



Richland County Council

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

September 24, 2020

4:00 PM

Zoom Meeting

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The Honorable Paul Livingston, Chair
Richland County Council

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Honorable Paul Livingston

a. **September 15, 2020 (Portion) Re: Item 19(a)(1): "Safe Voting Plan 2020 Grant Agreement"**

The Honorable Paul Livingston

3. **ADJOURNMENT**

September 15, 2020
Richland County Council Minutes

Item 19(a)(1): "Safe Voting Plan 2020 Grant Agreement"—Mr. Brown stated Council received detailed responses to the questions raised on whether or not the Board approved this grant for the Voter Registration's Office. There is information from the SC Election Commission that states that the State does not receive the grant; therefore, the County, or someone else, would have to act as the recipient of the grant, on behalf of Voter Registration & Elections. There is information about the organizations that support the funding for the grant, as well as other counties that have received funding.

Mr. Manning moved, seconded by Ms. McBride, to accept this grant.

Mr. Malinowski noted, on p. 252, it states, "Since the appointing authority for county election commissioners is by an authority 'outside county government'...the General Assembly has mandated that county council possesses no authority in this area..." Therefore, if we possess no authority, he does not believe we have the authority to accept or reject the grant, regardless of what it is for.

Mr. Smith responded the Elections Board is appointed by the Legislative Delegation; therefore, they are a separate legal entity. In this case, we recommended the County act as a pass through for these funds, with the caveat that the County is not going to be responsible for the admission, or the operations, of this grant. Administration and operations of this grant, and the things the grant is attended to address, will be the responsibility of the Board of Elections and Voter Registration.

Mr. Malinowski stated, in the requirements, from the agency, it notes, "they can ask for the return of all or part of the grant funds if it is determined, in its sole judgment, that any of the above conditions have not been met." To him, this means the County will be held responsible, if the conditions are not met. He also noted the local government units would own and control all of the equipment. We have no idea if there is any software requirements, future costs for maintenance, etc. It is his understanding, the State has mandated there should be one voting machine for every so many voters. So, why would we want to incur costs for maintenance, and associated costs for 30 machines? In addition, he did research on this and it showed that many of the organizations that support them are left leaning private groups, who advocate for specific political agendas. They have shown themselves to oppose congressional bills that target terrorists, human traffickers, and other criminals that use the internet for crimes. They also want to guide voters to what they should be doing when they register to vote. He does not believe we align ourselves with a group that has surrounded themselves with so many questionable supporting entities.

Ms. McBride stated the recommendation came Richland County Voter Registration & Elections, and they took all of these things into consideration. We know that additional resources are needed, and the problems we have experienced; therefore, any resources we can obtain to help mitigate some of these issues we need to look at doing.

Ms. Terracio stated, because County Council is the funding source for the Board of Elections, if we deny these monies, we would be shirking our duties to ensure the Election Commission is fully funded.

Ms. Myers stated there are good reasons to add voting machines. State law sets a floor, not a ceiling. It states we must have a minimum number of voting machines. Given our desire to support the Election

Commission to ensure the vote, and election is free and fair, having more machines strikes her as the right thing to do.

Mr. Malinowski inquire if the Election Commission did any research into the partners, which are outline on p. 270 of the agenda, this group has.

Ms. Stephens stated she did review the partners and sources for this organization. She stated these machines will be used at satellite locations throughout the County. Other machines they are looking into purchasing will assist in counting absentee ballots, in sorting the ballots as they are received and to verify the signatures.

Mr. Malinowski inquired what has been determined regarding additional maintenance, registration, software contracts, etc.

Ms. Stephens stated she is still awaiting quotes from the vendors about rolling the maintenance into the current maintenance contract. She will provide Council with this information, when she receives it.

Mr. Malinowski noted that he has received complaints about the phones not being answered in Voter Registration.

Ms. Stephens responded that she will be meeting with IT to initiate a telephone service to get information out to the public, and additional staff has been hired to assist citizens with questions.

In Favor: Dickerson, McBride, Livingston, Terracio, Walker, Manning, Myers and Newton

Opposed: Malinowski

Not Present: Kennedy

The vote was in favor.