

COBB COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS AND REGISTRATION
January 13, 2025
BOARD MEETING MINUTES

100 Cherokee Street
3:00 p.m.

Board Member Attendance

	Present	Absent
Tori M. Silas, Chairwoman	X	
Jennifer Mosbacher, Vice Chairwoman	X	
Stacy Efrat, Secretary	X	
Debbie Fisher, Assistant Secretary	X	
Steve Bruning	X	

Others Present:

Tate Fall, Director of Elections
Daniel White, Counsel for the Board of Elections
Melissa Miller, Registration Division Manager
Kara Pringle, Election Division Manager
Marcques Spivey, Absentee Division Manager
Debbie VonFeldt, Administrative Assistant

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Silas called the meeting to order at 3:01p.m.

Recited the Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Silas acknowledged the passing of the 39th President of the United States, Georgia's native son and former Governor, James Earl Carter, Jr.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairwoman Silas raised the question of removing the Board Chair Update on the agenda per a previous email discussion with the board. Ms. Mosbacher suggested the Board Chair Update could be a part of Board Member Comments versus Election Office Reports, but didn't feel the need to move the agenda item for the current meeting. No other amendments were proposed.

Motion by Mr. Bruning to approve the January 13, 2024, meeting agenda as presented. Second by Ms. Fisher. Passed 5-0

PUBLIC COMMENT

Motion by Ms. Fisher to set a 5 minute time allotment per speaker for Public Comment. Second by Mr. Bruning. Passed 5-0

Leroy Emkin: Addressed the Board to read an email from Salleigh Grubbs to the Board

Donna Court: Addressed the Board regarding a successful election season and upcoming elections

Donald Barth: Addressed the Board regarding various grievances

Sally Riddle: Addressed the Board regarding the November 2024 election and upcoming Special Election

Christine Rozman: Addressed the Board regarding various concerns

Shelley Northrup: Addressed the Board regarding the November 2024 election and upcoming Special Election

Pamela Reardon: Addressed the board regarding general comments and election concerns

Parin Chheda: Addressed the Board regarding previous public comment

Sharon Marshall: Addressed the Board regarding the Policy Statement on Meetings with Political Parties

Mike Binns: Addressed the Board regarding general comments and public volunteers

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

No proposed revisions

Motion by Mr. Bruning to approve the December 9, 2024, meeting minutes as presented. Second by Ms. Fisher. Passed 5-0

PUBLIC HEARING

Polling Location Change for Oregon 02

Due to the sale of the Worship of Wonders building, Oregon 02 was temporarily relocated for the November 2024 election to Smitha Middle School. A request to move Oregon 02 to a permanent location is being made from the temporary location of Smitha Middle School to Gathering of Champions Church.

<u>Previous Location</u>	<u>Temporary Location</u>	<u>Proposed Permanent Relocation</u>
Worship of Wonders 1887 Powder Springs Road SW Marietta, GA 30060	Smitha Middle School 2025 Powder Springs Road SW Marietta, GA 30064	Gathering of Champions 1994 Powder Springs Road SW Marietta, GA 30064

The Proposed Oregon 02 location is across the street from Smitha Middle School. It is a great location and has a large parking lot. The effective date for the location is January 14, 2025.

Due to the Public Hearing portion of the Board Meeting, public comment is permitted on this topic and only related to the permanent relocation of Oregon 02.

No public comments

Chairwoman Silas thanked Director Fall for the format for this change to the polling location. Chairwoman Silas also acknowledged this proposed location change falls on the precinct boundary, and requested that the template used for proposed polling location changes be updated to include the number of miles the proposed location is outside of the precinct boundary when applicable.

With this precinct change being in District 4, it will be a polling location for the upcoming Special Election. Chairwoman Silas asked that the Communications lead leverage the BOC newsletters in areas assigned to this polling location in order to get the word out.

