

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, June 10, 2020, for a meeting with the Board of Elections.

Mayor Byrd started the meeting at 8:00 pm. It was held virtually.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Emmett V. Jordan, Leta M. Mach, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Colin A. Byrd. Edward V.J Putens arrived at 8:15 pm.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Nicole Ard, City Manager; Rick Bower, Police Chief; and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

ALSO, PRESENT WERE: Patricia Evans, Steven Gilbert, Julie Gaebe, and Toni Mathewson, Board of Elections; Ric Gordon, Bill Orleans, and Kathleen Gallagher, News Review.

COVID-19 Updates – Council discussed holding a Special Meeting to discuss the reopening of the City. It was noted that it's too late to advertise in the News Review.

Board of Elections

Ms. Evans presented to the Council the election statistics on registered voters and the percentage of registered voters who voted. In her presentation to the City Council, it was noted that the Board of Elections had determined that the last election generally proceeded well, even with some counting delays after the polls closed. Ms. Evans indicated that there will be changes for the next election cycle.

Mr. Jordan inquired about the breakdown of the number of candidate votes by the voters. Unfortunately, Ms. Evans was unable to provide this information.

Mr. Gilbert explained that the process of Early Voting was a little challenging, with a delay in reporting results in the count of the 467 early and absentee votes. In addition, the sorting and categorizing votes by precinct occurred late in the day and caused a delayed start. The main issue was that the scanner lacked an automatic feeder resulting in each ballot being hand-fed into the machine.

Mr. Gilbert also explained the new procedure of implementing electronic poll books that the Board plans to use instead of the traditional method of the paper register voter rolls provided by the Prince George's County Board of Elections.

Ms. Davis inquired about the cost of the electronic poll books. Ms. Evans noted that the electronic poll books are estimated at \$100 per item with two devices at each polling location. The cost for the voting machines is a separate cost which the Board is working to obtain estimates.

Ms. Evans provided the City Council with the suggestions to modify the 2021 City Election. The Board recommends a machine for Early Voting to provide real-time feedback and electronic poll books to ease the check-in process.

She also noted that the Board members and the City Clerk attended the City of Rockville forum to discuss their 2019 election procedures with mail-in ballots. As a result, participation in their election had doubled. Ms. Evans provided an overview of the pros and cons of voting by mail with the City of Rockville. Mr. Roberts inquired if Rockville maintains its voter registration list. Ms. Evans indicated uncertainty; however, Rockville mentioned purging inactive voters.

Ms. Pope asked if electronic poll books were needed at each polling location. Mr. Gilbert stated that there would be a need for an electronic poll book that will be used at the polling location with a backup in case of any issues.

Ms. Davis announced that the City needs to be very careful in selecting its vendor for the vote-by-mail process to avoid having a similar issue as the County, which had problems with its vendor in the recent election.

Mayor Byrd noted that the City Council is more often telling the Board of Elections what to do and should allow them to decide on the issues with some independence.

Mr. Putens expressed concern about the mail-in process and the need for step-by-step instructions on the process. He also asked what happens to the ballots when they are sent back to the City. Mr. Gilbert explained that once the City receives the sealed ballot, it is opened and scanned at 4:30 pm on Election Day.

Ms. Mach asked how the City would be sure if a voter is not voting twice by mail and on Election Day. Mr. Gilbert noted that the Board would know because the voter information would indicate how the vote was cast.

Ms. Davis noted that in the past, candidates had monies in their account from the previous election cycle but the candidate started with a zero balance the next election cycle. She also noted that this should not be done; the balance should carry over. Ms. Davis hoped the Board is reviewing how the campaign funds are expended.

Items of Information

Mayor Jordan noted three items. The City of Bowie's Mayor Adam's family member died suddenly. Mayor Jordan requested a card be sent. The Associate Director of NASA sent a letter. There will be a Four Cities meeting in July. Staff should check with other cities to schedule a Zoom meeting.

Ms. Pope noted the work performed on Hanover Parkway. It was pointed out that the work is sidewalk improvements.

Council discussed the Special Resource Officer (SRO) issue and the Prince George's County School System requesting the removal of officers. Council expressed concern and favors maintaining the SRO at Eleanor Roosevelt High School.

Mayor Byrd indicated that he is in favor of the removal of SROs from the schools. Therefore, he would not be signing the letter.

Mr. Jordan noted the need for school nurses in the school.

The meeting ended at 9:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonita Anderson
City Clerk