

COMMISSIONERS
Adell Adams, Chair
Jane Dreher Emerson
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E. Peter Kennedy
Shirley Mack

Voter Registration & Elections



Rokey W. Suleman II
DIRECTOR

Richland County, South Carolina

Minutes of the Richland County Board of Elections & Voter Registration Elections & Voter Registration Conference Room

**August 9, 2017
4:00 PM**

In Attendance

Board Members

- ❖ Adell Adams, Chair
- ❖ E. Peter Kennedy
- ❖ Jane Emerson
- ❖ Shirley Mack
- ❖ Sylvia Holley

Staff Members

- ❖ Rokey Suleman II, Director
- ❖ Lillian McBride, Deputy Director
- ❖ Yonita Simmons, Outreach Coordinator

Others Present

- ❖ Ericka Moore, City Clerk
- ❖ League of Women Voters Representatives (LOWV)

Call to Order

A meeting of the Richland County Board of Elections & Voter Registration was called to order in the Elections & Voter Registration Conference Room on June 14, 2017 at 4:00 PM, Chair Adams presiding.

Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Adams moved that we adopt the agenda as published. Mr. Kennedy made a motion to adopt the agenda; it was seconded by Ms. Emerson. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Approval of Board Meeting Minutes

Ms. Adams made a motion to adopt the June board meeting minutes as published. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Board of Chair Comments

No comments.

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Directors Comments

Agency Status

- 260,375 Registered voters as July 31
- 2,350 New voters registered in June and July
- 2,217 Address changes
- 384 (New and Address changes were received through the online portal)
- 25 Voter ID's

Budget

- We are currently operating in our FY18 Budget. The County has issued an apology and voted to do an amendment of over \$400,000 for reimbursements. The process was not completed in June and will put the funds in the FY18 budget. The first reading was held the 2nd and 3rd readings will be held in September when they come off of their summer break. The monies do not bring us to the originally requested budget but it does put us close. We now have enough funds to pay our licensing fees to our vendors.
- We have a new budget analyst representing our agency, James Hayes and we have met with him once. After our first meeting, we see eye to eye. We are looking to do a budget amendment for FY19, this budget amendment, will allow us to include the funds we requested previously but the advantage this time is the help and backing of Mr. Hayes who agrees that this office has been underfunded in years passed. He is working to see that, in the future all of the reimbursements will return back to the general fund; as they should. Our job; collectively now is to do a better job educating the County Council members in the future concerning the budget for FY19.

November Election

- The office is currently preparing for the upcoming municipal elections in November. (Arcadia Lakes, Blythewood, Columbia and Irmo). This office has a meeting scheduled with the officials of Arcadia Lakes to discuss them allowing this office to handle their Election. Of the course of the past few weeks there have been a few discrepancies that could be avoided if our office were in charge of the Elections going forward.
- The precinct staff; are in the process of moving a small number of polling locations. Locations are expected to be solidified shortly so that voters can be notified with enough time.
- The agency has begun to order supplies for the Election.
- Staff changes have begun to take place, all part-time staff will began full-time hours after the holiday. Additional workers will be brought in after the holiday as well.

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- Reminder to the board, additional cost including staff and overtime are passed on to the jurisdictions at a prorated bases for reimbursements.
- Letters and new voter registration cards are being mailed to voters who have recently been annexed into the City of Columbia, as of August 1st. The apartment complex is located off Garners Ferry Road and it includes an estimate of 200 - 300 individuals.

Equipment Update

- We have agreed to participate in a pilot program with the State Election Commission, to upgrade the Election Software platform that is used with the Unity Platform System.
- It will be upgraded to Unity 4.0. It is the newest software that has been passed for certification by ES & S, through the Federal Certification Program.
- The state is looking to upgrade all of the software, on the voting equipment and the servers for the 2018 Election; but they need to pilot it on some jurisdictions first.
- Richland County is the largest county to participate in the pilot program, as they need to test it in 2017 to ensure that all the kinks are out before they launch it in 2018.
- The staff will receive training on August 17th on how the new system works.
- ES & S will come in and update the firmware on all of the voting equipment free of charge as a part of the pilot program.
- We met with IT recently and they were concern about the need to update the Unity server, but this new pilot program takes care of their concern and eliminates the problem.

