

**Election Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
February 23, 2015**

Present: Marjorie Butler, Jan Huffman, Nancy Levine, John McDermott

Also Present: City Clerk David Olson & Assistant City Clerk Eneida Tavares

**Update on the request to set the date of the Preliminary for Thursday, September 17, 2015**

Clerk Olson provided an update on the Board of Aldermen's Programs & Services Committee meeting where they discussed the recommendation to seek Home Rule Legislation to remove the Tuesday restriction from the Charter and set the 2015 date for Thursday, September 17, 2015. He noted that Commissioners Butler and Levine joined him at the Programs & Services meeting for the discussion. The discussion went well and the Board chose to seek Home Rule Legislation and set the date for the 17<sup>th</sup>. The Board will take final action on March 2, 2015 and then it will go to the state for approval. Commissioner Butler asked if the Law Department was putting together the text. Clerk Olson responded that he had drafted it and sent it to the Law Department for their review. The text will be ready for the March 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Commissioner Butler clarified that the change will not be just for this year, but will allow the flexibility of setting the date into the future.

**Update on the Budget Process**

Clerk Olson noted that at the last meeting he had presented the budget and some of the changes in the election budget that were proposed. He has since met with Maureen Lemieux and she has removed the increase in pay for the poll workers that had been proposed. Due to all of the snow related expenses this year, the reserves that Ms. Lemieux thought she would have to supplement the budget have been depleted and she asked that the raises be delayed until the next budget cycle. Clerk Olson noted that there was full funding for a preliminary election this year. If there was no need for a preliminary election he would ask that \$16,500 of that unused money be used for poll worker increases for the November and March elections. Commissioner Butler asked if the city would be reimbursed by the state or federal government for the snow costs. Clerk Olson noted that it is a possibility, but it is not something that happens quickly. He noted that the City is still waiting for a reimbursement for snow removal that happened two years ago. Commissioner Butler noted that it needs to be made clear that getting these funds for poll worker increases is a priority.

**Minutes**

The minutes from the January 21, 2015 meeting were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made and seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **Election of Chair**

Clerk Olson noted that at the last election of a chair it was agreed that the chair would switch between the Democrats and the Republicans. This year it would be a Republican. Jan Huffman and John McDermott are the candidates. Commissioner McDermott was concerned that his appointment was almost up and had not heard about reappointment. Clerk Olson assured him that he would serve until he was reappointed, or replacement was found.

A motion was made and seconded to elect Commissioner McDermott as chair for the coming year. **The vote to elect was unanimous.**

Commissioner Huffman commended Commissioner Butler for her service as Chair for the past year.

### **Change of Polling Locations Discussion**

Clerk Olson noted that the staff had been working with the spreadsheet that had been presented at the last meeting which prioritized the need for moving particular locations. Assistant Clerk Eneida Tavares started with the locations in most critical need of moving and has begun to work her way down the list. Clerk Olson noted that it was not the expectation to vote to move any locations today, but to begin to discuss some of the new locations that have been identified.

Assistant Clerk Eneida Tavares presented her work to date on identifying potential new locations. She presented her work on finding new locations for the top 4 locations in need of moving. She started with the Church of the Redeemer. She contacted Boston College and The Chestnut Hill Mall which both said no. The Congregation Mishkin Tafila on Hammond Pond Parkway is interested and the space and parking is wonderful. They also have on-site storage space for our election equipment, however, there are a few concerns including the fact that poll workers would not be able to bring their own food with them to the polls. Kosher food would need to be provided for the poll workers. They also would be charging a fee to use the space and there is the issue of Jewish Holidays during election season. Commissioner Levine noted that even if a Jewish holiday fell on a Tuesday, it would still be a problem if the holiday ended on a Monday, because we would not be able to set-up. Clerk Olson reminded the Commissioners that the State Primaries are out of the City's control and that the State would try to avoid a Jewish Holiday. However, the decision rests with the State and it might be a day before or after a holiday, or on one of the minor Jewish holidays, which would preclude us from using the synagogue as a location.

Another option would be to use Newton South High School. Asst. Clerk Tavares has contacted them and in the initial discussion the school was concerned that there was not enough parking. She has not heard back from them with a definitive answer yet. Commissioner Huffman noted that he has been at the school during registration and that there seemed to be plenty of parking there during the day. Eneida Tavares stated that she would talk with Michael Cronin.

