



DUVAL COUNTY ELECTION ADVISORY PANEL

PRELIMINARY MINUTES

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

December 4, 2024

3:00 p.m.

**Don Davis Room
City Hall**

Meeting convened: 3:03 pm

Attendance: Panel Members Lanelle Phillmon, Gloria Einstein, Daniel Henry, Robert Maldonado, Carmen Martinez, and Austin Kwikkel (arrived 3:14 pm)

Excused: None

Absent: Ray Pringle and Robert Phillips

Also: Jerry Holland and Justin Gicalone – Supervisor of Elections Office; Colleen Hampsey – City Council Research Division

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, Daniel Henry called the meeting to order, and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. With 5 of 8 seated EAP members present, quorum was determined.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the September 18, 2024 meeting of the Election Advisory Panel were moved for approval. Lanelle Phillmon asked about the word choices on page 2 (tranches) and on page 4 (universe). Mr. Henry said those words accurately describe what he said at the meeting. Carmen Martinez noted that on page 3, the minutes reflect that she said that she would prefer that there be no voting by mail. She said her recollection was that she said she would prefer limited voting by mail, and she requested that the sentence be amended to clarify that intent.

Motion (Phillmon) approve the minutes with the requested change - **approved unanimously via a voice vote.**

Supervisor of Elections report on the November General Election

Jerry Holland, Supervisor of Elections, reviewed the November General Election. Mr. Holland said that there were very few issues throughout the process, which included some initial equipment glitches with the express voting machines that were addressed through screen cleaning and the addition of styluses for the touchscreens. Mr. Holland said the overall voter turnout was 73.3%, with 289,000 early voters, 71,000 vote by mail ballots, and 114,000 Election Day voters. He said that 82% of early voters used the express voting option and usage varied by site. Mr. Holland commented on a change in voter behavior from prior years and

he listed several counties that experienced voter aggression or hostility issues. He mentioned the voter intimidation with a machete incident at the Beaches Library, that was quickly addressed by the Neptune Beach Police Department.

Carmen Martinez asked about express voting machines changing vote choices. Mr. Holland said that the machines are sensitive and that the regular screen cleanings and addition of the stylus tools addressed any issues with the machines. He talked about the positive public reaction to the new “I voted” stickers, and he said his staff is considering methods to include stickers in vote by mail ballots. Mr. Holland said that early voting turnout was low in the Maxville and UF Extension locations, so those locations may not continue in the next election. Two alternate early voting sites are under consideration in South Jax Beach and on the UNF campus.

Ms. Phillmon asked about staff capacity at the SOE call center during election time. There was discussion about creating a way to separate staff calls from voter calls, the challenge to hiring part time call center staff, and improving staff training. Ms. Eistein asked about regulations for poll watchers and encroachment near tabulation machines. There was discussion about precinct managers modifying poll watchers’ behavior. Ms. Phillmon asked about provisional ballots. Mr. Holland said that many of the voters who had to use provisional ballots had registered after the registration deadline. The group talked about new polling locations used this year and how that impacted some voters who went to the wrong location to vote, despite notifications from the SOE Office.

Daniel Henry asked about data updates on the SOE website on Election Day. Mr. Holland mentioned the search for a new web host for the next election. Mr. Henry asked about future legislative changes, locally or state-wide, related to voting. Mr. Holland talked about changes to prohibitions on filming inside precincts. Mr. Holland discussed the possibility of special elections in 2025, if necessitated by an elected official vacating in order to run for a different office or to fill a position in the new presidential administration. Mr. Holland said that if there is a state created vacancy, the state pays for the election and if city officials leave office to run for something else, the City pays for the special election. Mr. Holland said that if a council member resigns after March 23, 2025 the seat could potentially sit vacant until the next regular council election (2027).

Mr. Henry asked about an effort made by the SOE this year to reconnect with inactive voters, in which 1971 were reinstated. Mr. Holland talked about what the Supervisor’s Office does during years without scheduled elections. He said that they focus on student registration and voter list maintenance. Mr. Maldonado asked about non-citizen voting or registration. Mr. Holland referenced a list they received from the state with 8 names of non-citizens registered to vote in Duval County. He said it wasn’t clear that they actually voted, and he noted that any prosecution for such would be a state issue. Mr. Holland talked about the honor system as related to registration and disclosing felon status or mental capacity.

Process improvements discussed for 2026 election:

- 2 lines for voters instead of 1, in precincts where space allows
- Add more ballot on demand printers where needed
- Continue regular touchscreen equipment cleaning
- Enhance privacy for booths in the design of voting room
- Different colors for sample ballots, to differentiate them from the actual ballots, so voters may bring them into the precinct as reference
- New web host for improved website accessibility
- QR code to facilitate annual mail ballot requests

Old Business

The members agreed that the 2025 EAP meeting dates listed on the agenda (3/19, /6/18, 9/17, and 12/17) are all acceptable.

New Business

Carmen Martinez suggested recommending the establishment of a city council special committee to compare the costs for tabulating votes by hand, as opposed to the current method. Mr. Holland explained the practical obstacles, including time, staffing and results delays. He talked about the post-election audit conducted by the SOE, wherein it took two and a half hours to count 7000 ballots for one race. Ms. Martinez expressed doubts about the use of machines to count votes. Mr. Holland said that the audit could be expanded perhaps, to instill greater public confidence. Ms. Phillmon asked if the tabulation machines operate properly, and Mr. Holland said yes.

Public Comment

None

With no further business, Vice Chair Kwikkel adjourned the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned: 4:37 pm

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

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Posted: 12.12.24 5:00 pm

