

Election Process Review Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, January 5, 2015

The regular meeting of the Election Process Review Committee Meeting on January 5, 2015 at 5pm in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Conference Room, Independence Hall, 725 Old Post Road, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Catherine Albin - Chairperson, Ron Pine – Vice Chairperson, Bryan Cafferelli, James Quinn

PRESENT:  
Registrar Roger Autuori, Registrar Matthew Waggner, Virginia Rysz and Public

**I. Call to order**

Mrs. Albin opened the meeting at 5:06 pm.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mrs. Albin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Everyone took a minute to review the minutes and information.

Mrs. Albin asked if everyone had a chance to look over the minutes for approval.

Mr. Pine said the first set of minutes are fine and still looking through the second set.

Motion to approve meeting minutes from December 15, 2014.

Mr. Pine approved, Mr. Quinn seconded, passed unanimously 4 in favor, 0 opposed.

Motion to approve meeting minutes from December 22, 2014.

Mr. Pine approved, Mrs. Albin seconded, and the meeting minutes passed 2 in favor, 0 opposed, and two abstentions Mr. Cafferelli and Mr. Quinn.

**IV. Committee discussion and fact finding with Registrars and Moderators.**

Mr. Autuori reviewed the packet of information that he provided to the committee.

1. State Statute 9-147a Absentee Ballots, 2. State Statute 9-351, Delay in counting or declaring vote, 352 tampering with tabulator, 3. State Statute 9-267 Removal of officials, 4. State Statute 9-355 Official neglect or fraud, 5. Email stream from Mr. Waggner to Mr. Autuori, 6. Poll workers appointed by Republican Registrars for November 4<sup>th</sup> Election, 7. Statement of Christina Mason regarding problems in District Three, 8. Statement of Assistant Registrar, Sharon Brzozowski regarding District Three, 9. Statement of Republican Deputy Registrar Steve Elworthy. 10. Statement of Assistant Registrar Charlene Turturino regarding problems in District Nine, 11. Statement of Assistant Registrar Doug Soutar regarding problems in District Four.

Mr. Autuori stated that each registrar alternates year to year to take the lead on Election. The one leading for the year picks the head moderator and lead Registrar calls the shots for the election. Mr. Waggner was in charge this election.

Mr. Pine asked, what does it mean that Mr. Waggner is in charge?

Mr. Autuori stated that his was in charge of the voter list, printing ballots, absentee ballots, and how they were counted district wide. The registrars had to agree on central counting or it ends up in the districts according to Statute 9-147a. The Poll workers and phone numbers were provided. District 10 had extra work regarding absentee ballots and Election Day registration (EDR). Christina Mason in January 2013 complained about the moderator who was in district 3.

Mrs. Albin asked should we review the statute now or come back to it.

Mr. Pine stated there is one question on the state statute, with one of the issues were the ballots being counted at the polls why was it decided to be counted district wide at the polls.

Mr. Autuori said the statute states the ballots can be counted at a central location. Mr. Waggner wanted it counted in the districts and Mr. Autuori wanted it done centrally. At one time 1984 or 1988 it was done in the polls with two people showing up with 14 districts, when switched to 10 districts they decided to switch to central counting.

Mr. Pine asked how does work if the registrars agree or do not agree, Mr. Waggner why would you decide to count at polls verses a central location.

Mrs. Albin said the state statute 9-147A states any election may be counted at the districts. That may leads you to believe in paragraph B, that there is another method. The primary method is polling places.

Mr. Quinn asked if it has to be done in the polling places or can be counted at a central district.

Mrs. Albin asked why would anyone want to change the practice of counting absentee ballots, is it driven by new districts or machinery.

Mr. Cafferelli stated that in the document number 5 Mr. Autuori submitted on page to that the Registrars outlined both positions. At the bottom of the page for absentee counting the bold is Mr. Waggner's email, Mr. Autuori responded in lighter font.

Mr. Quinn as Mr. Autuori in your experience have you ever counted absentee ballots at the polls?

Mr. Autuori stated only when there were smaller districts.

Mr. Pine stated there was an issue and it did not work well counting at the polls. Mr. Waggner, can you enlighten us at the polls why you switched to polls.

Mr. Waggnner stated that he was glad you took a look at the different variables for absentee ballots. The head moderator files the final results. I feel strongly that this year as with all years both Registrars are jointly in control. Not sure why comment was made that I was solely in charge. Absentee ballots have been reporting later because of the split districts with 21 separate local polling areas. 1 or 1,000 ballots at each district only requires an entire set of returns for 21 districts. It is quite a lot of paperwork for central counting and they get out at 2 or 3am it is a lot of work all night. Political parties go to the polling places. Our group worked the 2013, with Election Day registration it is double paperwork for the ballots counted centrally.

Mrs. Albin asked how and why does it cause double the work.

Mr. Waggnner stated the Election Day Registrations (EDR) are counted in the absentee room but reported separately.

