

Board of Civil Authority Hearing
Thursday, October 3, 2024
Akeley Memorial Hall

BCA Members present were: Leighton Detora, Susan Connerty, Mary Black, Marina Meerburg, Paco Aumand, Jo Sabel Courtney, Elizabeth Lackey, Lyndall Heyer, Suzanne Clark, Lynn LaFleur and Penny Davis

Leighton Detora called the meeting to order

Agenda Changes/Additions

The motion was made, seconded and all in favor for the agenda to remain as is.

Review/Approve Minutes

The motion was made by Mary Black seconded by Jo Sabel Courtney and carried to approve the August 22, 2024 minutes. Paco Aumand, Elizabeth Lackey, Marina Meerburg abstained as they were not at the meeting.

The motion was made by Mary Black seconded by Jo Sabel Courtney and carried the August 22, 2024 minutes. Paco Aumand, Elizabeth Lackey, Marina Meerburg, Lyndall Heyer and Suzanne Clark abstained as they were not at the meeting.

The motion was made by Mary Black seconded by Jo Sabel Courtney and carried the August 27, 2024 minutes. Paco Aumand, Elizabeth Lackey, Marina Meerburg, Lyndall Heyer and Suzanne Clark abstained as they were not at the meeting.

The motion was made by Mary Black seconded by Susan Connerty and carried the September 10, 2024 minutes. Paco Aumand, Elizabeth Lackey, Marina Meerburg, Lynn LaFleur, Lyndall Heyer and Suzanne Clark abstained as they were not at the meeting.

Discuss Early Processing of Absentee Ballots in the Tabulator

Since the Secretary of State mailed all general elections ballots, we will be receiving a lot of absentee ballots prior to the election. In the past all absentee ballots were processed in the tabulator on election day. In order for ballots to be processed early in the tabulator, the Board of Civil Authority must give approval. Penny gave an overview of the Chain of custody log sheet for early processing of ballots. Many people have already started returning their voted ballots. By state law starting Monday, October 6, 2024, the outer returned envelopes need to be opened so that certification envelope which is contained in the outer envelope can be examined to make sure they are not defective. If the certification envelope is deemed defective the Town Clerk must notify the voter to let them know that the defect in their certification envelope needs to be cured before it can be counted. If it is not deemed defective, The Town Clerk must enter the ballot as being received in the Vermont Elections Management System (VEMS). It must be entered into VEMS before it can be processed in the tabulator. Discussion ensued among the members of the Board of Civil Authority regarding whether the Board would approve processing, that is counting, ballots before election day, as well as the process. There were some members that felt uncomfortable with processing of the ballots into the tabulator early. There were

other members that felt that given the number of ballots that needed to be processed that we needed to start earlier than waiting for election day.

Paco Aumand made the motion, seconded by Mary Black to authorize the Town Clerk to begin the procedures for early voting as early as October 9th and continuing thereafter on the 16th, 23rd, and 30th and that the procedure shall be in compliance with the Election Procedures Manual promulgated by the Vt. Secretary of State's office and that those who will enter ballots into the tabulator agree on the accuracy of the tabulator count.

The motion carried by a vote of 7-2 with Leighton Detora and Penny Davis abstaining.

Other Business

Discussion ensued regarding the election process. Leighton Detora took the opportunity to inquire of those present whether they had observed or knew of any irregularities in prior elections that we should discuss as we, as Justices of the Peace, are responsible to see that the elections are fairly and properly run. There were no outstanding issues in this regard. Mary Black stated that she went to the VLCT Town Fair yesterday regarding elections. They discussed many things but one thing that was mentioned was that election officials should expect to have poll watchers and/or first amendment auditors on Election Day. Discussion ensued about the current set up in the theatre in the Akeley Memorial Building regarding the presence of poll watchers so that voters are neither intimidated nor interfered with in any way. The consensus was that they should be confined to areas which will eliminate any possibility of intimidation or interference. Mary encouraged everyone to review the Elections Procedure Guide that is on the Secretary of State website. Another item mentioned was the recommendation of wearing gloves and/or mask when handling absentee ballots.

Discussion ensued regarding the number of Justices of Peace. According to Stowe's population we should be able to have fifteen Justices of Peace. We currently have twelve. In order for Stowe to increase the number of JPs, the Secretary of State says the Town needs to vote on it. Penny will look into the process and report back.

The Board told Penny to let them know if they needed their help for processing ballots or preparing for the election.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Penny A. Davis