

COBB COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS AND REGISTRATION
February 17, 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
Tammy Thorpe, Communications Specialist II
Debbie VonFeldt, Administrative Assistant

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Silas called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Recited the Pledge of Allegiance

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

No proposed amendments to the agenda.

Motion by Mr. Bruning to approve the February 17, 2025, meeting agenda as presented. Second by Ms. Fisher. Passed 4-0. Ms. Mosbacher is not in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No In-Person Public Comment sign ups. 1 Virtual Comment sign up.

Monica Delancy – Virtual – Signed up but did not attend

OLD BUSINESS

No old business to discuss

NEW BUSINESS

1) Director's Election Update

a) Advance Voting

ADVANCE VOTING LOCATION	TOTAL VOTERS
Marietta – Main Office	753
Austell – Old Clarkdale Community Center	246
Mableton – South Cobb Community Center	755
Southeast – Smyrna Community Center	1,553
TOTAL	3,307

PARTY	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 4	TOTAL
Democrat	1,648	1,259	2,907
Republican	200	200	400
TOTAL	1,848	1,459	3,307

b) Absentee by Mail

ISSUED	TOTAL VOTED	CURED	REJECTED
50	42	2	42

PARTY	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 4	TOTAL
Democrat	19	14	33
Republican	0	8	8
TOTAL	19	22	41

The unofficial Election Summary Report shows 41 total votes due to one of the ballots being provisional. Provisional ballots are counted under the provisional total, rather than the regular

ballot total. 50 ballots were mailed out. 42 ballots were returned. 1 ballot was mailed out as a provisional ballot, one was a provisional ballot upon return and needed to be cured. Both provisional ballots were cured, therefore all 42 ballots returned were accepted. 1 voter opted to cancel their Absentee by Mail ballot and vote Advance In-Person. There are 7 outstanding Absentee by Mail ballots not returned.

c) Election Day

ELECTION DAY TURNOUT BY HOUR											
7 AM	8 AM	9 AM	10 AM	11 AM	12 PM	1 PM	2 PM	3 PM	4 PM	5 PM	6 PM
165	220	277	338	405	457	454	474	533	694	822	795

PARTY	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 4	TOTAL
Democrat	2,110	2,790	4,900
Republican	289	449	738
TOTAL	2,399	3,239	5,638

68 precincts open on Election Day. No issues to report. All precincts opened on time.

d) Official and Complete Results

COUNTING GROUP	BALLOTS CAST	NUMBERED LIST	TURNOUT %
Election Day	5,638	5,638	2.35%
Advance Voting	3,307	3,307	1.38%
Absentee by Mail	41	42	0.02%
Provisional	19	18	0.01%
TOTAL	9,005	9,005	3.75%
Total Voters in Districts 2 & 4			240,114

The numbered list shows 42 for Absentee by Mail due to the provisional voter getting credit for voting, but the ballot is cast/counted in the provisional group.

e) Risk-Limiting Audit

Begins at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 18. Nearly a full recount will be conducted due to the special election being small. There will be 2 audit teams and the parties have been notified.

2) Certification of February 11, 2025 Special Primary Election

Ms. Fisher inquired about the discrepancy regarding the ballots cast and numbered list total of 9,005 in the Official and Complete Results, the GARViS report of 8,988, and the ePulse report of 8,945. Director Fall stated the GARViS list the Board received on Friday, February 14 did not include credit for voting for all the provisional ballots as they had not been uploaded at that point. The ePulse numbered list only includes Election Day and Advance Voting due to those being the only programs that use ePulse. Absentee by Mail and Provisional do not use ePulse. Chairwoman Silas noted that the ePulse numbered list of 8,945 plus the 42 Absentee by Mail ballots, plus 18 provisional ballots equals 9,005 as stated in the Official and Complete Results.

Motion by Mr. Bruning to certify the results of the February 11, 2025, Special Primary Election. Second by Ms. Fisher. Passed 4-0. Ms. Mosbacher is not in attendance.

3) O.C.G.A 21-2-213.1 Monthly Contingent Expense Allowance for the Operation of the Office of the Board of Registrars

Ms. Fisher brought up for discussion the O.C.G.A 21-2-213.1 code regarding a monthly contingent expense allowance. Ms. Fisher deferred to Mr. White for legal input on the relevant code section. Mr. White stated the code talks about monthly expenditures for Board of Registrars and not the Board of Elections and Registration. The initial code was developed before most counties had official Boards of Elections and Registration. Board of Registrars, which are appointed by superior court judges, are starting to go away as most counties now have a Board of Elections and Registration. Mr. White also referred to O.C.G.A. 21-2-212 which defines a Board of Registrars, which is different from a Board of Elections and Registration.

Chairwoman Silas stated conversations relating to the Board stipends and potentially increasing the stipends have been brought up prior to Ms. Efrat and Ms. Fisher joining the Board. Board members receive a stipend of \$150 per month and the Chair receives a stipend of \$200 per month. Chairwoman Silas will leave it up to the Board whether they want to bring forward discussions regarding increasing the stipend. To the extent that it is needed, or follow up is requested, Chairwoman Silas will reach out to other similarly sized counties to see what stipends their Boards are receiving. Ms. Fisher remarked she brought up the contingent expense allowance code due to discussions she had with other boards regarding their monthly stipends.

