

The Board of Elections Meeting was held on Thursday, February 1, 2024.

Steven Gilbert, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:37 pm virtually via Zoom.

Board members present were Alison Gary, Maxine Morrison, and Beth Terry.

Staff present were Bertha Gaymon, City Treasurer, and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

Others present were Robert Goldberg-Strassler, Michael Hartman, and Bill Orleans.

Approval of Agenda: Ms. Terry moved to approve the agenda. Mr. Gilbert seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 11, 2024: Ms. Gary moved to approve the January 11, 2024 meeting minutes. Ms. Terry seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Election Budget Discussion with Finance Staff: The Board discussed the previous year's budget, focusing on expenditures and shortfalls. Mr. Gilbert, Ms. Gaymon from the City of Greenbelt, and others reviewed specific budget items, such as the voting machine rental, election questionnaire, and miscellaneous expenses. They discovered that while some categories were under budget, others, like miscellaneous expenses and the election questionnaire, were over budget. The Board also noted that some expenses, such as the renewal of a PO box and mail, fell under the 'office expenses' category despite not being budgeted. The discussion concluded with an agreement to review and adjust the budget for future use.

The Board discussed the budget for a recent project, focusing on categorizing expenses. There was a particular emphasis on the cost of postage and the use of permits. The Board noted that the project was within budget, having spent \$77,988 out of a budget of \$80,000. However, it was agreed that the expenses should be better categorized for future projects. The idea of adding a 'postage' and 'accessibility' category was proposed. The Board also briefly discussed the rental of voting machines, which had been reclassified for better financial tracking.

Special Election Cost Discussion

The Board discussed the cost of a special election. Ms. Terry recalled an estimate from a vendor, Fort Orange Press, which suggested that mailing ballots to all voters would cost between \$29,000 and \$32,000. Mr. Goldberg-Strassler emphasized the need to understand the cost and possibly devise a more cost-effective process. Mr. Gilbert proposed the idea of conducting special elections via mail only, which would be less expensive and simpler. However, the Board did not finalize any decisions during this meeting. A clarification was made about the city owning election machines, which could affect accounting procedures, and Ms. Gaymon agreed to investigate the implications. Furthermore, Ms. Gaymon offered to provide a

comparative analysis of election numbers from 2021 and 2023, as requested by Mr. Goldberg-Strassler. The importance of due diligence in managing accounts and assessing revenue was also emphasized.

The Board discussed the budget for the recent election and the costs associated with various items. There was confusion regarding the cost of mailing notices and publications, with Ms. Terry and Mr. Gilbert unsure if these costs were included in their budget. Ms. Anderson clarified that the costs of the Voter Notification Cards (VNCs) were categorized under the election budget and paid in November. She agreed to check if the invoice for the mailing notices had been paid and how it was categorized. The Board also discussed the cost of staffing for election day, which is calculated based on the number of registered voters in each municipality.

The Board reviewed the previous year's budget, identifying expenditures and shortfalls. The Board also discussed the budget for a recent project, emphasizing the need for better expense categorization. A potential vacancy on the Council and the cost of a special election were also discussed.

Post-Election Discussion (Review Draft Memo): The Board discussed approving a memo to the City Council and the disability language preferences. Mr. Hartman raised a concern about the use of the term "visually impaired" in the nomenclature for people with disabilities, suggesting that "blind" or "low vision" would be more appropriate. Mr. Gilbert disagreed, stating that the language preferences have changed over time. The Board also discussed the use of a borrowed Dropbox without any additional costs.

There was a discussion about voter turnout and voting rights. Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Goldberg-Strassler discussed the issue of low voter turnout in their city, considering outreach efforts to target non-citizens, 16 and 17-year-olds, and long-term residents who do not vote. However, they noted previous efforts have not resulted in a significant increase in participation. They also touched on the topic of voting rights and constitutionality, specifically in relation to New York City and Maryland. The conversation highlighted the differing voting qualifications in these areas and ended without a clear resolution on the matter.

There was a discussion about the correct terminology for visually impaired individuals, with Ms. Terry noting the importance of using the correct language.

Mr. Gilbert moved to approve the amended draft memo. Ms. Terry seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

New Business: None.

Schedule for Next Meeting: The Board meeting will be held on Thursday, February 29, via Zoom at 5:30 pm.

Next steps:

Ms. Gaymon will help suggest categories for the next budget to improve tracking and management.

Ms. Gaymon will provide a comparative analysis of election numbers for 2021 and 2023.

Ms. Anderson will follow up on the costs to the Prince George's County Board of Elections and report to the Board.

Mr. Goldberg-Strassler will email the Board about the non-sitting voting issue.

Ms. Terry will send the budget sheet to Pat Evans for her comments.

Ms. Gary moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Gilbert seconded.

The meeting ended at approximately 6:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonita Anderson, City Clerk