

The regular monthly meeting of the Erie County Board of Elections was called to order by Chairman Thomas Ferrell on Friday, December 15th, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.

Roll Call:	(D) Thomas M. Ferrell, Chairman	Present
	(R) Lisa M. Crescimano, Member	Present
	(D) MaryAnn Groot, Member	Present
	(R) Nancy C. McKeen, Member	Present

Guests in attendance: Amy Grubbe, Stephen Lippert, and Harriet Minich Lippert

Ms. Crescimano motioned to approve the November 20th Official Canvass, Certification and Regular Meeting minutes. Ms. Groot seconded the motion. All board members voted yes; motion carried.

Ms. Groot motioned to approve the November 29th Post-Election Audit minutes. Ms. Crescimano seconded the motion. All board members voted yes; motion carried.

Ms. Crescimano motioned to approve the December 6th Special Meeting minutes. Ms. Groot seconded the motion. All board members voted yes; motion carried.

Alex Jones, Director, gave a financial report. He presented the monthly bills to the board, which the board members reviewed. Ms. Crescimano motioned to approve the December bills, with Ms. Groot seconding. All board members voted yes; motion carried.

Mr. Jones also presented the board members with the worksheet of the total cost of the November election. We are charging back to the political subdivisions about \$93,000. The worksheet indicates the amount we are charging back to each subdivision. The board members took a few moments to review. Ms. Crescimano motioned to approve the chargebacks for the November 2023 General Election, with Ms. Groot seconding. All board members voted yes; motion carried.

For the Director's Report, Mr. Jones gave an update on the two individuals who took signs from the Groton Township Building on Election Day. He stated that Jason Hinnars at the Erie County Prosecutor's Office said it was their intention to charge the two individuals. He will let us know when that happens. Ms. Groot asked what the charges will be. Ms. Crescimano stated that Jason said it would be a misdemeanor.

Ms. Groot stated that in reading the poll worker logs from Election Day, she noted that someone took signs at the Huron Township #3 polling location, and asked if there had been any follow-up. Adrienne James, Deputy Director, stated she read about someone's car being parked too close to the entrance, but wasn't aware of signs being stolen. Ms. Groot stated the log did not name who the individual was. She thinks we need to tell poll workers in training to be aware. She is concerned about people taking signs in the March and November elections next year. Mr. Jones agreed that we should tell our workers in training to be vigilant. He also suggested talking to the Sheriff's Office about an increased presence next year.

Mr. Jones gave the board members reimbursement forms for Winter Conference next month, and asked them to input their anticipated expenses at the top of the form. The board members took a few minutes to do so.

Mr. Jones stated that although we have petitions to review and approve today, there are some candidates who are still circulating. We'll need to meet after the first of the year to approve the outstanding petitions, and to approve the Election Administration Plan, or EAP, for the March 2024 Primary. The EAP must be approved and signed no later than January 4th. After some discussion, the board members agreed to hold a special meeting on Friday, December 29th at 3:30 p.m. for those purposes. Ms. James stated she would update the board meeting calendar.

Next, Mr. Jones spoke on a potential polling location change. Due to renovations at the old city hall, the Sandusky Municipal Court has moved its operations to the City Service Complex, which hosts Sandusky O and P. Some people, including the Sandusky Precinct Support Person, noted there was not much room there. Mr. Jones stated that one option would be to move Sandusky O and P to the Health Department, which already hosts Sandusky M. Board staff will visit the Health Department next week to see if that is a feasible option.

Mr. Ferrell asked how many voters would be at the Health Department. Mr. Jones replied that there are about 900 registered voters in Sandusky M, about 900 in Sandusky O, and about 1,300 in Sandusky P. Mr. Ferrell stated he doesn't know if the parking lot could handle that many voters.

Mr. Jones stated another option is the old Venice Heights Elementary School, which is now the Sandusky Career Center. He is not sure if it would be big enough for two precincts, though. Ms. Crescimano asked if that building is ADA compliant. Mr. Jones stated he thinks it is. He also noted that City Manager John Orzech stated the renovations should be done in July, so in November it should be okay to return to the Service Complex, if the board chooses.

Ms. Groot stated that at Oxford Township, the workers felt cramped and requested more tables and privacy screens. She stated we may want to talk to the people in Oxford Township. Mr. Jones stated we talked about sending them more supplies, but doesn't know where else in Oxford to go. Ms. Groot noted that parking at the Oxford location was limited.

Under new business was approval of candidate petitions for the March 2024 Primary Election. Mr. Jones noted that all candidates listed meet the necessary requirements to be on the ballot. Ms. Groot motioned to approve the candidates, with Ms. Crescimano seconding. All board members voted yes; motion carried. The candidates approved are as follows:

- Leslie Murray, County Commissioner, Full Term Commencing 1/2/25, Democrat
- Marcus L. Harris, County Commissioner, Full Term Commencing 1/3/25, Democrat
- Kevin Baxter, Prosecuting Attorney, Democrat
- Luvada S. Wilson, Clerk of Courts, Democrat
- Craig A. Hecht, Clerk of Courts, Republican
- Ellen Olsen, County Recorder, Democrat
- John D. Farschman, County Engineer, Democrat

Next was approval of a candidate name change for the March 2024 Primary Election. Ms. Crescimano motioned to approve the name change request for Mr. Harris from Marcus L. Harris to Marcus Harris. Ms. Groot seconded the motion. All board members voted yes; motion carried.

