

New Castle City Board of Elections

Minutes

April 12, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.

1 Municipal Boulevard

*Members Present: Marianne Caven, Chair
Connie Reese
Rodney Pratt
Carolyn Travers*

Absent: Susan Hager

Also Present: N. Christopher Griffiths, Esq., City Solicitor

Ms. Caven called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Minutes

2/21/2023 – A motion was made to approve the February 21, 2023, Minutes as presented. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

3/29/2023 – A motion was made to approve the March 29, 2023, Minutes as presented. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

Poll Worker Training

Training was conducted on April 12th. A few Poll Workers who did not attend the April 12th training will receive the Manual to study and a short overview of the process will be conducted on Saturday morning for their benefit.

Voting Machines / Setup

The voting machines will arrive at the Senior Center prior to 3:00 p.m. on Friday April 14th. Mr. Pratt will coordinate with Natalie at the Senior Center and will oversee the setup.

Signage / Inventory

Ms. Reese inspected the inventory being held at the City offices. Mses. Reese and Caven will review the inventory prior to Election Day. Some signage will be provided by the County.

Hospitality

Mses. Hager and Travers will coordinate hospitality. Ms. Travers noted that she has not heard anything from Ms. Hager. Ms. Caven will follow-up with Ms. Hager. Hospitality needs for the morning should be at the Senior Center at 7:00 a.m. Ms. Caven explained how hospitality needs were handled for past elections.

Poll Needs

Ms. Caven will open and close the polls on Saturday. Ms. Travers and Mr. Pratt will be at the polls in the morning.

The poll boundary must be measured out to ensure that candidates and/or campaigners remain 50 feet from the building. Ms. Travers suggested that could be measured out on Friday evening.

Voter Lists

The final voter list will be delivered Friday morning. On Friday afternoon the list must be divided and individuals who voted by Absentee Ballot must be identified on the list. Ms. Caven explained the process that will be followed if a voter who has submitted an Absentee Ballot presents themselves at the polling place and wishes to vote in person.

Public Comment

Sally Denton – 209 2nd Street

Ms. Denton asked for an explanation of how the situation regarding Ms. Leary's candidate application came about. Ms. Caven stated that Ms. Leary is on the ballot because she applied prior to 5:00 p.m. on the last date to apply. She added that the Board of Elections was not presented with a formal complaint regarding the candidate process followed by Ms. Leary. The City investigated the matter and it did not require anyone to be removed from the ballot.

Mr. Griffiths clarified that there was an irregularity that was brought to his attention and he investigated the matter. He questioned City employees and spoke with Ms. Leary. It was determined that there was a City procedure in place; however, there was no stated policy or Code regulation violation that would have required the removal of a candidate from the ballot. He explained the process that would have been followed if a formal complaint had been received that would have required the Board of Elections to act as an appellate body. Mr. Griffiths stated that he investigated the matter from a legal and an ethical standpoint. He reiterated that a formal complaint was never received by the City or him. Mr. Griffiths added that the City employee voluntarily resigned.

Ms. Denton stated that the matter should have been more transparent to the residents. Mr. Griffiths explained that before any communication to the public was made he was required to fully investigate the matter and discuss it with the City Administrator to determine if there were facts to support any allegations that were made. He stated that there was not enough evidence to support removing anyone from the ballot.

Mr. Griffiths stated that all due diligence was taken in the matter but there was not enough evidence to take the matter further.

Ms. Denton stated that she was satisfied that Mr. Griffiths had answered her questions.

Beverly Ross – 650 Delaware Street

Ms. Ross asked if going forward a procedure would be in place. She stated that she and others were not informed that they could file a formal complaint.

Mr. Griffiths explained why it can be important to require a candidate to pick up a packet in person, noting that it is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the application is properly submitted before the deadline. He opined that the City will look into the matter and

create a formal policy. He added that the Board of Elections can review the intake process and how it should be done.

Ms. Ross asked who would be the contact to follow-up on these procedures. Mr. Griffiths explained how a change in the intake process could be facilitated through the Board of Elections, the City Administrator and City Council. He noted that having the process instituted via Ordinance would give it the force of law.

Ms. Ross reiterated that she wanted someone to be a contact person. Mr. Griffiths noted that the issue can be followed up with the City Administrator of at City Council meetings.

Ms. Caven stated that the Board of Elections did receive a written complaint and she followed-up on it; however, after discussing the matter with the complainant and explaining next steps, the complainant did not pursue an appeal.

Valarie Leary – 201 Harmony Street

Ms. Leary stated that in 2015 she filed via email, which set a precedent. She added that her application was filed well before the deadline. She stated that Delaware Title 15 does not state any means for filing and the City Charter has no definition of how to file and does not list any restrictions. She opined that perhaps more efficient methods should be considered.

Ethan Quirk – 522 Harmony Street

Mr. Quirk stated that as a candidate it was very difficult to get accurate and up-to-date information on registered voters. He noted that he was informed several times that he would receive that data; however, he did not. Ultimately he received a list from the City Office but it was from 2022. Ms. Caven apologized and noted that the Board never received his request. She stated that the 2023 list has been available since February. Ms. Delgado stated that she gave Mr. Quirk the list that was received in February and apologized for supplying an outdated list.

Mr. Quirk encouraged the Board to provide clear direction on how to obtain a copy of the Voter Registration List.

During discussion Ms. Reese noted that the County list includes all residents in the 19720 zip code, not just the City of New Castle residents; and opined that the list could be pulled by the County using parcel numbers. Ms. Caven stated that this could be addressed prior to the next City election. Ms. Caven noted there has been discussion of having the City create its own Voter Registration List. Ms. Caven suggested that further discussion of the Voter Registration List be tabled.

Ms. Ross noted that the Trustees have their own Voter List and suggested that people in power work together to coordinate a Voter List.

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Ms. Caven explained that on Election Day the Board of Elections will have a direct contact in Dover to verify qualification of anyone who comes to vote and is not on the Voter Registration List.

Mr. Griffiths confirmed with Ms. Denton that he had addressed all of her questions.

There being no further business to discuss Ms. Caven made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer*