

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

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

Also Present: City Clerk David Olson

Minutes

The minutes from the May 18, 2015 meeting were reviewed. A motion to amend the text of the fifth paragraph of the section that covered the changes of polling locations, to clarify why the Commission was looking at moving the polling location out of the Countryside School, was made and approved. A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made and seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Certifying the September 17, 2015 Preliminary Election

Clerk Olson noted that there were very few adjustments to the unofficial numbers that were presented on Election night. In total, there were four ballots that needed to be hand-counted after the polls closed and one Provisional Ballot. It was a very light election with only 8% turnout across the city.

Commissioner Huffman asked if there were any complaints that were brought forward on Election Day. Clerk Olson stated that there were a couple of concerns that were mentioned: Ald. Cote and Commissioner Huffman had both heard of difficulties in finding parking spaces mid-day at the Newton Community Service Center. Clerk Olson noted that there was nothing unusual going on that day, parking is just hard to find sometimes at all of the polling locations. He noted that Commissioner Huffman had asked if the meters in the parking lot across the street from the NCSC could be bagged so that voters did not have to pay for parking. Clerk Olson stated that he would make the request to the Police Department's Traffic Bureau.

Clerk Olson also noted that there was concern regarding parking at the Grace Episcopal Church as a no parking zone went into effect on Eldredge Street from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm on Election Day. In speaking with Sergeant Babcock of the Traffic Bureau, he was willing to look at making this area a 15-minute zone on Election Day. Clerk Olson shared some photos he had taken of the parking situation on Election Day which showed that there was not a huge problem.

Finally, there were last-minute minor changes to polling locations within three schools. The gym at Bigelow School could not be used on Election Day as the contractors refinishing the floor were behind schedule. Voting moved to the hallway outside the gym and worked well given the light turnout. At the Countryside School and the Memorial Spaulding School, voting was moved from their respective cafeterias to their gyms. The principals wanted access to the cafeterias during the day on Election Day. Commissioner Butler pointed out that the gyms at

these two locations were probably in higher demand after school for the after-school programs then during the day.

Clerk Olson praised the poll workers, staff, and everyone involved in making the election happen. Everything went very smoothly. He noted that the Clerk's office has been down two staff members for a few months. Commissioner Huffman asked if the salaries were high enough to attract workers. Clerk Olson stated that they were in line with similar city departments. He felt the critical piece in FY2017 is to increase the poll worker's pay as it has been a while since an increase was approved.

Ballot Lottery for November 3, 2015 Municipal Election and Area Council Elections

The ballot lottery was conducted by the Commissioners and the candidates will appear on the ballot in the following order:

Alderman-at-large, Ward 1

Scott F. Lennon
Allan L. Ciccone, Jr.

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 7

Ruthanne Fuller
Marc C. Laredo

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 2

Lynne Lise LeBlanc
Marcia T. Johnson
Jacob Daniel Auchincloss
Susan S. Albright

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 8

David A. Kalis
Richard A. Lipof
Frank Wolpe

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 3

Ted Hess-Mahan
Julia Malakie
James R. Cote

School Committee, Ward 1

Ellen B. Gibson

School Committee, Ward 2

Cyrus Vaghar
Margaret L. Albright

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 4

Leonard J. Gentile
Amy Mah Sangiolo

School Committee, Ward 3

Angela Pitter-Wright

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 5

Brian E. Yates
Deborah J. Crossley
Christopher Pitts

School Committee, Ward 4

Diana Fisher Gomberg

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 6

Victoria L. Danberg
Gregory R. Schwartz

School Committee, Ward 5

Susan Huffman
Stephen Siegel

School Committee, Ward 6

Ruth E. Goldman

School Committee, Ward 7
Matthew Hills

School Committee, Ward 8
Margie Ross Decter

Ward Alderman, Ward 1
Allan L. Ciccone
Alison M. Leary

Ward Alderman, Ward 2
Emily Norton

Ward Alderman, Ward 3
Barbara Brousal-Glaser

Ward Alderman, Ward 4
John W. Harney

Ward Alderman, Ward 5
John B. Rice

Ward Alderman, Ward 6
Richard B. Blazar

Ward Alderman, Ward 7
R. Lisle Baker

Ward Alderman, Ward 8
Cheryl Lipof Lappin

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area
Council

Rodney M. Barker
G. Groot Gregory
Srdjan S. Nedeljkovic
Robert L. Burke
Steven R. Feinstein
Barbara Darnell

