

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held on Monday, December 6, 2021

Discuss: Post-Election Review with the City's Board of Elections

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:00 p.m., held virtually via Zoom.

In attendance Council members Colin A. Byrd, Judith F. Davis, Brandon R. Gordon, Silke I. Pope, Rodney M. Roberts, Kristen L. K. Weaver, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

City Staff present were Timothy George, Acting City Manager, and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

Others present were Board of Election members Steven Gilbert, Patrice Evans, Toni Mathewson, Laurie Siegel, Wanna Coker, and James Williams.

During the introductions of the City Council and Board of Election members, Mayor Jordan emphasized the role of the Board of Elections, which conducts City Elections every two years. He explained that the Board meets regularly, especially during election periods, and works closely with the City Clerk to manage the Election process.

Ms. Evans, Board of Elections shared there was a (3%) three percent increase in registered voters compared to previous years, with voter registration rising across all precincts. She highlighted that in the 2017 Elections, one council seat was vacant, while in 2021, there were two vacancies. This year, challenges arose from the pandemic, vote-by-mail procedures, and implementation of E-Poll Books.

Mayor Jordan highlighted the Board of Elections (BOE) was appointed by the City Council and is composed of volunteers. He expressed appreciation for their hard work and noted some changes implemented this year, including the expansion of early voting, introduction of drop boxes, and use of mail-in ballots.

Ms. Davis addressed concerns about the negativity surrounding the BOE on social media, particularly from some candidates and their followers. She emphasized that the BOE members are local volunteers and are not conspiring against the community. She pointed out that many of the problems encountered during the election were caused by a vendor and the ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Gilbert, BOE explained that historically, the city used one vendor for all election-related tasks, including voting machines, mailing applications, and sending and receiving ballots. However, this year saw increased participation, and with it came more problems, particularly with mailing errors and late ballot distribution. He noted that despite these issues, no one was denied the right to vote.

City Clerk, Ms. Anderson shared, there was a glitch with one of the thumb drives used during the election. The vendor responsible for the issue was scheduled to review the missing information and confirming all votes.

Mr. Byrd sought clarification on the location of precincts, which Mr. Gilbert provided, listing the Community Center, Police Station, Springhill Lake, Greenbriar, and Schrom Hills Park as key precincts.

Mr. Gordon inquired about the training of volunteers, to which Mr. Gilbert responded that volunteers receive training the Monday before the election. He admitted that some information might have been confusing, but future efforts will aim to provide clearer instructions.

Ms. Davis suggested that the low voter turnout in some areas, such as Springhill Lake, could be improved by mailing ballots directly to residents, as seen in other cities such as Rockville. However, she cautioned that the city's lack of control over the voter registration process could lead to issues with ballot distribution.

Ms. Weaver raised concerns about the costs of early voting, weekend voting, and mail-in ballots. Mr. Gilbert (BOE) explained that while there are added costs, ensuring the integrity of the process requires proper identification and tracking of ballots.

Mayor Jordan questioned the effectiveness of early voting and suggested that compressing the voting period or holding elections on a different day, such as Sunday, could boost participation.

Mr. Roberts raised the issue of delayed ballots during the mail-in process and asked if there would be consequences for the vendor if responsible. Mr. Gilbert and Ms. Evans acknowledged the Vendor's deficiencies and stressed the need to address these issues before future elections.

The meeting ended at 10:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonita Anderson

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City Clerk