***Motion by Mr. Bruning to permanently relocate Oregon 02 to Gathering of Champions Church.
Second by Ms. Fisher. Passed 5-0***

OLD BUSINESS

Cobb BOER Policy Statement on Meetings with Political Party Chairs and Representatives

Ms. Mosbacher drafted a policy regarding meetings with political party chairs and representatives and what guidelines should be followed. Discussion regarding proposed revisions followed. Ms. Fisher is not in agreement with the policy as written. Having participated in previous meetings with former Director Eveler, Ms. Fisher feels there is nothing nefarious about a party chair and appointees meeting with the Director to discuss the issues poll watchers noticed during an election, as it is meant to try to improve the process. It was noted that the GOP Chair, Salleigh Grubbs, did not have a problem inviting the Chair of the Democrat Party to a requested meeting. Ms. Fisher also questioned Item 4 in the proposed policy as it states available information shall be limited to materials that are publicly available. This limits the intended purpose of party chair asking to meet with the director to go over poll watcher reports which are not available to the public. Ms. Fisher requested item 4 be stricken from the policy. Ms. Fisher was also concerned how the policy will impact phone calls by party chairs and if phone calls would have to include all parties. The concern is it will limit the exposure of Director Fall to both parties and limits 1st amendment rights. Ms. Fisher was not speaking on the behalf of the GOP Chair, but giving her thoughts on the policy.

Chairwoman Silas shared edits to the proposed policy and will provide the Board with her edits via email. Ms. Silas stated that she is curious about the rationale for limiting participation to parties' appointed board members, and doesn't understand why the board chair would be excluded. Ms. Mosbacher stated that it was logical to include the board members appointed by the parties attending the meeting. Ms. Silas recommends changing the verbiage in III.C. from "human resource matters are prohibited" to stating what topics are permissible, such as "election matters only". Mr. White does not have legal concerns with Ms. Mosbacher's draft or Ms. Silas's recommendations. Mr. White will provide additional suggested revisions. Ms. Fisher is concerned about the language "prohibiting human resource matters"; in 2020, both parties had issues with one employee and it was important to discuss the concern with Director Eveler.

NEW BUSINESS

Schedule for publication of BOER Meeting Materials

Item placed on the agenda per Chairwoman Silas regarding the timeliness of posting items on the website for public viewing. The schedule for 2025 included deadline dates that are not being met.

Currently, sign up for virtual public comment and the agenda should be made available three days prior to the meeting. Due to the current timeline not being met, Mr. Bruning requested the proposed agenda to have a deadline of one week prior to the Board Meeting so the public and the board can digest the agenda and come to the meeting prepared.

Ms. Mosbacher suggested a calendar format of deadlines for the internal and public materials.

Ms. Fisher suggested all items that come before the board be included in the agenda packet for public viewing. There have been times the agenda is posted the day of the board meeting and two times when the virtual comment link hasn't been posted.

Motion by Ms. Fisher to publish meeting materials including the agenda and agenda packet seven days prior to the BOER Meeting. Second by Mr. Bruning. Passed 5-0

Per Director Fall, if there is anything that comes up after the agenda is posted, we can amend the agenda during the meeting.

ELECTION OFFICE REPORTS & UPDATES

Director's Update

1) Absentee

Absentee by Mail Logistics and Accuracy testing for the February 11 Special Election completed on January 13

Absentee by Mail ballot mailout begins January 21 per O.C.G.A. 21-2-384(2).

12 regular applications, 1 UOCAVA application as of 1:00p.m. January 13

Advance Voting training takes place Fri, Jan 17 and Saturday, January 18

Advance Voting begins February 1

2) Elections

Training will start on January 21 and run through February 1

Target Number of Poll Workers Needed: 651

Total Hired as of January 13: 562

3) Prep

Started Logistics and Accuracy testing on January 13, 2025. Logistics and Accuracy will take an estimated 5-7 days but will continue until completion.

4) **Registration**

Voter registration deadline for the upcoming Special Election is January 13, 2025

Keyed 20,000 applications

New precinct cards will be ordered with Oregon 02's approved relocation

5) **Municipal Contracts**

Director Fall is working with the county attorney on contracts for the November municipal elections

6) **Cobb County Surveyor Qualifying Fee**

The BOC will vote on the qualifying fee for Surveyor at the January 14 meeting. No one qualified for the Surveyor position in 2024 so this position will be included in the November election. \$15 qualifying fee to be approved by the BOC. The Surveyor position does not have a salary.

