

## **Roanoke County Electoral Meeting Minutes**

County Administration Building  
5204 Bernard Dr., Suite 300B  
Roanoke, VA 24018

**Date:** March 1, 2019 Minutes

**Call to order** by acting Chair Gailen Miles: 11:02 AM

**Attendance:** Gailen Miles, Acting Chair; Dana Martin, Secretary; Ken Srpan

**Guests:** Gene Rose, Roy Miles, Brenda Daugherty, Susan Cloeter

**Minutes:** Minutes for the December 17, 2018 and January 31, 2019 meetings were approved by the Electoral Board

### **Meeting Agenda:**

Reorganization: Mr. Martin made the motion that Ken Srpan serve as Chair, Gailen Miles serve as Secretary, and Dana Martin serve as Vice Chair. The motion was second by Mr. Srpan, no discussion, motion passed by three yes votes. At this time, the meeting was turned over to Mr. Srpan.

Officers of Election (OoE): Ms. Cloeter presented a list of 305 names of individuals who have agreed to serve as OoE for the next year. Ms. Miles motioned that the list be accepted, Mr. Martin seconded, during open discussion Ms. Cloeter suggested that the current Chiefs of 302 Poages Mill and 104 Northside be moved to other precincts and offered a position as an OoE rather than Chief or Co-Chief.

Ms Miles made a motion to accept the list of the list of OoE and send Thank You letters to those who are not returning or retiring from service, Mr. Martin seconded, and the motion passed.

### Travel Policy:

Ms. Miles made the motion that per the minutes dated April 26, 2018, stating that the Electoral Boards will set their own policies and procedures in compliance with the Roanoke County Travel Policy and Procedures, she moved that, with immediate effect, only the latest seated Board Member receive funding to attend either the VEBA and ELECT annual conferences or any others which are deemed directly beneficial to the business of the Department of Elections for Roanoke County. The funding will adhere to the Roanoke County guidelines regarding mileage, per diem, meals, and overnight expenses.

Other conferences and ancillary meetings must be authorized by the Board as a whole and will not be funded by the department unless the subject matter pertains directly to the business of the Office and would provide substantial benefit to the Roanoke County Office of Voter Registration and Elections and its voters.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Srpan. In discussion, Mr. Martin questioned the impetus for having to make this motion at this time and having it effective immediately. Ms. Miles responded that in accordance with the approved minutes from April 26, 2018, line #19 "Electoral Boards set [sic] determine their own policies and procedures for complying with state mandates (line #26)." Mr. Gates, then County Administrator, furthered clarified that the county does not decline reimbursement for travel items fitting Electoral Board or Department of Elections policies." Ms. Miles continued that for the past year the Board has avoided defining such policy and given budget constraints it is imperative that we address the travel policy and the expenses it incurs. She stated that the decision should be made by the Board as a whole and put a stop to individual Board members making decisions as to where and when travel shall be reimbursed.

Mr. Martin stated that all three of the Board Members are required to go "by VEBA and the state code" but provided no proof of that. Likewise, he referred to existing policies and was unable to cite any such policies. The remainder of the Board established that there was no formal Board policy concerning travel and determined that there is neither precedent nor written evidence to support of Mr. Martin's claims.

Mr. Martin stated that he is required by the State to attend quarterly COOP meetings in Richmond and that his attendance benefits the County as well as other medium-size localities in Virginia. Specifically, he cited that meeting with DHS and members of the FBI have allowed him to make presentations about continuity of operations planning that justify continued travel reimbursement. Ms. Miles pointed out that his advice during a 2016 Officer of Election training regarding Election Day emergencies was simply "stay calm and call the police," that the prior 20 years of meeting minutes lack any indication that he has presented information gained from these meetings to the Board, or used the same to any benefit of the County Elections Office.

Mr. Martin said that making this motion at this time was immoral and that there were other agendas at play.

The motion in no way prohibits any Board member from attending any out of town meeting. The motion only determines who will receive travel reimbursement.

Mr. Srpan called for a vote and the motion passed with two yeas and one nay.

Ken Srpan will be our representative for the March 8-10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 VEBA conference. Ms. Cloeter was directed to make the appropriate changes to the VEBA conference registration to reflect Mr. Srpan's attendance and to cover his expense for that attendance.

Ms. Miles made a second motion that a date be set to review the County regulations and develop a more comprehensive set of policies and procedures relating to Electoral Board travel consistent with the previous motion. During discussion, the Board agreed that it would invite a County auditor to review the policy once created. The Board scheduled a meeting to draft its travel policy on March 21<sup>st</sup> at 10 AM. The motion was seconded by Mr. Srpan and the motion passed with three yeas.