4) Advance In-Person Voting Schedule – April 29, 2025, Special General Election

The Advance Voting schedule is a mirrored proposal of the Special Primary Election. The same 4 sites will be utilized, Main Office, Old Clarkdale Community Center, South Cobb Community Center, and Smyrna Community Center. All 4 sites will have drop boxes.

Proposed dates and hours are as follows at all locations:

Saturday, April 19:	9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, April 20:	12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Monday, April 21 – Friday, April 25:	7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Fisher feels the proposed sites are heavy on the south side and light on the north side with 8 miles from the top side of District 2 to the closest location in the north which is the Main Office.

She feels we need to add another site further north. Director Fall stated our Main Office is the northernmost facility the county has in District 2.

There are 8 precincts north of the main office. 6 are churches. 1 is Cobb EMC. 1 is a private facility that is used for election day only. Churches aren't utilized for AIP due to not being able to secure spaces because of all the other activities they have going on. Mr. Bruning mentioned Cobb EMC is just around the corner and wouldn't be a significant benefit to voters as an added facility as it's not much further north. Ms. Efrat noted she liked the consistency of the locations and hours since it was the same schedule as the Special Primary.

Motion by Mr. Bruning to approve the proposed Advance Voting schedule for the April 29, 2025 Special General Election for Districts 2 & 4. Second by Ms. Efrat. Passed 3-1. Ms. Fisher is in opposition. Ms. Mosbacher is not in attendance.

ELECTION OFFICE REPORTS & UPDATES

1) Director Update

a) Precinct Cards

Director Fall gave an update regarding the mailout of just under 600,000 precinct cards to active and inactive voters in the county. The law requires a voter be notified if they are affected by a change in boundary of a district. While the elections office was only legally required to notify all voters who had County Commission District boundary change, precinct cards were mailed out to all Cobb County voters as a courtesy.

After mailout, many voters called the office due to the precinct card showing up in their USPS Informed Delivery but not receiving the card until 3-5 days later. Director Fall is still waiting on a response from USPS regarding that particular issue.

Director Fall stated there are always cards that come back from large mailouts due to voters moving. Those returned cards are entered into GARViS to document that interaction.

Total pieces mailed from vendor 592,253

Total pieces scanned by USPS 592,299

- Difference of 54 pieces or less than 0.01%

Returned undeliverable mail

- If voter is active at the same address, a confirmation notice is sent to start the Inactive process which is processed in GARViS as returned mail. If voter is already inactive, no action is taken since they are already Inactive

Returned undeliverable mail with forwarding address in Cobb, out of Cobb, or out of state

- If voter is active at the same address, it is processed in GARViS as returned mail to start the Inactive process. We mail the voter either a voter registration application to update the address in Cobb or another county, or we mail the cancellation form to have their name removed.

Director Fall also commented on the large number of precinct cards that were returned with a

postage due label. Before a vendor mails out the cards, addresses are run through USPS databases which includes NCOA. When forward notification mailings are identified, additional postage is included on the cards. Our permit number, rather than postage, has been used in the past, so this particular issue had not been encountered before. Director Fall inquired with the vendor why our permit number was not used and is waiting on a response. The elections office has identified approximately 2,000 precinct cards that were returned with postage due. Upon research from the vendor, the addresses on those particular cards were not in the NCOA database, however, there is a known lag in the database. The vendor stated it is possible the 2,000 addresses have put in for a change of address but it hasn't made it into the database yet.

An update on this issue was provided by the vendor:

“In preparing the mailing, our team identified 38,624 pieces with an active move on file in the NCOA database. These shipped with additional postage to include Returned Service. You should expect these 38,000 pieces to be returned to you.

Finally, you have identified additional cards as being returned. Attached is the NCOA date details for one of the sample you provided (also attached). This particular recipient did not have any notation in the NCOA database. It should be noted there is a lag in the NCOA data, which would explain a few of the returns.”

USPS confirmed this is correct.

Director Fall informed the Board that the elections office will be mailing a letter to all the District 2 voters that had had precinct cards returned. The office is starting with District 2 due to the Special Primary Runoff Election on March 11, then will move onto District 4 in preparation for the April 29 Special General Election. We will use our permit number so mailings will be forwarded.

Ms. Fisher asked about the cost from the current state vendor vs the three procurement bids received. Director Tate commented the other bids received were for printing only and did not include postage.