Newton Upper Falls Neighborhood Area
Council

Anil Adyanthaya
Jennifer A. Kohl
Jeffrey R. Riklin
Susan Huffman
Maxine Bridger
Mark Bridger
John F. Neville, Jr.
Kimberly Hokanson
Nina Kochs
Marie T. Jackson
Julie T. Irish

Waban Neighborhood Area Council

Joseph J. Corkery
Sallee H. Lipshutz
Kathryn K. Winters
Isabelle M. Albeck
Christopher B. Pitts
Pia K. Bertelli
Rena L. Getz
Andreae Downs
Maureen E. Reilly Meagher

Discussion of the League of Women Voter's Letter

Clerk Olson presented a letter from the League of Women Voters that was sent to the Board of Aldermen and copied to the Election Commission in July. He noted that since the letter was delivered he has not heard anything further about it. He asked if the Commissioners wanted to respond to it, or how they wanted to deal with it.

Clerk Olson asked Ellen Glusman, a member of the League of Women Voters who has been attending Commission meetings if she had any response. She noted that she is not on the

League's Board and has not heard any discussion lately. She noted that there was supposed to be someone from the Board at this meeting tonight but did not know why they were not here. Clerk Olson asked her if she had a sense if the issue of moving the location to Newton South were a big deal for the League. Ellen noted that it can't be that big as they did not show up, but cautioned that they are all caught up in the Charter Commission at the moment.

Commissioner Levine felt that there should be some kind of response, but did not want to make it a big deal. She felt that someone should have a conversation with the President of the League to ask why the drafters of the letter did not talk to the League member who attends the Commission meetings to find out the background for the Election Commission's decisions, or at least to have talked with the Election Commission before writing the letter. Commissioner Levine felt that the response should be a conversation rather than a letter, and that everything listed in the letter has been talked about in open meetings.

Commissioner Butler was concerned by the statement in the letter requesting that any changes that are made do not discourage voters. She stated that it is the Commission's goal to encourage voters to vote. The Commissioners have yet to get any feedback regarding the issue with the School Committee rejecting the move to Newton South. The Commission has tried to integrate the concerns of all of the constituencies. She suggested that the response might be that if the Commission could do more, we would be happy to make it work. Clerk Olson noted that the request to move the three locations was still on hold in the Programs & Services Committee until the Commission goes back to them. There is nothing that can be done with it right now, as there is not enough time to make the move for this year. Going back to Programs & Services at this point would be a conversation for March of 2016 or later. He asked if the Commissioners wanted the School Committee to come to a meeting to have a conversation before then? Commissioner Levine felt that the issue was really with Mike Cronin, the Head of Operations at the schools. It is the Head of Operations that needs to talk with the School Committee. Clerk Olson noted that the Board of Aldermen would probably not want to move ahead without having a conversation with the School Committee as it was a member of the School Committee that asked that the request be held.

Commissioner Butler suggested that as a response the Commissioners put in the minutes that while we did address some of those issues, we ask what else we can do and how do we want to talk to the School Committee. Who else do we want to engage in the conversation: school principals, PTOs, etc.?

Commissioner Levine noted that the Commission had to be careful in its discussions about talking about "danger" in regards to voting in schools. We are talking about people's neighbors. It is not just anybody and their uncle coming in to the schools on voting day. Commissioner Huffman noted that there are a significant number of parents going in and out of the school anyway. Commissioner Levine stated that the Commission has a role here to remind people that voting is not a particularly dangerous enterprise.

Ellen Glusman from the League of Women voters was recognized and stated that on Election Day it might not be just neighbors. Anyone who sees the big vote here sign outside the door may find their way into the polling location. Commissioner Levine noted that on Election Day individuals are walking into the polling location where there are poll workers and police officers stationed. Commissioner Butler noted that we are trying to balance all of the needs and concerns in each of the polling locations. Clerk Olson noted that we are still trying to find locations that will work outside of the schools, but not coming up with much as this is a very residential community.

Commissioner Huffman asked why the School Committee, a policy making body, would be involved in this level of decision making. Is this just one vocal School Committee member, or is it the whole School Committee? Commissioner Levine noted that we don't know, but it seems that we need to get the word out to them and others. We have a letter from the League of Women Voters and almost all of these questions have been looked at and discussed. It feels uncomfortable to invite the School Committee in when Mike Cronin has the authority. That issue is between them, and once they work it out then inviting them in knowing to hear what the Commission is proposing.

