

**Election Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 28, 2014**

Present: Marjorie Butler, Nancy Levine, John McDermott, Jan Huffman
Also Present: City Clerk David Olson, Asst. City Clerk Eneida Tavares

Minutes

The minutes from the November 18, 2013 meeting were reviewed. There were no changes and the **minutes were approved unanimously.**

Election of a Chair

City Clerk David Olson noted that the Commissioners needed to elect a Chair and asked the Commissioners if they were prepared to do that this evening or if they would like to wait until a future meeting. Commissioner Butler asked if the chairmanship alternated between a Republican and a Democrat, and what is the length of time that the Chairman serves? Clerk Olson stated that Mass General Law requires that the Election Commissioners elect a Chairman for a one year term by April each year. He noted that the Chair has the responsibility of creating the Agenda and leading each meeting. As the previous chair had been a Republican, Commissioner Butler offered to be a candidate for Chair as a Democrat. The Commissioners agreed that it would be good to select a Chair from the opposite party each year and noted that the current group of Commissioners has been working very well in a non-partisan manner. A motion to nominate Marjorie Butler was made. Commissioner McDermott seconded the nomination with the note that it should alternate between parties each year.

Commissioner Butler was elected unanimously.

FY15 Operating Budget for Elections

City Clerk Olson noted that there were no major changes in the operating budget for the coming year. This year (FY14) the department ran two municipal elections and in FY15 it will be running two State elections - a primary and general election. However, the Clerk has requested some additional funds for Capital Investments in FY15. He noted that some of the polling equipment that we currently have is in very bad condition. The equipment used in the school locations especially has seen a lot of wear. Clerk Olson noted that the department was able to apply for and get some reimbursement from the State for the costs of the Special Senate election held in the Spring of 2013. He has spoken with the Mayor's Office who is willing to look at releasing some of this money to purchase some equipment now and he has added a Capital line of \$5,000 to the budget

to be used to continue the purchase of polling equipment. He noted that he had been meeting with School Custodians and the Election Advisory Committee to determine what type of polling equipment would work best. There are two types of polling booths that are being considered. The typical four carrel version that is in current use at the polling locations, and the individual suitcase type which is used at City Hall. The custodians were interested in the individual suitcase variety as they felt it was easier to handle, especially for those schools where there may be some serious distance that needs to be covered when moving the equipment from storage to the polling location. Commissioner Huffman asked how long the polling booths will last. Clerk Olson stated that he did not know at this time, but that the equipment that is available today is not as durable as the all metal equipment that was purchased previously. Unfortunately the older all metal booths are no longer available. Commissioner Levine suggested that the department stagger the replacement of the equipment so that we don't end up having to replace everything all at once again in the future.

The issue of storage of the equipment was raised and it was asked if this equipment needed to be stored at the schools, or could it be stored at City Hall. Clerk Olson responded that there is some storage space at City Hall and it could be a possibility, however, if storage was not at the polling locations, damage would be encountered in the moving process.

New Polling Location Discussion

City Clerk Olson began the discussion of finding new polling locations with a look at Zervas and Cabot schools which will be closing for renovations in the next few years. It will be critical to find new spaces for these locations. Asst. Clerk Tavares presented the first steps of the process. She distributed maps that showed the locations of potential sites that could be used in the vicinity of these schools. Clerk Olson asked what criteria should be used in selecting a location. He noted that he had asked the same question of the Elections Advisory Group and they provided the following criteria: parking, walking distance, public safety, visibility and ease of finding the entrance, handicap accessibility, adequate heat and ventilation, space availability during the day, and bathrooms that can be used by the poll workers. He reminded the Commissioners that it would be the Board of Aldermen that would vote to approve the locations and told them that during the reprecincting process, the Aldermen wanted to keep the polling locations community focused and were in favor of having smaller locations within the community as opposed to combined precincts. Commissioner Butler asked about renting spaces and Clerk Olson noted that we currently do rent space, or pay for custodians throughout the day, in a variety of locations. If a polling location was to move from a school to a

rented space, elections would shift the cost from a school custodian to the rental of the space. Clerk Olson asked if the Commissioners would consider asking the Schools to close on election days. There was not much support voiced for asking the schools to close. Commissioner Huffman asked if Election Day might be an in-service day for the teachers.

Legislation Update

The commissioners viewed and discussed the comparison of Election laws that have passed the Massachusetts House and Senate and are awaiting a joint committee review. The bills contain a variety of changes to how Massachusetts conducts elections. On the issue of Early Voting, Commissioners were interested in knowing whether the change would increase the number of voters turning up early, or would it be the typical absentee voters. Commissioner Butler liked the idea of early voting, stating it would allow more opportunity for voting over the weekend. Commissioner Huffman had some concerns and wondered if it would create unmanageable lines when it comes to larger elections, comparing it to states that had long lines during the election in November 2012. Commissioner McDermott raised questions of the tabulation process and how we would be able to set up multiple machines for the different wards and precincts if voting were to take place at City Hall.

Commissioner Levine was concerned about the elimination of the Cancellation Device. Without it there would be no way of knowing whether or not a ballot has already been processed through the voting machine.

Commissioner Huffman had some concern about allowing individuals to register to vote the same day as the election. It does not state that they have to be a US citizen and it could open up the door to voter fraud.”

Set Date for Next Meeting

The next Election Commission meeting was scheduled for April 8, 2014 at 5pm.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Submitted by
Marjorie Butler, Chair