

Election Commission

Meeting Minutes

July 9, 2013

Present: Ken Hartford (Chair), Marjorie Butler, Nancy Levine, John McDermott

Also Present: City Clerk David Olson

Minutes

The minutes from the May 9, 2013 meeting were reviewed. A minor grammatical change was made and the minutes were approved unanimously.

An Update on the Consolidation of the Elections Office with the City Clerk's Office.

David Olson reported that the consolidation of the two departments has been going very well so far. The wall between the offices will be coming down and a plan to do that is in place and the project is in the Building Department cue. Additional filing cabinets have been ordered to create the extension of the City Clerk's Counter. The current window will be closed off and people will come into the office to conduct business instead of standing in the hallway.

Eneida Tavares has been hired to be the new Assistant Clerk for Elections. She officially started the job on July 1. The Commissioners were happy that David was able to promote from within. Cross training of the staff has begun and has been going well. David was able to give Both Sue and Eneida July 3rd and 5th off with current City Clerk staff handling and processing Elections related questions and information. Eneida's old position is now vacant and David will be looking to get it filled before the fall elections.

Certification of the June 25 Special Senate and Special Alderman-at-Large Elections

David Olson presented the official results of the June 25th elections to the Commission members. He noted that there were a few additions to the unofficial results that were recorded and posted on election night primarily in the Alderman-at-Large race where there were a large number of blank voted ballots that did not go through the Accu-vote machine and were hand-counted at the polls at the end of the night.

David reported that money has been approved by the State Legislature to reimburse cities and towns for the State Special Election. Newton will be able to recoup money for the Special State Primary, but because the City ran the Special Municipal Election on the same day, only a small

portion of the costs associated with the June 25th Special Senate Election will be able to be recouped.

David noted that the reporting of blank voted ballots for the Aldermanic race were inconsistent across the precincts as Wardens in each precinct handled them in two different ways. In the training on how to conduct a dual election, the procedure for handling completely blank ballots was not covered. As Wardens called in the morning of the election to find out how to deal with the ballots that the Accu-vote machine was rejecting, they were instructed to place them in the hand count slot on the ballot box and to count them as blanks at the end of the night. For the most part these instructions were followed. A few precincts however took the Aldermanic ballots back and crossed the individual off of the Check In List for the Aldermanic race.

Review of the plans for the Fall Elections

David reported that nomination papers have been going out and coming back in. He presented a list of those candidates that have pulled papers and those that have already turned in papers and have been certified. If all of the candidates for Mayor turn in their signatures and are certified, then the City will have to have a preliminary election on September 17, 2013. Papers need to be in by July 30, 2013. The general election will be on November 5, 2013.

Commissioner Butler asked that the polling locations in schools be reviewed again over the summer to make sure that the students are being effectively separated from the voters. David reported that he will meet with Michael Cronin, the Chief of Operations at the Schools, to review the school locations again. Commissioner Levine asked that the Commission look at finding new polling locations to try and move as many polling locations as possible out of the schools.

Future Meeting Dates

August 15, 2013 at 5:00 pm – Drawing for Ballot Position for the September 17 Preliminary

September 23, 2013 at 5:00 pm – Certifying the results of the September 17 Preliminary and
Drawing for Ballot Position for the November 5 Municipal Election

November 12, 2013 at 7:00 pm – Certification of the November 5 Municipal Election

David also reported that the Commissioners were invited to attend the Board of Aldermen's Zoning & Planning Committee Meeting on Wednesday, July 17, 2013 at 7:00 pm to participate in a discussion of the City's ordinances around campaign signs.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.