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Board Meeting

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Agency: [Cuyahoga County Board of Elections](#)

Date: Sept. 11, 2023

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Summary

- Apparently there are some rigorous new security directives being dished out by the Secretary of State.
- Martin J. Sweeney is arguably the most prominent individual to choose to withdraw from an upcoming race. It is unclear why he dropped out of the Cleveland Municipal Court Clerk race, but it does mean he will be able to finish out the remainder of his term on Cuyahoga County council.
- The ballot jamming issue seems to be widespread enough that the board has taken notice of public complaints and is trying to fix it.

Follow-Up Questions

- What sort of security directives is the state mandating? Per Board Member Inajo Davis Chappell, there seems to be more sensitive instructions delivered to the board that are not included in the directive 2023-16 linked below. As these instructions evidently require funding, I would be curious to know what the state feels needs to be fixed in our elections.
- What are these charter amendments that they're approving?
- How widespread is the problem of ballot jamming? Board officials said they are using ad hoc solutions such as tape, but should they be looking for other fixes?

Notes

Present:

Inajo Davis Chappell, board member

Anthony Kaloger, deputy director

Terence M. McCafferty, board member

Lisa M. Stickan, board member

Henry Curtis, board chair

Brian Cleary, Ballot Services Division manager

All board members were present at the Monday, Sept. 11 meeting at the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections building on Euclid Avenue.

ADMINISTRATIVE

The meeting began with the board's acknowledgement of two directives from the Secretary of State's Office: Directive 2023-16 on Election Security and Directive 2023-18 on Ballots, Voting Schedule, and Deadlines for the Nov. 7, 2023 election.

Acknowledging these directives is a procedural process the board undertakes so the Secretary of State can be assured they have read and will follow the directives.

Board Member Inajo Davis Chappell said while the board cannot discuss details of the exact security procedures mandated by the state, she was wondering if they will receive state funding assistance to meet the new guidelines. This seemed to imply these new directives will require additional training or equipment.

Board Chair Henry Curtis confirmed they will receive funding to comply with these directives.

The [Election Security Directive](#) can be viewed here. It mostly relates to procedures and processes on how to keep elections secure. This year's version, compared to the 2022 directive, seems to have a particular emphasis on protecting against cyberattacks such as phishing.

The other initiative acknowledged, the [Ballots, Voting Schedule, and Deadlines for November 7, 2023 General Election](#), offers general guidelines on procedures and timetables for the Nov. 7 general election.

BALLOT

Brian Cleary of the board's Ballot Services Division provided an update on the Post-Election Audit of the Aug. 8 special election. This election was held for citizens to vote on [Issue 1](#), the ballot initiative that sought to raise the approval threshold for citizens' initiatives to amend the constitution.

“A hand count was conducted of 68 batches, consisting of 1,515 ballots,” Cleary said, out of the 335,356 total ballots cast in Cuyahoga County. “The count was verified with 100% accuracy.”

In ballot audits, a nonpartisan group will manually check a sample of ballots against what their vote was registered as, to check for any inconsistencies or fraud. Per Cleary, every ballot checked in the sample was verified.

CANDIDATE AND PETITION SERVICES

The board acknowledged the resignation of Rick Cyngier from the Brooklyn Board of Education. It also acknowledged the appointment of Karam Hasrouni to Cyngier’s former seat.

Several candidates also withdrew from their respective races, which the board must acknowledge. Among those were Maple Heights City School Board candidate Tamitra Peavy, Newburgh Heights City Council candidate Todd J. Knight, North Royalton Ward 4 council candidate Heidi Tsakalos, Pepper Pike council candidate Megan DiGiorgio, and South Euclid City Council candidate John Fahsbender.

Notably, Martin J. Sweeney, the former state representative and current Cuyahoga County Council member, has chosen to withdraw from the race for Cleveland Municipal Court Clerk. This means Sweeney will likely stay on the county council until his term expires in 2027.

The board then certified the nonpartisan and write-in candidates for the Nov. 7 election. They did not read the list of names as, per Curtis, “It is an exhaustive list.”

The board then moved to “certify the remaining issues for the November 7, 2023, General Election.” There was no clarification of what these issues were, as the board certified them unanimously without reading them aloud.

“Again this is a comprehensive list, so I will move it in accordance with what is published in our board packet,” Curtis explained.

“And they’re all charter amendments,” Chappell added, with Curtis agreeing they are in fact charter amendments. It was unclear what a charter amendment means in this context.

PERSONNEL

The board started the personnel section by approving an employee's leave request. Deputy Director Anthony Kaloger then took the floor to discuss the board's preparation for two primary elections being held tomorrow, Sept. 12. One is in Garfield Heights and the other in Maple Heights. Both are council member races, Kaloger said.

Kaloger reported 17 early voters and 204 absentee ballot requests in the weeks preceding this primary. Election officials will travel to the pertinent polling centers to run this election, with Kaloger hoping to take advantage of the small scale to use this as an experience-building exercise for newer employees.

Kaloger also said that the ballot machine jamming issue [reported in past elections](#) likely has to do with the ballot door getting wedged stuck. He's hoping to use tomorrow's election to experiment with potential solutions, such as taping it open. However, the jamming is so intermittent that it's hard to figure out what exactly is causing it, and the low turnout expected tomorrow will limit officials' ability to test solutions.

"The sample size will be so small, we won't have measurable results from it. But from some of our internal testing, we see that [the door] might be some of the reason for it," Kaloger explained.

Chappell then asked Kaloger how the board team has been handling the slate of directives the state has been sending out, especially the ones relating to new cybersecurity guidelines. "There are a lot of deadlines coming up with what we're obligated to do in September and October, and I'm assuming we'll be hitting all those deadlines?" she asked.

"Yeah, we met last week with multiple departments, mostly IT departments. We're aware of it and prepared for those deadlines," Kaloger said.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were made during the public comment period.

And with that, the board recessed after a remarkably short 15-minute meeting. As Curtis put it: "Business has been concluded in record time!"

If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at

clDOCUMENTERS@gmail.com with "Correction Request" in the subject line.