ADA Survey

- The ADA survey entered into with the DOJ is nearly complete there is only 1 survey remaining. I would like to thank Pete for assisting me the sites. Becky, Cheryl, Jessie and John did the bulk of the sites and I would like to compliment them on a job well done. It was a tremendous amount of work and this agency is very appreciative for all of their efforts.
- We have an August deadline to submit our report in response to the surveys to the DOJ. I will make sure that I submit a copy of the report to the board members.
- A small number of the polling locations have issues that cannot be corrected. Becky will be working to secure replacement locations. She has already begun the process of searching for new locations; once those locations are secured we will update the board and ultimately the voters of Richland County.
- We have meetings scheduled with school superintendents for districts 1 & 5 to discuss issues at their buildings. These will be issues that they will be responsible for fixing. We also have a meeting scheduled with Public Works to discuss the same issue.
- Construction is scheduled to begin on this office next Monday (August 14th) to correct the issues as we were not in ADA compliancy. A railing will be added to the walkway,

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leading to the entrance of the building. The incline will be leveled to make it easier for individuals with wheelchairs to have access to our building.

- They will build accessible crosswalks on Washington Street.
- They may convert all of the parking spots in front of our office to ADA Handicap parking spots.
- Completion should be completed before September.

Legal Update

- The agency has submitted legal bills in the amount of \$58,520.69 for the attorneys that have been representing the board in various legal matters. These are the law suits that the board has been involved in that the County has refused to provide legal representation for.
- Conversations have been held with the Assistant County Administrator. They want the bills to be paid in the budget in which they were incurred, which was FY17. We were running a \$500,000 deficit, adding an additional \$58,000 would not add additional harm.
- We have submitted the bills and that should get this agency up-to-date with outstanding legal fees through June 30, 2017.
- We are still going to incur outstanding legal fees as we move forward, as we move forward. Those items will be discussed in executive session.
- We have the insurance fund that is available to us, but the insurance fund that is available to us but it is inadequate to us for our legal needs.
- There was a suit filed against us in Federal Court in May, which I expect to be dismissed as meritless. Our insurance does not cover this because it predates this claim.
- The insurance is Tort insurance. We are spending \$9000 a year and it is inappropriate for this office.
- A meeting has been requested with Administrator Seals and Attorney Smith to discuss the ongoing reluctance to represent this office. We need understanding on why this office should not be represented by the County as it represents all over County offices.
- Question: Emerson: Have you been made aware of the judge's decision, which Richland County did not have to pay? Rokey: I am aware that decision; but my question is why wasn't that appealed? I am aware that some judge told them not to pay. There is also an AG's (Attorney General) opinion that says they should be financially responsible.
- I have considered hiring a staff attorney for the agency.

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Executive Director Update

- Completed 4 of the 11 classes required for certification with the South Carolina Election Commission.
- 2 classes are scheduled for October.
- Certification will be completed before the required certification date.
- Meeting in Denver was successful. We will be working with the Bi-Partisan Policy Center on a line management center this fall. They will do assessments on how long individuals wait in lines, what the needs are and what the causes are. The data will be used to compare with other large jurisdictions across the country. They will teach us how to do effective line management techniques.
- The County has decided not to close for the solar eclipse. I have encouraged the staff to take a leave day if they would like. I and most of the managers will be here.

Cross Training

- Beginning in September the agency will begin cross training. Individual meetings were held with the staff and the common request among staff was cross training.
- The Voter Registration Department will have the most impact as they are the largest department in the office.
- This gives the staff an opportunity to not only assist the departments when in need but also understand in detail what their job duties include on a day to day basis.

IT/State

- ISIS attacked government Election websites, defacing them with ISIS paraphernalia.
- The State Election Commission tested each Counties website for potential vulnerabilities to hacking. Vulnerabilities were discovered in our website and immediately we contacted IT to schedule a meeting.
- While meeting with IT meeting they explained the vulnerabilities and discovered that they were not issues but in fact the way that our website is setup. IT will be crafting an official response to forward to the Election Commission.

Website

- We are reviewing our website internally to make some much needed improvements.
- IT has agreed to give us more creative control and assistance.
- This will allow us to provide the public with a user friendly webpage with accessible information.

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SEC Response

- Received a memo stating this office was deficient in a disaster management plan.
- Although this office does have a disaster management plan it does need to be revised. We informed the state that a revised plan will be forwarded to them by the end of August.

Board Comments

No Comments

Executive Session

Miss. Emerson moved to adjourn to Executive Session, to discuss a legal matter. The vote in favor was unanimous. The members of the Board of Elections & Voter Registration entered into Executive Session at 4:45 PM. Executive Session ended at 5:30 PM.

A motion was made to authorize the Executive Director to approve any settlement, which may arise from mediation on August 22nd from the Jackson and Campbell cases. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Public Questions & Comments

LOWV Representative- Your agency is the only one without legal representation; is there any other agency setup that way? Rokey? No, I am unaware of that.

Adjournment

Mr. Kennedy moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Mack. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 PM.

Next Scheduled Meeting

The next regularly scheduled Board of Elections & Voter Registration meeting is October 11, 2017 at 4:00 PM in the Richland County Council Chambers.

Submitted By:
Yonita Simmons
Outreach Coordinator