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Summit County Board of Elections

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Agency: None

Date: Feb. 14, 2025

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Notes to reader: *Unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at documenters@signalakron.org with "Correction Request" in the subject line*

Summary

- The Summit County Board of Elections (BOE) reviewed submitted candidate petitions. Most of the petitions were unanimously approved, including all for the City of Akron offices. Some petitions were rejected for reasons including lack of valid signatures or incorrect party affiliations.
- Multiple BOE policies were updated with recommendations by BOE staff or from the Ohio Secretary of State (SOS). Some of these policy updates include lifting monthly restrictions on sick leave, adding new document categories, and changing post-election procedures and wait times.
- The BOE approved a “trial” contract with [Enhanced Voting](#) for live election reporting software. This software, which is currently used by Cuyahoga County, is more flexible for meeting county needs. It also provides the public with an accurate precinct map. This contract will only be for the May 6 primary and then the board can decide to approve an additional annual or four-year contract.

Follow-Up Questions

- Will the board reach out to the state for guidance regarding election polling equipment?
- What could the repurposed election iPads be used for after being “wiped”?

Notes:

- There was a screen in the front of the room only visible to board members. It obstructed the board from public view
- Board Chair William Rich (Democrat) started the meeting at 9:34 a.m.
 - Pete Zeigler (deputy director), Lance Reed (director), and board members Republicans Bryan Williams and Ray Weber, and Democrats Valerie McKittrick and Rich were present.
- The [Summit County Board of Elections](#) (BOE) utility bills passed unanimously
- The BOE \$96,373.14 payroll passed unanimously
- The Jan. 28 meeting minutes passed unanimously

May 6 primary candidate petition certification

- A staff member said [Petitions 1-54](#) (the [linked](#) list does not have the petitions in item order) have enough valid signatures
 - Petitions 1-54 passed unanimously
- A staffer said petitions 55-56 did not have enough valid signatures
 - Petitions 55-56 were unanimously rejected
- A staffer said petition 57 had mostly fraudulent signatures, which appear to be written by one person and don't match records
 - The petition was given to the board
 - Williams said they look fraudulent
 - Rich asked if the circulator was an elector
 - A staffer said he was hired but there is no disclosure of payment
 - A staffer said when people live at the same address, they are in alphabetical order
 - Williams asked if the signatures were from registered voters
 - A staffer said they are
 - Petition 57 was unanimously rejected
 - Williams moved to hold a hearing and subpoena the circulator, candidate and anybody responsible for the campaign
 - Motion passed unanimously
- A staffer said Petition 58 for [Barberton City Council Ward 2](#) was filed by a recently

appointed council member. The person is a registered Democrat but filing for the Republican primary

- Reed said he was sworn into office on Jan. 13
- Williams asked if he is required to file a [10Y](#) form (form regarding party affiliation) even though he was running before he was appointed
- John Golanski with the Summit County Prosecutors Office said somebody may not run in a party primary if they have recently voted in a different party primary.
 - He said the candidate could run as a Democrat or unaffiliated (independent) candidate, but it is too close to the election to change party affiliation
- Petition 58 was unanimously rejected
- A staffer said Petition 59 for Green City Council Ward 4 filed a 3N (meant for unaffiliated candidates and due the day before the primary) and not a 3O (meant for partisan candidates and due 90 days before the primary)
 - Williams said this has been a problem before. He said the forms are identical aside from the filing deadline.
 - Williams asked if the information for the form would be acceptable if on the other form
 - A staffer said it would
 - Weber moved to adopt the petition
 - Petition 59 passed unanimously
- A staffer said Petition 60 for New Franklin City Council at-large has an additional '1' at the start of some addresses. Without those addresses, they do not have enough signatures, but with those addresses, they meet the 75-signature requirement. They said the listed addresses with the '1' do not exist, but without the one, they match with the names of the signers
 - Rich said the question is whether this would cause confusion for the signer or cause confusion about who the signer is
 - Williams asked if other candidates could contest this if they chose to approve it
 - Rich said they could
 - Petition 60 passed unanimously
- A staffer said Petition 61 for [Tallmadge City Council at-large](#) did not mark whether they are running for a full term or for an unexpired term
 - Rich said this would not confuse signers because the only terms available are full terms
 - Petition 61 passed unanimously

