

# DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections

## Meeting Minutes

October 12, 2023

Start Time: 4:35 p.m.

End Time: 6:03 p.m.

Board Attendees: Chair Karli Swift  
Vice-Chair Vasu Abhiraman  
Nancy Jester  
Anthony Lewis  
Susan Motter

Other Attendees: Keisha Smith, Executive Director  
Terry Phillips, Deputy County Attorney  
Bennett Bryan, Senior Assistant County Attorney  
Tristen Waite, Assistant County Attorney

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Swift called the Board of Voter Registration and Elections meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. Ms. Austin read the roll by calling each board member by name. All the members were present. A quorum was met.

Motion by Ms. Jester, seconded by Ms. Motter, to move the PLEJ Agreement from Items for Decision to Items for Discussion and approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Ms. Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to approve the minutes of the August 31 special called meeting and September 14 scheduled meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Austin read the rules for public comment:

Public comments may be made in person or submitted by sending an email of one printed page or less at a minimum font of 12 to [electionspubliccmnt@dekalbcountyga.gov](mailto:electionspubliccmnt@dekalbcountyga.gov) which must be received between 35 and 5 minutes before the scheduled start of the meeting. The body of your email must include your first and last name. Abusive, profane, or derogatory language will not be permitted. By submitting an email for public comment, you agree to have your name and the email broadcast on the UStream and entered into the record and minutes. The DeKalb Board of Registration and Elections reserves the right, at the DeKalb Board of Registration and Elections' sole discretion, to (1) add your email to the record/minutes without reading any of it into the broadcast or (2) read all or a portion of your email into the record/minutes.

The following citizens provided public comment:

- Naomi Bock

- Bill Henderson
- Online- Chair Swift stated that this comment will be included in the agenda and be read at the next meeting.

## **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

### A) Director's Report

Director Smith reported on current registration totals; elections activities including a polling place location change and subsequently 19,000 polling place change letters mailed out, ballot proofing, L&A testing, absentee ballot mailing, advance voting equipment delivery, and HUB assembly; budget activities including encumbrance, budget training for management, and potential funding requests for additional personnel in 2024; facilities updates on the warehouse expansion and advance voting; general communications noting that poll worker training was underway. She provided election key dates, and updates on the translation resolution, the joint party meeting, and outreach events. Director Smith thanked the staff, Board of Registration and Elections, County partners, Commissioners, all poll workers and DeKalb County residents for their dedication and support.

### B) Partnership for Large Election Jurisdictions (PLEJ)

Director Smith provided an overview of Partnership for Large Election Jurisdictions (PLEJ). She stated that she received inquiries about our participation from Vice-Chair Abhiraman as well as the previous Chair and the PLEJ leadership. She stated that PLEJ is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that has bi-partisan support with over 8,000 local election departments nationwide. She further stated that PLEJ hopes to engage elections officials in areas of best practices, election law, public relations, cybersecurity, personnel management, and logistics.

Chair Swift opened the floor for questions.

Ms. Jester said that she would like to do more research on PLEJ, for example, knowing who their donors are, who is on their Board of Directors, and seeing their financial statements. She stated that she is a no at this time but would like to get more information. Regarding the Director's Report, Ms. Jester thanked Director Smith for the budget and stated that she is glad that we review it monthly. She asked Director Smith about recruiting for poll workers and if she feels adequately staffed for the upcoming election. Director Smith replied that all 174 precinct managers have been hired and that DeKalb County is very fortunate to have a large percentage of repeat poll workers. Director Smith expressed general concerns about recruiting poll workers because of the environment, specifically for next year. She went on to state that the department is working to develop recruiting and retention best practices to increase the number of poll workers. Ms. Jester asked Director Smith to share the poll worker applications and data on poll worker demographics with the Board in the future.

Ms. Motter asked Director Smith to explain to the public the negative line items and encumbrances shown on the budget. Director Smith expounded on the budget and the line items and stated that the overall budget is balanced and that the various line items would be reconciled. Ms. Motter confirmed with Director Smith that there is adequate funding for the remainder of 2023. Ms. Motter expressed concerns regarding PLEJ and stated that she would also like to get more information on the organization before voting on the membership. She further stated that she likes the concept generally, of participating with other jurisdictions and that we can learn from each other.