Mr. Cafferelli asked if there is Election Day registrations do they have to do 21 sets of paperwork for each district for EDR and Absentee ballots. Do they have to have ballots by hand, machine, written, for EDR and Absentee for each district and then total?

Mr. Waggnner stated that it is double a paperwork from EDR and Absentee ballots.

Mrs. Albin asked to explain how it is more work.

Mr. Waggnner stated it was completed sooner this year by being done at the polls the last results came in earlier. Except for district 1, where a machine broke and ballots came in last. I wrote an email and can be better prepared for the meeting if you have a specific question for a meeting if you let me know beforehand. We could have made it smoother but all things considered was a primary requirement that one person do 21 sets of paperwork. To have each of the 10 moderators do double the paper work took a longer time at poll but it was a cost savings. The cost savings was having 6 ballot styles verses 45 ballot styles. It cost less having less people staffed at central counting a stack of ballots for 21 districts. By having the absentee ballots at the districts, the town clerk only had to order 21 different styles to test and the less quantities save over \$1,000. A 1,000 ballots are needed to test each machine programming before the election.

Mrs. Albin asked if Mr. Autuori agreed that having the absentee ballots counted at the polls saved money.

Mr. Autuori stated usually a group of 10 would count the ballots centrally. There were 20 people counting ballots, two at each district. The total people was more. The 10 district moderators devoted most of their time dealing with the absentee and EDR ballots. The assistants had to deal with usual moderator work. There was a moderator who came, who had some ideas on what might be done in the future. We ordered less ballots than budgeted this year, usually we order more ballots. I do not think we used 1000 ballots for testing.

Mr. Pine asked do you have a copy of the email on absentee counting, one of the issues we came across is lack of training, and do you have to train 10 districts on the absentee ballots.

Mr. Waggner stated that in regards to the training that the workers did not have a lot of experience, Moderators are trained on the procedures. In general not to many poll workers got involved, we trained the absentee counters to do that. When someone circles verses fills in bubble, the moderator makes the decision if it is counted. They do that at the end of the night for the written ballots. We did not save money on poll workers, you need people from 10am to 8pm and until 2am to 3am for the people in charge. The staffing cost the same for both methods. I was using more people for less time. Ballots that are central counted are not audited.

Mr. Quinn asked for the statute number that states which ballots are counted for an audit.

Mr. Cafferelli stated he did not agree, he believes it is subject to an audit.

Mrs. Albin stated we need the statute to confirm.

Mr. Autuori stated that Hartford pick and choose which districts to audit and that Fairfield 5<sup>th</sup> voting district with about 30 voters from district 132. For all this work we only had 30 votes audited.

Mrs. Albin stated we will need to have to review the statute for the next meeting.

Mr. Quinn asked if anyone had done survey to find out if it is preferred to count at the polls or central office.

Mr. Waggner said there was a small survey.

Mr. Quinn stated we need to find out the best practice effort.

Mr. Autuori stated a lot of towns only have two or three districts count in the districts. The cities (New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford, and Bridgeport) and towns with a lot of districts count at a central location. If they have eight people they can count one district and move onto another district. The training has a test deck that goes on and on, which was what the moderators had to look through. The training did not include reading the tape.

Mrs. Albin asked why was the tape was not part of the training.

Mr. Autuori stated that Mr. Waggner's assistant Sharmaine Pulley had given the training and it was too much to do on one day. Normally there is an absentee ballot training and two moderator trainings. The problem is to figure out where the numbers go if there is a problem with the absentee ballots do they have to recount ever district.

Mr. Pine asked if there was a cost savings switching the absentee ballots to the districts.

Mr. Waggner stated the substantial cost saving in equipment and ballots, and there was no cost saving in staffing.

Mr. Quinn stated that you used double the people but half the time.

Mr. Autuori state we paid them \$75 at central location, 2 people stuck around.

Mr. Cafferelli asked if there is a budget for us compare pre and post-election.

Mrs. Albin stated we probably want to compare the 201 budget to the 2012 and 2010. Could the Registrars give us the budget for the past 3 years?

Mr. Waggner stated I am happy to get what you need in any regards.

Mr. Pine stated that Mr. Waggner had good intentions and asked what is his slant in retrospect to the changes?

Mr. Waggner stated it would be satisfying if the ballots were hand counted, things are customary but not required. There is a problem filling out paperwork in central, some detail information is not required at polling places, if you incorporate the cost and auditing components you cannot get those back if you go to central counting. I will email suggestions but I am not clear as to what was the problem.

Mr. Pine stated that the First Selectman's office is not happy about results were reported with the delay and the issue with district or central counting.

Mrs. Albin to hear from the moderator.

Mrs. Rysz said thank you for allowing me to speak. I will start with the training, I have never complained about training. The first few minutes we were going to try something new and the moderator tried to figure out how to do this. The moderators split up from the poll workers and sat with moderators and they were given the opening and closing procedures. After opening procedures, we were told the moderators would open up a second machine and four additional workers would be counting, the moderators were to make the final decision. Absentee ballots looked like they were filled out by doctors, many were difficult to read. District 10 had almost double the work and continuously people were coming in, working with people on the absentee ballots and unable to monitor on the other side. I don't want to say there was problem but it could be difficult if the legislator of CT makes new requirements. During that time of discussing the absentee ballots then they gave the procedure to close. That was the training.