RC-2 updates

- Reed said this will update RC-2 standards based on Secretary of State (SOS) recommendations, including adding nine document categories. These changes will be submitted to the Summit County Records Department, the Summit County Historical Society, and the state auditor
 - Reed said current standards say the BOE will not destroy ballots until 90 days after election certification but the state only requires an 81-day wait. He asked the board members if they wanted to change it
 - Rich said they can change it to 81 days
 - Williams made a motion to approve the RC-2 updates with the change to 81 days
 - The RC-2 updates passed unanimously

Policy updates

- A staffer said the recommended changes from last meeting are in the board members' binders. These changes include removing the four monthly sick day limit and ending election procedures upon certification of the election and not 21 days after the election
 - Other policy updates include requiring the direct supervisor of an employee to provide a written warning for tardiness
 - Rich asked that these be shared with the board ahead of time so they have time to read them carefully
- Policy updates passed unanimously

Campaign finance terminations

- A staffer said there are 14 candidate committees and two PACs that have "really not [been] active" due to deaths or not filing with the BOE. They have been sending letters and calls to said committees with no response. A state official asked him over the phone to terminate these committees and PACs Williams asked if this was in writing
 - A staffer said it was only verbal
- Williams said he would vote to terminate committees of deceased candidates with the prosecutor's advice but would not terminate other inactive committees without written recommendation
- Williams asked if the BOE has communicated with these parties
 - A staffer said they have tried but have not received responses and many

phone numbers are inactive. They have also referred the committees to the state

- Kolkovich said canceling committees of deceased candidates would be a reasonable use of board discretion
 - A staffer said these committees have a \$0 balance
- A staffer said another committee has been inactive since being created in 2016. The candidate was incarcerated and the treasurer resigned. Campaigns are required to have a treasurer (who can be the candidate)
 - Kolkovich said the candidate is responsible for the candidate committee
- Weber said they should write to the state and request recommendations
- A staffer said these committees and pacts have not filed updated financial records in approximately six years
- Rich said they should terminate the two deceased candidates' committees
 - Williams moved to terminate said committees
 - These committees were unanimously terminated
- Weber asked if there could be criminal penalties for not filing updated financial records. He said they could be misusing campaign finances without accountability
 - Kolkovich said there are criminal charges for filing fraudulently but not for not filing. There are civil penalties for not filing
- A staffer said none of these committees they recommended terminating are currently tied to people in elected office.
- Williams said it is not about whether the board has the authority to terminate these committees but whether they have the grounds

LIVE RESULTS

- A staffer recommended the board enter into a contract with [Enhance Voting's](#) live election results reporting services for the May 6 primary election. He said Enhance is able to do machine and voting location reporting and provides a precinct map on the BOE website. Cuyahoga County uses Enhance for live election reporting. This contract would be a trial for the May 6 primary and then the board could approve a longer annual or four-year contract.
 - Contract costs:
 - One election (May 6): \$10,675
 - Yearly: \$19,800
 - Four-year \$73,200
 - Williams asked how this compares with other options
 - A staffer said the only other price they have is from a previous vendor. Other options did not meet the requirements

- Williams asked what will happen if only some polling locations in a precinct are reporting
 - A staffer said the reports will indicate whether precincts are fully reporting, not reporting, or partially reporting. He said they are trying to do machine reporting so that entire polling locations are able to report even if one machine is not able to report
- Weber moved to authorize the director to enter into a contract with Enhance Voting for the May primary
 - Motion passed unanimously

Northfield Village precincts

- A staffer said current precincts B and C will be changed to not split census districts. Additionally, census districts will be renamed in order from west to east where precinct A will become D, C will become A, and D become C. Precinct B will stay precinct B. Affected residents will be informed about the changes
 - These changes do not require Secretary of State approval but require informing SOS so they can update state maps. These changes will not affect Northfield Village ward boundaries
 - The changes passed unanimously

Other business

- Reed said they want to find a way to reuse iPads used for poll books. [The state restricts polling equipment](#) from being loaned or sold to other Ohio BOEs or destroying them. He said they want to repurpose the iPads so they aren't wasted or wasting space
- Williams asked what triggers this state restriction
 - A staffer said using them as polling equipment does
- Williams asked if the polling data and software could be "wiped" from the iPads
 - Rich said an iPad wouldn't be polling equipment without polling software
 - Rich said wiping the voting software can constitute destroying the polling equipment
 - A staffer said data from an iPad is automatically encrypted. He said "wiping" the iPad would not destroy the data but would destroy the keys to the data making it functionally lost

Public comment

- A community member said they worked polls and are concerned that voter illiteracy is preventing them from reading ballots. They said they are concerned about violence towards candidates and voters, which they said they have faced in elections since 2008.

The meeting ended at 11:35 a.m.