Clerk Olson asked about the Longwood Cricket Club. Assistant Clerk Tavares noted that there was not much parking around the facility. Clerk Olson asked if anyone had any other suggestions of spaces for Ward 7 Precinct 1.

In looking at an alternate space for the Memorial Spaulding polling location, the only option at this point is Temple Beth Avodah which has the same issues as mentioned with Congregation Mishkin Tafila. Clerk Olson asked if Newton South High School could be used as an alternate as it is in an adjoining precinct. Asst. Clerk Tavares noted that the Oak Hill Middle School is already being used as a polling location and that it is large enough to accommodate another precinct. Asst. Clerk Tavares noted that parking is an issue at this location. Commissioner Butler asked about the use of Brown Middle School which is across the street from Oak Hill Middle School. Commissioner Levine noted that the school is set back from the street and up an incline so that it might have accessibility issues. She also noted that if the Commission is looking to move out of schools she would hate to move into a new one. Commissioner Butler asked about the use of the new fire station. Clerk Olson noted that there is no completion date for the station at this time and in looking at the floor plan, there is no big community space in the building other than the truck bays, which are not ideal as we have seen in the use of Station #1 in Ward 1. The Commissioners asked that we continue to pursue a second polling location at Oak Hill Middle.

Asst. Clerk Tavares moved on to the Bowen School. She has contacted the MacKenzie Center, but they were concerned about having to move their scheduled activities. They would be looking for \$800 in compensation. Clerk Olson noted that the MacKenzie Center was a big gym attached to the Sacred Heart Parish. It would work nicely, but we have not compensated any location to this point other than to cover custodial costs. He asked the Commissioners if they would consider paying to rent space. Commissioner Levine felt that if we can't increase our poll worker pay then we should not pay rent at this time. Asst. Clerk Tavares noted that she had also contacted the Andover Theological School who did not say no, but would have to have a meeting to see if they might consider it. Commissioner Levine asked about the Baptist Church as a location and Commissioner Huffman asked about the Lutheran Church. Clerk Olson noted that they are in an adjacent precinct, so they are possibilities. It was noted that parking would be tough in Newton Centre.

The final location for discussion was Fire Station #1. Asst. Clerk Tavares noted that the Craft Street Stable might be a possibility. She still needs to look at the space and talk with DPW Commissioner to determine if it will work. Asst. Clerk Tavares noted that the Sons of Italy has been asked, but they would have to agree to not sell alcohol that day. Commissioner McDermott noted that parking there was terrible. Asst. Clerk Tavares has also asked the YMCA, but they have said no. Commissioner Huffman suggested Our Lady Help of Christians might be a possibility. He also suggested the old Aquinas Jr. College but Clerk Olson noted that the sisters that own it are in the process of selling it. The Jackson Homestead was suggested, but the spaces are too small for a polling location. Commissioner Butler suggested the Eliot Church as they have a large room behind the sanctuary. There is some parking, but also some street parking is available. Asst. Clerk Tavares suggested that it might be possible to consolidate it

with the polling location at Pellegrini Field House. The space in the building is large enough, but the parking may not be adequate for two precincts. Commissioner Huffman asked about the old Newton Community Service Center location and if that might be a possibility. Clerk Olson did not know anything about it, but would look into it. He suggested that the Bigelow School might be a possibility. It currently has two precincts, but is large enough to include a third. Parking however is an issue. The Silver Lake Mill building which is now an office building might also be a possibility.

Asst. Clerk Tavares will continue to look at spaces and present some additional possibilities at the next meeting. Clerk Olson noted that the Aldermen, when they were going through the re-precincting process, were concerned about keeping voting locations central to each precinct. He suggested that the Commissioners be prepared that there might be pushback from the Aldermen if the Commission only pursued a strategy of consolidation.

#### **Other Business**

Commissioner Huffman asked if there will be a problem with the use of Countryside as a polling location if the preliminary is held on Thursday. He asked if the school would need to use the cafetorium for students to have lunch on that day. Clerk Olson noted that he has communicated with Mike Cronin from the school department who spoke with the Superintendent and has gotten assurances that the date would not be a problem.

#### **The Date of the Next Commission Meeting.**

The Commission will next meet on Monday, March 30, 2015, at 5:00 pm.

#### **The meeting adjourned.**

Submitted by

Marjorie Butler, Chair