Chairwoman Silas inquired about the number of voters that were impacted by redistricting. Director Fall stated she would get back to the Board with those numbers, and the cost of the mailout vs the bids. Chairwoman Silas also stated it would be beneficial to mail the actual precinct card along with the letter to the impacted voters. She also inquired if the elections office has the capability to print any of the precinct cards in-house. Director Fall stated the elections office does not have the capability of printing those in-house.

b) Remaining Elections in 2025

DATE	ELECTION
March 11	District 2 Special Primary Runoff (Democratic Runoff Only)
April 29	Districts 2 & 4 Special General Election
June 17	Public Service Commissioner Statewide Primary
July 15	<i>Public Service Commissioner Statewide Primary Runoff (if needed)</i>
November 4	Public Service Commissioner Statewide General and Municipal Elections
December 2	<i>Municipal Election Runoff (if needed)</i>

Mr. Bruning stated that the Public Service Commissioners need to live within their district, but believes it is a statewide election. Director Fall will confirm the details of the Public Service Commissioner Special Election at an upcoming board meeting as little information regarding the June 17 election has been provided by the State.

2) 2025 Communications Plan

1) 2024 Milestones

- a) Developed our brand identity to ensure voters easily recognize our official communications
- b) Mailed Voter Guide to Cobb Voters
- c) 12 Voter Education & Outreach Events
 - i) Kennesaw State University Elections 101 – went on campus and helped answer any questions
- d) Launched our Social Media
 - i) Instagram
 - ii) Facebook

2) 2025 Goals and Objectives

- a) Standardize branded materials to reflect the departments new logo and color scheme
- b) Internal Communication – launching our department SharePoint – “PeachPoint”
- c) Voter Education & Marketing: tailor marketing material to alert voters of upcoming, typical low voter turnout elections. Partner with other county departments to amplify election messaging through their established marketing channels and audiences.
- d) Voter Education & Outreach: Partner with community organizations to be onsite to register and assist voters. Focus on ensuring alignment with departmental goals and responsible use of available resources. Update outreach displays to reflect new department brand.
- e) Social Media: continue to use our channels for education and awareness. Increase reach and follower count on Instagram and Facebook.

<u>Instagram Insights</u>	<u>Facebook Insights</u>
(Last 30 Days)	(Last 30 Days)
Followers: 144	Followers: 230
New Followers: 29	New Followers: 12
Views: 7,422	Views: 6,477
Accounts Reached: 3,455	Accounts Reached: 1,394
Interactions: 267	Engagement: 332

- f) Crisis Communication: Partner with EMA (Emergency Management Agency) to develop a departmental crisis communications plan

A discussion between Ms. Thorpe and the Board took place regarding Department Goals being shared, a list of dates of importance regarding the roll out of communications, suggestions of a future newsletter, utilizing email as a form of communication, and the potential for launching a mobile app. Ms. Thorpe was commended on the new logo and branding.

Ms. Fisher addressed Ms. Thorpe about the timeliness of the recent precinct card mailout. Director Fall stated that Ms. Thorpe is responsible for the design of the voter guide and precinct cards, but not the actual timing or process of mailing them out. Director Fall stated the current precinct cards deadline was a tight turnaround with redistricting and the holidays. Director Fall requested 3 quotes from vendors per county policy. When the 3rd vendor did not respond in a timely manner, the department went with the state's vendor that was already in place. Moving forward, precinct cards will be mailed out on a quarterly basis for the remainder of the year and the department will look at sending a mailer at the beginning of next year depending on funding.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Chairwoman Silas commended Director Fall and the team on the administration of the February 11, 2025 Special Primary Election.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Mr. Bruning to move to Executive session for personnel matters at 4:04 p.m. Second by Ms. Fisher. *Passed 4-0. Ms. Mosbacher is not in attendance.*

No vote will be necessary after Executive Session.

Motion to come out of Executive session at 5:04 pm by Mr. Bruning, second by Ms. Fisher. Passed 4-0. Mosbacher is not in attendance.

Next Meeting

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

- Board Room – 995 Roswell St NE, Marietta

March 14, 2025 @ 3:00 p.m. – Pre-Certification Meeting

- Board Room – 995 Roswell St NE, Marietta

March 17, 2025 @ 3:00 p.m. – Regular/Certification Meeting

- BOC Room – 100 Cherokee St, Marietta

Adjournment

Chairwoman Silas adjourned the meeting at 5:04 pm.



February 17, 2025 minutes prepared by:

Debbie VonFeldt, Administrative Assistant

February 17, 2025 minutes reviewed by:



Stacy Efrat, Board Secretary



Affidavit Executive Session

The undersigned chairperson or presiding officer, under oath, certifies that at a meeting of the Cobb County Board of Elections and Registration held on **February 17, 2025**, the Board closed its meeting as permitted by the Open Meetings Act of Georgia [O.C.G.A. 50-14-1 through 50-14-6].

The undersigned does hereby attest that the executive session of this meeting was devoted to matters covered within the exceptions in the Open Meetings Act. Specifically, the matters attended to are covered by O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3 and consisted of discussion of personnel matters.

This 17th day of February, 2025.

Donna M. Swan

Signature of Chairperson or Presiding Officer

Sworn to & Subscribed Before Me
On The Above Indicated Date:

Debra Vontfeldt
Notary Public, State of Georgia
Commission Expires 07/13/2027

