidential preference primary. He said the least expensive way to vote is by mail, and the most expensive way is early voting. It costs over \$1M to run a countywide election. A precinct costs \$4,000 to operate for an election and EV sites cost about \$40,000, depending on how many days and hours they are open.

Old Business

Robert Maldonado asked about movement on a new Election Operations Center. Mr. Holland said he recently looked at the State of Florida's Fuller Warren Office Building on Market Street that the state has made available for sale. It is not big enough for both the operations center and the SOE headquarters but might be a possibility if the current headquarters a block away on Monroe Street is retained. He said most office buildings aren't set up for their voting equipment storage and load-in/load-out needs. The current headquarters on Monroe Street is being renovating because apparently they will be there for a while and the building needs work.

Lanelle Philmon asked about the use of the University of North Florida as an early voting site. Mr. Holland said he will be meeting with UNF officials very shortly, but there are already 2 EV sites within 4 miles of the campus. It doesn't make financial sense to have a site there if there are other parts of the county that don't have 4-mile access to an EV site. He said putting EV sites at the Dinsmore Community Center as talked about at the last EAP meeting and at a new Oceanway library when it gets built will help the access situation on the Northside.

Ms. Philmon suggested doing a vote-by-mail promotion campaign for college students so they can take advantage of that method rather than going to a physical location. Mr. Holland said he will talk to UNF about that when he meets with them. He said UNF is a difficult place to find parking if you were going to try to have an EV site there unless it was in the Adam Herbert University Center on Alumni Drive or the Alumni Center on Kernan Road which are on the outskirts of the campus. The Equal Protection settlement agreement discussed earlier in the meeting affects whether it could be used or not based on the number of precincts per council district.

Carmen Martinez asked how students determine residency to vote – at home or at school. Mr. Holland said it's their choice because there is no state law about minimum residency time in a location before you can register to vote there. He said students often keep their registration at their home address and vote by mail.

Lanelle Philmon asked about the state's new voter registration and vote by mail request applications. Mr. Holland said the SOE needs to gather up all of the outdated voter registration application forms from places like libraries and from third party voter registration organizations so people don't fill in outdated forms. Ms. Martinez asked about registration options for persons who are homebound. Mr. Holland said anyone can take a registration form to someone to fill out, but individuals can't bring them back to the SOE; only registered third party organizations can take them and turn them in. If the date the form is returned is more than 14 days after it was issued by the SOE then there's extra scrutiny because registration forms can't be held for long by third party organizations. Ms. Martinez asked if third party registration is less now after the change of state law. Mr. Holland said yes, the numbers are down. Ms. Philmon said the League of Women Voters quit being a third-party registration entity because of the severity of the fines involved for violations of the state law.

New Business

EAP annual report: staff will prepare a draft of the report based on the topics discussed at the last year's meetings for the commissioners to consider and adopt at the June meeting.

Mr. Maldonado asked if there is anything the Supervisor of Elections office needs that the EAP could recommend in its report. Mr. Holland said he would think about that. The state poll worker manual revision added a requirement for using a bar code reader wand to check in voters' driver licenses so those will need to be purchased. The SOE got a reimbursement of funds from the Department of Homeland Security in the last fiscal year that they've asked to be transferred from fund balance to this year's budget; the bill is pending in City Council.

Chair's comments

None

Public comment

Ernest Smith III said he lives in the Brentwood area near the area where the City has purchased the controversial building that was going to become a liquor store near a school. He recommended that that building would be a good early voting site to serve the neighboring area. Mr. Holland said he's looked at that building and was surprised at how little parking space it has. Mr. Smith suggested that the SOE approach the adjacent KIPP School about using their parking lot. Mr. Holland said he looks at the long-term prospects for sites so if it becomes a business assistance center then it may lose its value as a voting site.

Next meeting

June 26, 2024

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

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