Creating a Recruitment Program

- *Media Involvement:*
  - Mr. Sspan reported that in preparation for creating a recruitment program he has met with: John Carlin and the news director at Channel 10, the general manager and news director at Channel 7, a reporter with channel 27, and the director of WFIR. Mr. Sspan said that all were on board with helping us once we have our program ready to present to the public. He also said that he plans to speak with the Roanoke Times once we are ready to launch the campaign, which will be finalized by April 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Ms. Cloeter requested the board consider empowering the Office to use social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter to publicize officer of election recruitment, voter registration and absentee voting deadlines, public education efforts, etc., while permitting citizens to submit questions/comments and communicate with staff via direct messaging. Mr. Sspan made a motion to empower Ms. Cloeter to use social media/twitter to promote the activities of and services provided by the Office and his motion was seconded by both Ms. Miles and Mr. Martin.
- *Officers of Election Meeting:*
  - Mr. Sspan has talked by phone with eleven OoE's and has received some good quotes and possible talking points for speaking engagements. Ms. Cloeter will put Mr. Sspan in touch with Betty Graham, a long-time member of the Department of Elections with extensive involvement in efforts to retrain and schedule OoEs, for additional talking points.
  - Mr. Sspan suggested a review of the brochure adding quotes from OoE's. He also suggested that we embed a reporter as a trained OoE for the upcoming June Primary in a busy precinct like Lindenwood, Orchards, etc.
- *Speakers Bureau:*
  - Mr. Sspan presented a spread sheet of nearly 40 civic organizations which was divided into three groups of 13 each for each member of the Board to contact and secure speaking dates. Mr. Sspan will call the first 13 on the list, Ms. Miles the second group of 13, and Mr. Martin the balance of the list.
  - The presentation will be finalized by April 1<sup>st</sup> and presentations will be scheduled after that date.
  - The Board discussed asking the OoE's if they belonged to civic groups and invite them to secure a speaking engagement with that group including having the OoE participate in the presentation.
  - The Board agreed to meet on March 11 at 1 PM for the purpose of developing the talking points for the presentation.

Directors Remarks:

- Changes in the precincts, as approved by the County Board of Supervisors, are in progress. This involves the reconfiguration of the 103, 106, and 405 precincts and addition of a precinct 401 precinct. Pending provision of information from the County's GIS Department regarding necessary updates to the street file and entry of the same into the Virginia Election and Registration System which is

used to assign voters to the correct voting precincts, these changes should be in place for the June Primaries

- Letters appointing officers of election and confirming the use of polling places for upcoming elections will be mailed this week.
- A timeline featuring dates of elections and voter registration-related deadlines, election preparation and reporting deadlines, and for required administrative and Electoral Board actions is being developed and will be an internal document.
- Ms. Cloeter proposed development of an election unit for middle school civics students and suggested this be used as an opportunity to recruit these students to serve as volunteers Election Day.
- Ms. Cloeter informed the Electoral Board that the Virginia General Assembly has approved legislation that will affect absentee voting as soon as the November 2020 Presidential Election. The law will enact 8 days of no excuse absentee in person voting and will not apply to absentee voting by mail or absentee voting in person prior to the beginning of that 8-day period. This led to a discussion regarding logistics, office space, personnel, hours of operations, and increased expenses expected to result from this change.
- Ms. Cloeter also informed the Electoral Board that legislation to alter the formation of the State Board of Elections has been approved by the General Assembly. Mr. Martin noted that he had this idea many years ago, used his position within VEBA to propose it, that it prompted the organization to pursue the changes contained within the legislation, and that it is a perfect example of both the benefits that his travel and engagement with VEBA, SBE, and ELECT have brought to Virginia and the prestige it has lent to Roanoke County.
- Ms. Miles made a motion to invite County administrators to a session reviewing the impact of changes in voting technology and Virginia policies on the Department's budget and the ways that further policy changes like "no excuse in person absentee voting" have had/will have on the Office and County.
  - The Board and Director of Elections identified topics including the change in the amount and nature of voter registration and election activities managed by the Office since 2015/2016, introduction of new voting machines and paper ballots, the costs associated with the same, of printing materials like forms and envelopes that were once provided by the state, the concerns regarding logistics, space, ADA accessibility, staffing, and financial resources that will be associated with changes in absentee voting, notable increases in overall voter participation, etc.
  - Ms. Cloeter requested further consideration of changes in the Office's operating hours as discussed during previous meetings of the Electoral Board – specifically, the possibility of opening the Office from 7AM-4PM as opposed to 8AM-5PM so as to allow voters an opportunity to cast their ballots before normal working hours begin. She outlined the view offered by many voters that it would be more convenient to vote before working hours, earlier in the day, and while their children were in school than trying to reach the office before 5PM. She also stated that the flow of voter activity through the office during the two months prior to each election would support such a change. Mr. Span asked Ms. Cloeter to determine

whether the County would allow such a change and suggested that the Board continue discussion of the proposal afterward.

- Mr. Sran noted that significant public education will need to occur around the change in absentee voting policies and that this subject will need to be reviewed in greater detail going forward.
- The Electoral Board agreed that invitations to participate in this meeting will be sent in August.
- Mr. Sran seconded Ms. Miles' original motion and the motion passed. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sran.

#### Other Business:

Ms. Miles presented an update of the Boards Wish List. The updated list is attached.

#### Adjournment:

Ms. Miles motioned to adjourn and both Ken and Dana seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 2:10 PM.

#### Upcoming events and meetings:

- March 8-10 VEBA conference at the Homestead in Bath County.
- March 11, 1PM meeting of the Electoral Board to discuss talking points for the recruitment program
- March 13, 1-3PM Anne Marie Green and Rebecca Owens to conduct a training session for the Electoral Board and Director of Elections concerning County procedures dealing with basic finance and human resources issues. The training is to be held in the Human Resources Training Room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.
- March 21, 10AM meeting for Electoral Board to develop a formal travel policy.