



DUVAL COUNTY ELECTION ADVISORY PANEL

PRELIMINARY MINUTES

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

**September 16, 2026
3:00 p.m.**

**Don Davis Room
City Hall**

Meeting convened: 3:00 p.m.

Attendance: Panel Members Ray Pringle, Carmen Martinez, Donovan Bradley, Gloria Einstein, Ed Williams, and Justin Gicalone

Excused: None

Absent: Panel Member Austin Kwikkel

Also: Brandon Russell, City Council Research Division; Jerry Holland, Supervisor of Elections

Roll Call

Mr. Pringle convened the meeting and called for introductions.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Bradley moved to approve the minutes from the June and April meetings, and Ms. Einstein seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Supervisor of Elections Update

Mr. Gicalone provided the Supervisor of Elections update. The total count of registered voters in Duval County was 651,978; Democrats made up 245,685 voters; Republicans 238,974; no-party affiliation 142,734; and other party 24,585.

Mr. Gicalone said there were 36,570 requests for vote-by-mail (VBM) ballots; of those, 34,053 were domestic requests, and 2,517 were UOCAVA. He explained that they began mailing UOCAVA ballots yesterday.

He said in the 2024 General Election, 72,833 voters voted by mail. In the 2022 Gubernatorial Primary, 61,858 voters voted by mail. He noted the requests this year are roughly half of the actual votes cast by mail in those previous cycles. He said domestic VBM ballots were scheduled to be mailed on September 28, with

a deadline to have them mailed by October 1. He explained that their VBM outreach included social media, press releases to news outlets, and billboard and radio advertisements in conjunction with surrounding counties.

Mr. Gicalone then reviewed the recent primary election. He said turnout for that election was 23.44 percent, which he said was average. He noted that VBM turnout was low, but that turnout for early voting and on Election Day was higher; VBM made up 15.62 percent; early voting made up 39.1 percent; and Election Day made up 45.28 percent.

Mr. Gicalone said there were two new early voting sites: Dallas Graham Library and the Jacksonville Beach Community Center Exhibition Hall. He noted the Dallas Graham site had the lowest turnout, and the Jacksonville Beach location had the third-lowest turnout. He said that was common for new voting sites and that the general election will provide more data. He referenced the Holiday Inn in Bartram, a new site in 2024, and noted it had higher turnout as people became accustomed to it. He said the busiest sites were Highlands Regional and Pablo Creek Library.

Mr. Gicalone said poll worker training had started, with roughly 40 percent already completed. He said 15 percent were in progress, and 45 percent had not started. He said they have about 232 workers scheduled per day at the 24 early voting sites for the General Election. He said they planned to have about 1500 poll workers on Election Day across the 159 precincts. He said there would be one precinct change between the primary and General Election; the polling place in precinct 508 would move to Wayman Temple AME Church South Campus at 8855 Sanchez Road. He explained that the primary location no longer wanted to serve as a polling location. He added that it was also a change from the 2024 election. He said voters will be notified at least twice. First, impacted voters will receive a voter information card by mail notifying them of the polling place change. Their sample ballots will also have a notification. He said that they have also done social media posts and press releases.

He said they planned to send sample ballots electronically and by mail starting October 12. He said the ballot will be 17 inches, with candidate races on the front and amendments on the back.

Mr. Gicalone said they held their museum grand opening, which was well received. He also said that the City Council passed a resolution recognizing poll workers and thanking them for their service.

He said the FY2627 budget will cover three countywide elections and totals just over \$14 million, if approved by Council. He said the elections make up about \$8.7 million of that total budget, and registration makes up about \$5.8 million. He said they are receiving a grant from the state to purchase Clear Ballot, which is an automated voting system audit. He explained that this would enable them to audit 100 percent of ballots. He said they would move forward with the purchase, with the goal of operationalizing it in the 2027 municipal elections. He said the annual recurring cost for the system warranty would be just over \$90,000 and would be added as a budget enhancement starting in 2028. He said they would forgo a manual audit and instead use this system to audit 100 percent of ballots.

Ms. Martinez asked about the state rules regarding audits. Mr. Gicalone said state law allowed a manual audit or a 100 percent audit using Clear Ballot. He said they had not purchased Clear Ballot up to this point. Mr. Holland explained that 37 of 67 counties in the state had been using Clear Ballot and had purchased it themselves. He said the Secretary of State and the Governor wanted all ballots audited and provided funding to counties to purchase Clear Ballot. He said that if, in the future, legislation were passed to require Clear Ballot, counties may be on the hook to pay for it then. He said it made sense to move to that system while the State is offering to pay, even though there wasn't demand for it. Ms. Martinez asked if the state would pay for all of it or just part of it. Mr. Holland said the state would pay for the entire initial purchase, while

the county would cover ongoing maintenance expenses. Mr. Holland said the counties that use it are impressed with it and could potentially reduce the steps required for a recount.