7) **Implementation of New Laws**

O.C.G.A 21-2-217

Rules for Determining Residence

An unhoused voter can utilize the elections office address as their residential address for purposes of voter registration.

This has been the policy of Cobb County Elections. The department will continue to follow the new law as stated. We currently have four individuals that utilize our address as their primary residential address for purpose of voter registration.

O.C.G.A 21-2-283.1(b)

Ballot Proof Check and Review Procedures

Allows candidates on the ballot 24 hours to review ballot proofs prior to approval

O.C.G.A 21-2-493 (j.2)(1)

Ballot Images at 600dpi

New portion of the law that states beginning January 1, 2025, ballot images can be requested at 600dpi.

Election ICC and ICP scanners currently run at 200dpi.

The office received an Open Records Request for scans of all ballots from the November 2020 election. The copy machines in office can be set to 600dpi, but it would take up an enormous amount of space on the servers. Director Fall is working with ITS regarding how the department can scan ballots for Open Records Requests.

Follow up questions to Director Update

Ms. Fisher clarified that our 20,000 applications were keyed after the previous application deadline. Director Fall stated the registrations consist of change of addresses, new registrants, and out of county transfers. Applications should be finished being keyed by January 14.

New precinct cards will be sent out to all voters.

Mr. Bruning asked how other counties are handling the 600dpi rule, and if anyone is going to the legislature regarding the rule or asking for funds to comply. Director Fall spoke with representatives from a few other counties who received the same ORR and the ballot retention deadline had passed, so they no longer had their ballots. No guidance has been received from the Secretary of State other than we cannot use the ICC scanners to scan the ballots at 600dpi, because changing the resolution setting will de-certify the equipment.

Mr. White spoke with counsel for Forsyth and other counties who still have November 2020 ballots due to litigation. He advised Director Fall to let the requestor know the timeframe and cost, as Elections can charge for the time spent complying with the Open Records Request.

Director Fall responded to the requestor with an estimated time frame of 35½ weeks, scanning 2 hours each workday, and a cost of a little under \$14,000 for time spent retrieving and scanning the ballots.

The requestor had until end of day on January 14 to accept the estimate.

Elections cannot outsource the task as only election officials can handle the ballots. In order for the requestor to monitor the scanning, a copier would need to be moved out of the secured area.

Director Fall will let the Board know of any additional costs involved with regard to new equipment necessary for complying with these ballot image requests.

Chairwoman Silas inquired about mailing out precinct cards. Director Fall stated due to the timeline of getting the mailers out, the department is not able to use a third party and will be utilizing the state vendor, Knowink, which is the most cost-efficient option at this time.

Chairwoman Silas raised previous concerns using Knowink as a vendor in addition to some errors in previous mailing. Director Fall was asked if those concerns were addressed and asked about the process of mailing out the current precinct cards to ensure accuracy. Director Fall stated the current polling place with the address will be triple checked, as well as the redistricting street segments. The order will be placed directly through GARViS and the proofs will be triple checked.

Ms. Fisher asked about thousands of undeliverable precinct cards in other counties due to an error and whether that has been resolved. Director Fall stated it wasn't an issue for Cobb County, but we would triple check our proofs.

Board Chair Update

No Board Chair update

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

No Board Member comments

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Mr. Bruning to move to Executive session for pending litigation and an HR matter at 4:32p.m. Second by Ms. Fisher. Passed 5-0

Motion by Mr. Bruning to come out of Executive session at 6:13 pm. Second by Ms. Mosbacher. Passed 5-0

Next Meeting

February 11, 2025 @ 7:00p.m. – Election Night Meeting

- Board Room – 995 Roswell St NE, Marietta BOC Room

Adjournment

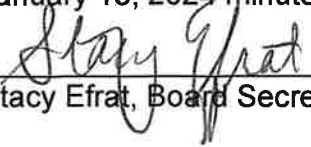
- Chairwoman Silas adjourned the meeting at 6:13 pm.



January 13, 2024 minutes prepared by:

Debbie VonFeldt, Administrative Assistant

January 13, 2024 minutes reviewed by:



Stacy Efrat, Board Secretary