Director Smith stated that Gwinnett County was the first county to join PLEJ in Georgia and all 4 large counties have been invited. She further stated that PLEJ is a new organization.

Mr. Lewis asked what new permanent personnel may need to be added to the budget and what that impact would be. Director Smith replied that she will be working with the managers to determine where the need is and then report it back to the Board. Mr. Lewis agreed with Ms. Jester and Ms. Motter's sentiments about PLEJ and that he would also like more time to look into the organization. Mr. Lewis asked if there was anything to report about the adopt-a-precinct program. Director Smith responded that the program is still under review with the attorneys.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman confirmed with Director Smith that Wade Walker will no longer be a polling location and is not being replaced for this election. Vice-Chair Abhiraman stated that he hopes PLEJ is approved when the Board is ready to vote on it. He pointed out that the membership agreement states that membership can be terminated for any reason.

Chair Swift asked what areas outside of personnel salaries are expected to increase next year. Director Smith responded that renovations, physical security, and facility improvements are the larger expenses in addition to equipment and things to help us modernize our operation. Chair Swift asked if there were opportunities for Board members to attend poll worker training sessions like there were in the past and asked Director Smith to send over available dates. She also echoed the sentiments of Ms. Jester, Ms. Motter, and Mr. Lewis regarding PLEJ and that she would like to do more research before making a decision.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman asked if the transportation of the voting equipment carriers has affected the scheduling for equipment drop off for poll managers. Director Smith said that equipment drop off has just begun but the same number of trucks and staff are being used as in past and it's approximately the same amount of equipment, however, it is more efficient. Vice-Chair Abhiraman asked if it would take less time on average to close each location. Director Smith replied that it should be a faster and less labor-intensive process for both set up and break down.

## **ITEMS FOR DECISION**

### **A) Election Day Managers**

Director Smith reported that we have 174 polling locations and all managers have been staffed. She requested that the Board approve the list of Election Day managers for the November 7<sup>th</sup> General Municipal and Special Election cycle.

Ms. Jester motioned to approve the list of Election Day managers for purposes of discussion, seconded by Mr. Lewis.

Ms. Jester asked Director Smith how many managers were repeat poll managers. Director Smith replied that she would have to collect that information and send it to Ms. Jester at a later time. Ms. Jester also asked for information on each manager's party affiliation, or if they did not report it, previous service and if they were previously a poll manager.

Chair Swift asked Director Smith for data on how many years each poll manager has been at their location. Director Smith responded that recruiting for each election cycle begins with contacting the managers who served in the previous election cycle, however, further information on the attrition rate would have to be collected and sent to her. Chair Swift asked the Board if there were any more questions and if they felt comfortable enough to proceed with voting.

Ms. Jester said that she felt comfortable enough with the manager list to vote today but would like the requested information in advance going forward. She thanked Director Smith for all the recruiting efforts and thanked the poll workers for their service.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman asked if training for poll managers was different now with the introduction of GARVIS and if they had to become deputy registrars. Director Smith replied that GARViS is not utilized during Election Day, but the training for poll managers does include the updates needed for the new cellular poll pads as they are being used for the first time.

The Board voted to approve the list of Election Day managers. The motion passed unanimously.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Motion by Ms. Jester and seconded by Ms. Motter to recess for an executive session to discuss litigation. The Motion was carried by unanimous vote. The Board exited executive session and resumed the regular meeting.

No action was taken during the executive session.

Motion by Ms. Jester and seconded by Mr. Lewis to adjourn executive session and reconvene in open session. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Ms. Motter to approve the consent order in SEB cases 2015-085, 2016-042, 2018-039, 2020-045, 2020-160, 2020-175, and 2020-215 and authorize the execution of the consent order in a form approved by the County Attorney. The motion was seconded by Ms. Jester and passed unanimously.

### **BOARD COMMENTS**

Ms. Jester thanked everyone for the great meeting and made a special acknowledgement to her son, Jake Jester, who was present.

Ms. Motter thanked Director Smith and the staff acknowledging their hard work preparing for the upcoming election. She also thanked the public for their attendance and comments. Lastly, she thanked the poll workers for their service to our community.

Vice-Chair Abhiraman thanked the Department and the County attorneys for all their hard work.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Jester, seconded by Mr. Lewis. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m.