Mr. Pringle asked if an audit conducted by the Clear Ballot machines would be acceptable as evidence in court. Mr. Holland said it was currently state law and that the law would have to be challenged as unconstitutional, but noted the counties had been using the system for about 8 years without any challenge. He also said the equipment was not the same as the equipment used to tabulate votes.

Ms. Einstein asked if the audit required an independent scan. Mr. Holland confirmed, explaining that each ballot would run through the tabulators and then the Clear Ballot equipment, comparable to a recount.

Mr. Pringle asked how long the audit takes. Mr. Holland said that the audit happens concurrently with VBM ballots and early voting ballots as they come in. He said the ballots received on Election Day will be audited after Election Day. Mr. Gicalone added that audits are done after the official results are certified, but noted that some legislators have proposed doing the audit before certification. He said that they would have 13 days after the election to complete the audit, which is when they have to have official results certified.

Ms. Einstein asked whether there were any concerns about the physical condition of the ballots. Mr. Gicalone said there could be a paper jam or another issue with the ballots being run through the machines, but not on a large scale. Mr. Holland added that they were used to receiving VBM ballots folded and had machinery to prepare ballots to run through the machines.

Mr. Holland said they were preparing and qualifying candidates for the Spring elections. He said they have over 30 candidates for those elections, with 12 running for Mayor.

Ms. Martinez asked whether they were complying with President Trump's executive order regarding VBM. Mr. Holland said Florida was largely already in compliance with much of the order. He said Florida could not immediately comply with the provisions requiring additional barcodes on VBM ballots. He explained that current VBM ballots have two barcodes: one intelligent barcode on the outbound envelope from the post office and another barcode on the return envelope that identifies the voter. He said there is no intelligent barcode on the envelope coming to the Supervisor of Elections, and adding one would require altering their equipment, which could not be done in time for the election.

Mr. Holland also said that his office, the State, and the United States Postal Service (USPS) had not met a requirement to send, through a portal to the USPS, a list of voters in the state of Florida and all voters who had requested VBM. He said the USPS was to verify whether returned envelopes were from Florida voters who had requested the ballot from Florida. He said that portal had never been set up. He said the Supreme Court had ordered a stay because they were 46 days out from the election, one week away from mailing ballots overseas to military personnel, and two weeks from sending out domestic ballots, and it would not be feasible for election officials across the country to comply in the short amount of time.

Ms. Einstein asked how the Florida SAVE Act would impact the upcoming municipal elections. Mr. Holland said the SAVE Act would take effect January 1, 2027, and largely tried to accomplish what the federal SAVE Act intended. He explained that the bill was intended to prevent non-U.S. citizens from voting and was inspired by Arizona policies that placed the responsibility of citizenship verification on election officials. He said the problem was that this created a bifurcated ballot, since federal law says an election official cannot check citizenship status for federal elections, creating a ballot for state and local races and a ballot for federal races. He said Florida and its Supervisors of Elections did not want a bifurcated ballot. He explained that Florida maintains the ministerial role of elections officials, who must accept what is put on the initial application to register to vote, including citizenship status. He said the SAVE Act changed this by requiring the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to check citizenship when driver's licenses

are renewed or replaced. That information is then sent to the state, which cross-references it with the voter list and notifies county SOEs of potential non-U.S. citizens registered to vote. The SOE then mails the person a letter, and they have 30 days to respond and correct the issue. If they do not reply, they are removed from the voter list and deemed ineligible. The state is notified, and the Election Crimes and Security Office may investigate potential voter fraud. He said that no voter will have to prove citizenship at the polls.

Ms. Martinez asked if a person could get a provisional ballot. Mr. Holland said that if you are an eligible voter, you can vote, and a voter in the 30-day due process window after being flagged by the state is also eligible until the end of those 30 days. He said eligible voters and non-registered voters can request a provisional ballot if they desire, and the canvassing board will determine eligibility.

Mr. Bradley asked whether the SOE notifies local parties about poll-watching deadlines. Mr. Holland said they have that on their calendars but don't go to the parties to remind them of deadlines, since more than just party members can be poll watchers. He said they authenticate people who show up at polling places to be poll watchers but do not remind candidates and parties to have poll watchers. Mr. Gicalone added that they also have no role in determining poll watcher locations. Mr. Bradley asked if they assign poll workers; Mr. Gicalone and Mr. Holland confirmed.

Old Business

N/A

New Business

Mr. Gicalone suggested moving the date of the upcoming Election Advisory Panel. Mr. Holland asked whether everyone received the meeting notification this time. All but Ms. Martinez confirmed they had received the notification. Mr. Pringle said he has had issues receiving emails in the past.

Mr. Holland suggested requesting confirmation of panel members' attendance and following up with phone calls. Mr. Russell committed to getting phone numbers after the meeting adjourned.

The Panel decided to move the meeting to December 2, 2026.

Public Comment

N/A

Meeting Adjourned: 3:51 pm

Minutes: Brandon Russell, Council Research

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Posted: 9.29.26, 11:42 a.m.