Under approval of issues for the March 2024 Primary, Mr. Jones noted that the Eagles Club in Sandusky M submitted petitions for a local liquor option. They had the minimum 50 valid signatures. Ms. Groot motioned to approve the issue, with Ms. Crescimano seconding. All board members voted yes; motion carried.

Next was allocation of voting equipment and precinct elections officials for the March 2024 Primary. Mr. Jones stated the recommendation is one DS200 and one Expressvote per polling location, and one Voting Location Manager, one Signature Judge, one Ballot Judge, and one Clerk per precinct. He stated that was the allocation we had in November's election. Mr. Ferrell asked about putting a check-in computer in the lobby. Mr. Jones stated that ball was in maintenance's court. Mr. Ferrell said he would talk to Gary about it. Ms. Crescimano motioned to approve the allocation of voting equipment and PEOs as recommended by Mr. Jones. Ms. Groot seconded the motion. All board members voted yes; motion carried.

For “any other matters to come before the board,” Ms. Groot noted that the campaign finance notice she received in the mail still had the name of a previous board member. Mr. Jones stated he must have pulled an old letter and that he would fix it. Ms. Crescimano reminded staff to make sure the board members’ signatures are changed on the ballots, too. Ms. Groot asked if the campaign finance letter should be signed by someone in the office. Mr. Jones stated it is not required.

Ms. Groot asked if staff members were prepared if we receive suspicious mail with white powder. She noted this happened recently in either Oregon or Washington. Mr. Ferrell stated that if that happened, we would call the Sheriff’s Office. Eliza Link, clerk, stated that we do have gloves and that we recently received an email about what to look for regarding suspicious mail.

Ms. Groot asked about the 111 provisional votes that were not counted last election. Ms. Link replied that we must keep the provisional ID envelopes for so long, and then we shred them. She also stated that the information on the provisional ID envelope is used to register those people to vote, unless they did not complete the envelope correctly. Ms. Groot noted there were three provisional voters who failed to sign their provisional ID envelope, and asked if we try to contact them. Ms. Link stated that we could do that.

Ms. Groot asked if anyone checks to make sure the data was entered correctly. She noted that in the poll worker comment logs, someone wrote about a voter who updated their registration with Human Services, but it didn’t get turned in or updated. Ms. Link replied that if someone turns in an incomplete voter registration form, we send them a letter. She thinks that sometimes there is confusion from the voters. They think they registered but they didn’t, and maybe they throw out the problem letter we send them.

Ms. Groot stated that on Election Day, she observed voters coming in and either talking loudly or talking a long time with the poll workers. She thinks we should add to the training that they should not loudly converse. She also noticed some Voting Location Managers (VLMs) making provisional voter notations on their log sheets. Ms. Link replied that VLMs are required to complete the blue provisional Authority to Vote Slip and the pink half sheet stapled to the provisional ID envelope. They are not required to log a provisional voter in their log sheet, although some of them do.

Ms. Groot stated that at the Castalia United Church of Christ on Election Day, they had a religious activity going on at the church at the same time. The religious activity was taking place in the accessible room. Ms. Groot observed two people coming in to vote who it was hard for them to get in. When we are checking locations, we need to make sure nothing else is going on. Ms. James replied that she will be mailing the polling location questionnaires for March soon. She added a new question, which is “Are there any other activities happening on Election Day which would mean voting must take place in a different room?” If the answer is yes, then Ms. James will verify with the location that the alternate room is accessible. If it is not, we can bring a temporary ramp to that location.

Next, the board members discussed polling locations in Sandusky. Ms. Groot stated we need more signs to direct voters at the Health Department. She also stated the parking lot was full on Election Day and there were not a lot of voters. Ms. Crescimano stated she thinks there is plenty of parking there. Ms. McKeen noted that the room at the Health Department where people got their Covid shots was huge. Mr. Ferrell stated he was not sure the Health Department could hold 1,000 more voters. The board members discussed various other options for Sandusky O and P. Among the ideas were Patina Chapel, the marina, AMVETS, the fire department, and a local bakery.

Ms. Groot asked if we have an employee handbook. Mr. Jones stated that we use the county’s handbook. Mr. Ferrell stated we were going to make our own adaptable with what the county has. Ms. Link noted that we used to have our own.

Ms. Grubbe asked about using the fire station as a polling location. Mr. Ferrell noted parking there is very limited. Ms. Grubbe then suggested the AMVETS. She also asked if we were going to follow up with the three people who did not sign their provisional ID envelope. Ms. Link stated we could do that. Ms. Grubbe also asked if the EOM provides any direction on what to do if we receive mail with white powder. Ms. James replied that the EOM is currently being updated and that the new version should be released soon. Mr. Ferrell again iterated that if a white powder situation were to occur, we would contact the Sheriff's Office.

Ms. Crescimano motioned to adjourn, with Ms. Groot seconding. All board members voted yes; motion carried. Board adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Alexander W. Jones, Director

Attest:

Thomas M. Ferrell, Chairman