Commissioner McDermott noted that it is the Board of Aldermen that ultimately votes to change the site. Commissioner Levine stated that they would not vote until they feel the School Committee agrees.

Commissioner Butler noted that we still don't know what the School Committee is thinking. They may not have the power to finally decide, but it would be good to know what they are thinking. Commissioner McDermott felt we should go ahead and ask the Board of Aldermen to decide. If the Board chooses not to move the location, then life goes on and nothing changes. Clerk Olson stated that we still need to have something changed at the Bowen School. As part of the security measures that were put in place at Bowen, voting was moved out of the gym into the Teacher's Lounge, which is barely large enough to accommodate the poll workers and polling equipment. Something is going to have to be done at this location before the Presidential election.

Clerk Olson asked the Commissioners how they wanted to move forward? Commissioner Levine asked if Clerk Olson could get some information from Mike Cronin about where things stand. Commissioner Huffman asked if Mike Cronin was aware of the letter? We don't know whether he is aware. Commissioner Butler stated that we should not change our recommendation at this point.

Commissioner Levine stated that she had spoken with Ald. Amy Sangiolo, the Chair of the Programs & Services Committee, and for Amy the concern with Newton South was student parking and traffic. Commissioner Butler asked if the Commission could ask the Traffic Bureau to look at eliminating the two-hour parking limit during school hours on the streets around Newton South on Election Day to give students more parking options. Clerk Olson stated this conversation could be undertaken with Sergeant Babcock in the Police Traffic Bureau.

Commissioner Levine thought that it would be best that we address this before the Presidential Primary in March so that we are not changing the location between the primary and the November election. Clerk Olson stated that he would get in touch with Mike Cronin and find out where things are going. Commissioner Butler asked if there would be time to get it done by March? She asked if it was appropriate to call the Ward 8 School Committee member to have a discussion about the concerns.

Other Business

Clerk Olson informed that Commissioners that the NewtonTab has allowed him to write an Election Update column that will be in the Tab each week now through the end of October. The column will contain information on deadlines and things to know.

Discussion of the requirements of Chapter 274 of the Acts of 1987

Clerk Olson noted that the Election Commission will need to send out a mailer to all the voters of the City to let them know of the two local ballot questions that will appear on the November ballot. He stated that he did not realize that this requirement applied to a Charter Commission question, but was informed by the Law Department that it does. Chapter 274 of the Acts of 1987 requires that the Newton Election Commission send a mailer when a Newton based ballot question appears on the municipal ballot. The mailer must contain a summary of the question prepared by the City Solicitor, a 250-word statement in favor by a proponent, and a 250-word statement against by an opponent. Commissioner Butler reminded the Commission that they had to do this before the last override question that was on the ballot.

Clerk Olson stated that he had contacted Susan Flicop of the League of Women Voters to provide the pro statement for the Charter Commission and was looking for a group to write the statement against, but was not having much luck. He asked if the Commissioners had heard of any groups that might write this statement. If there is no one that comes forward to write a statement then the Election Commission will need to write something. For the Pilgrim Power Plant question, the original requester, Guntram Mueller, is planning to write the pro statement. Clerk Olson has contacted Entergy, the owners of the Pilgrim Power Plant, if they would write the con statement and they are considering it.

Clerk Olson stated that he has requested additional funds from the Mayor's Office to pay for the printing and mailing. The Commission may need to get together in the next week or so to write the text against the two questions if no group steps forward.

Appointing Assistant Registrars of Voters

Commissioner Huffman had asked if the Election Commission had to appoint Assistant Registrars for the City. Clerk Olson responded that he had looked into the question with the City Solicitor's Office and it was felt that when the Elections Department was combined with the Clerk's Office, the ordinance completing that change allowed the Clerk, as the Executive Officer of the Commission, to be able to do that himself. However, both the Clerk and Law Department wanted to hear from the State Elections Office before taking any action.

Next Meeting:

The date of the next meeting was not set. Clerk Olson would send an e-mail out if the Commission needed to meet to draft text for the Elections mailer and if not would send a date for a meeting after the November 3, 2015 election.

The meeting adjourned.

Submitted by

John McDermott, Chair