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Board Meeting

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Agency: Cuyahoga County Board of Elections

Date: Dec. 10, 2024

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Summary

- The Board of Elections (BOE) was informed of a case where the absentee ballot of a recently deceased person was returned with a signature date four days before the ballots were mailed. The ballot wasn't counted, and the case was referred to the Ohio Secretary of State's office for further investigation.
- Turnout in Cuyahoga County for the November 2024 general election was 65.7%, which is lower than the 70.5% average over the three previous presidential elections.
- Board Director Anthony Perlatti informed the board that some suburban precincts may need to be reconfigured due to increased population, while some Cleveland precincts may need to be reduced. Also, Perlatti said it was unclear whether the BOE move to 1801 Superior Ave. would occur before the May primary.

Follow-Up Questions

- Is the Dec. 11 post-election audit the same process that was used for the two recounts? Personally, I wish post-election audits got more attention to show the accuracy of election totals and the steps taken by the BOE to ensure election integrity.
- Is there any data around the percentage of voter turnout between elections for redrawn precincts? It would be interesting to see if moving voters to new polling locations reduces turnout. I'm sure voter turnout changes a lot between elections, but you could compare an area before/after the precincts were redrawn, or compare an area with redrawn precincts to an area with intact precincts.
- I was interested in how the discussion about keeping individual precincts under 1,400 voters fit with the existence of consolidated polling locations, large mega-polling locations that could hold up to 10 precincts. For example, I think Brook Park and Bedford Heights had consolidated locations. However, I couldn't find any information about this online. Do they still do this?

Notes

The meeting began shortly after 2 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. All [board members](#) were present except for Inajo Davis Chappell, who was excused. The notes are organized by categories on the [agenda](#).

Administrative:

- Minutes from the Nov. 1, Nov. 15, and Nov. 20 board meetings were approved. Board Member Terence McCafferty abstained from the approval of the Nov. 15 meeting since he was absent and had the minutes from the Nov. 20 meeting amended to show that he was present.
- Perlatti explained to the board the need to dispose of around 1,400 older Apple iPad Mini 2s that had been used as electronic poll books. Perlatti explained that he had tried to give them away last year (for example, to CMSD), but that nobody wanted them because of the old operating systems. Perlatti will work with the county on disposal. The board approved this unanimously.
- Board Deputy Director Anthony Kaloger informed the board [about a specific case where an individual had been approved for an absentee ballot on Sept. 16 but died on Oct. 6](#). The BOE received the absentee ballot later in October with a signature date of Oct. 4. However, ballots were mailed out on Oct. 8. The BOE decided not to accept the absentee ballot and to refer the incident to the Public Integrity [Division of the Ohio Secretary of State](#).

Ballot:

- Perlatti also informed the board about a ballot received by an individual who was thought to be deceased but who was actually living in a nursing home. Since this ballot was accepted, the official results of the Nov. 5 general election need to be amended. The board unanimously approved amending the results of the general election to include this ballot.
- Ballot Department Manager Brian Cleary informed the board about two post-election recounts due to close elections ([Issue #37](#), which was one of four amendments to the City Charter of Parma Heights on the ballot, and the race for [Cuyahoga County Council District 6](#)). The recounts involved:
 - 1) counting around 5% of total ballots by hand and by machine to see if they match, and
 - 2) counting the remaining ballots by machine to see if the count matches the original machine count.

- In both races, the counts matched and the final results remained unchanged. The board unanimously approved certification of the recounted races. *[Editor's note: Issue 37 in Parma Heights failed, and Democrat Robert Schleper Jr. won the election for Cuyahoga County Council.]*
- Board Chair Henry Curtis informed the board about the post-election audit of the Nov. 5 general election, which is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Dec. 11 at the BOE Tabulation Center.
- Curtis also informed the board of the results of the mock elections for children that was held at the same time as the November general election. *[Editor's note: [The results include Elsa from Disney's "Frozen" movies as favorite princess and Marvel Comics' Spider-Man as favorite superhero.](#)]*

Candidate and Petition Services:

- Steve Doell, supervisor of Candidate Petition Services, talked to the board about early in-person voting for the November general election. There were 62,922 in-person early votes, an increase of almost 10,000 from 2020. Dillon reported the process went smoothly. Officials noted minor concerns:
 - 1) the instruction for submitting a multi-page ballot at the scanners, and
 - 2) the multi-page election ballot taking a long time to print.
- Doell said the online survey form completed by early in-person votes had 85% rating the process as "good" or "very good," with mostly complimentary comments ("staff were incredible, polite, kind," "amazing job," etc.)

Human Resources:

- The board approved both a promotion and the creation of several new positions at the BOE. The board also approved a 2% cost-of-living increase starting next year for people who are permanent full-time BOE employees as of Dec. 15, 2024.

New Business:

Peter James, the BOE Election and Compliance Administrator, gave a summary of a written report about the November general election. Highlights include:

- Voter turnout in Cuyahoga County for the November election was 65.7%, which is notably lower than the 70.5% average from the previous three presidential elections. This turnout rate was the third lowest in the state of

Ohio (the average statewide turnout was 71.7%).

- Around 166,000 Cuyahoga County voters cast ballots by mail (about 28% of total votes statewide), which is substantially lower than the 205,000 votes that were expected. Vote-by-mail votes accounted for 18.6% of votes in Cuyahoga County.
- Cuyahoga County had its most ever in-person early votes in 2024 (around 10% to 11% of total votes statewide, and 7% of county votes). However, this percentage of early in-person voters was still below the statewide average.
- 61% of all votes in Cuyahoga County were cast on Election Day, which is close to what was expected.
- An analysis of voting by hour of day showed that the 2024 election was similar to the 2020 election (a huge surge in the morning that steadily declined as the day progressed) and in contrast to the 2022-23 general elections (steady turnout all day with a slight dip in the middle of the day and slightly higher numbers in the early morning and late afternoon).

Perlatti informed the board that some precincts may be too big (over 1,400 voters) and will need to be reconfigured. This will be discussed during the February meeting. Perlatti specifically identified precincts in Strongsville, Berea and North Royalton. Perlatti said that there may need to be a reduction in Cleveland precincts depending on the results of the ward redistricting process (Note: Cleveland City Council President Griffin [publicly released the proposed redistricting maps the afternoon of this meeting](#)). Perlatti emphasized the need to get new redistricting maps (and revised precincts) in place before the May 2025 primary election.

Finally, Perlatti updated the board on the upcoming BOE move to the former Cleveland Plain Dealer building at 1801 Superior Ave. Perlatti provided details about the move, and expressed that he was “hopeful but realistic” that the move would occur before the May primary.

Public Comment:

There was one public comment during the meeting:

- Twon Billings (East Cleveland) informed the council that [a challenge to his election to the East Cleveland City Council had been rejected recently by the Ohio Supreme Court](#). Billings asked the board how to pick up his election certificate. Curtis said he would refer this request to the appropriate department.

After public comment, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at clDOCUMENTERS@gmail.com with "Correction Request" in the subject line.