Recommendations are for the explanation of the absentee ballots, and have 1 moderator for that machine and 2 for opening and closing machine. I don't think any moderator could work two places at one time. If you want them at the districts they need more people and training. I do not know how was it done at town hall, but it seems to me to be the safest place with 10 districts. You have to have a driver to take the absentee ballots to central, since it is done at town hall keep it there and put a machine at town hall. I received a piece of paper at 4:30 pm on Election Day for election procedures, there was no time to read it. The state procedure says it could be done at the districts or a central location. Setting up the machine at 3pm, and two people reviewing the ballots required a moderator attention. We also had to wait until the absentee ballots were received before closing at 8pm. The long tape was a disaster, the tape typically they read off the tape and it takes half an hour and the pollsters interrupted. I strongly recommend who programs and designs the output of the tape, and that it needs to conform to what is written down on the paper they use. The instructions were different, keys and paper

were handed in worksheets that were updated into the computers. Take the tape and compared with the computer until it is done. Why do we have to copy the tape to paper and to the computer? I made mistakes that day because it was so frustrating for an hour and a half. When it was time to do the absentee ballots, they had to take the tape and go right to the computer. We need more people, the biggest problem of the night was the tape. Whoever programmed the machine should have it match the ballot format. Another problem was that the Democrats and Republicans training for moderators and associates were separated meetings. That led to confusion as to when and what blue container could be opened in the evening or the morning.

Mrs. Albin asked if the moderators and assistant moderator are trained at separate time, to make sure it was clear.

Mr. Autuori stated that there is a Republican training at one time and Democratic training another time.

Mrs. Albin asked if that was typically.

Mr. Autuori was trying to get schedule dates and was unable to get them. A few democrats showed up to the republican training. Mrs. Rysz did not know who the poll workers were.

Mrs. Rysz stated that we had the best group of workers on Election Day and the two new people were superb, not seniors. Take aside and review the training, would make the people better feel. It was a tough evening.

Mr. Pine asked if there were two training for each party.

Mrs. Rysz said the Republicans and Democrats have their own meetings, different training as to when to open blue box, they mentioned the blue box where the ballots are. We would have to be there at 4:30 am if they could not open the box beforehand. The ballots were the same color with different district numbers on top, but usually they are different colors. We screwed up 6 ballots. It was our fault. Three people could not have dinner. The budget need to include people and plan where to put the absentee ballots, take into account for additional absentee ballots. I go to town hall vote and put in an absentee ballot why would it then be moved to the district.

Mr. Cafferelli asked if they verify the absentee ballots against the rolls at the districts.

Mrs. Rysz stated they brought the absentee ballots to the districts.

Mrs. Albin asked if the absentee ballots are check by the town clerk's office, do you have more recommendations or problems to discuss.

Mrs. Rysz said that is about it. People make it right or wrong, the real problem this particular election was the continuous flow of people. One thing that came to my attention is that they were told that they cannot separate the checkers folder to cross off the names. We have 3 people counting, and the moderators had to make sure the people got the write ballot. It was a hectic time, somehow we need to identify by street the number of voters. I would like to see three tables of checkers for A-F, G-M, N-Z. We need to take a good look around, a traffic director checked people with their street to the write district. People need to work on the budget to be aware of

the process and trying to get the tape onto a computer. I hope I helped and did not waste your time. If you had every moderator speak, you would probably get the same suggestions. If you keep the absentee ballots in the district you need to have 3 moderators.

Mrs. Albin asked does the committee have more questions on the absentee ballot issue tonight. Do we have further questions? We would like to see the state statute 9-320F before the next meeting.

Mr. Waggner stated that the ballots tabulated by the central district would be audited.

Mr. Quinn asked to have a copy of the town procedures manual that was received at 4:30 pm on Election Day with the opening and closing procedures.

Mr. Waggner stated that he will send a link because it is 200 pages.

Mrs. Albin asked both Registrars for an explanation on why Republicans and Democrats are trained separately?

Mr. Waggner stated that Mr. Autuori hires people earlier in the year, and people may cancel. Causing the rescheduling of workers. I schedule two Saturday training days and Mr. Elworthy was at the training. So both assistant registrars were at the training the same time.

Mrs. Albin asked Mr. Autuori to comment.

Mr. Autuori had been in discussion with Sharmaine Pulley, we thought there was a week scheduled and letters were send out. Mr. Elworthy said they are not going to do the training. At one point said Mr. Waggner did not want to use the Senior Center for training and be at the same training.

Mrs. Albin asked if the committee agrees this this a good stopping point and would entertain a motion to adjourn.

## **V. Communications**

## **VI. Adjourn**

On a motion made by Mr. Pine, seconded by Mr. Quinn and passed unanimously the meeting was adjourned at 6:34 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrea Flynn  
Recording Secretary