

Election Process Review Committee

Final Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 11, 2015

The regular meeting of the Election Process Review Committee Meeting on February 11, 2015 at 5pm in the 2nd floor Conference Room, Independence Hall, 725 Old Post Road, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824.

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

ABSENT: Bryan Cafferelli

PRESENT:

Registrar Matthew Waggner, and Public

I. Call to order

Mrs. Albin opened the meeting at 5:14 pm.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. Albin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from December 22, 2015 was made by Mr. Pine, seconded by Mr. Quinn, passed on a vote unanimously of 3 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from January 12, 2015 was made by Mr. Pine, seconded by Mr. Quinn, passed on a vote unanimously of 3 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

IV. Review Statute

Mrs. Albin stated that the main issues will be to put in a report along with the committee findings and recommendations. March 4, 2015 is the target date for a completed report. Since there are no more questions and answers to be asked. The next meeting is to be an open executive session for the purpose on working on the report.

Mr. Quinn stated that he reviewed the Statute and the moderator handbook, which lays out the functions for the Election, Prior, Opening and Closing procedures.

V. Committee Discussion

1. Opening of Polls

Mr. Pine stated after looking at the moderator logs, the polls have to be opened at 6am. District 3 opened at 6:10 am, District 4 opened at 6:15am, and District 7 opened at 6:03am. Three districts were in violation of the state law.

Mrs. Albin requested to find the actual language stating the polls need to be opened at 6am. We can make a recommendation in the report stating the polls have to be opened on time.

Mr. Quinn stated that the workers need to be at the polls by 5:15 am and the polls opened at 6 am. Remaining 7 districts were opened by 6am.

Mrs. Albin stated we need to look at the number of absent and late moderators.

Mr. Pine stated that we should only look at the districts that opened late to see if it was because the workers were late or did not show.

Mr. Quinn stated that moderators arrived late.

Mrs. Albin stated we will look at the documents for the evidence poll workers were late. That cannot happen, and will be stated in the report.

2. State Election Enforcement Commission (SEEC)

Mr. Pine spoke to SEEC and obtained three months of complains from November, December and January. There were no sustainable complaints for Fairfield. The SEEC received 33 complaints in November, 11 in December, and 2 in January, for other towns and there were none for Fairfield.

3. Machinery Failure

Mrs. Albin stated machine failure happens and there was no negligence reported.

Mr. Quinn stated the handbook covers in detail on what to do in the event of a machine failure. There are two machines and when one goes down the second one presses into action.

4. Ballots Issues (Split Districts and Absentee)

Mrs. Albin suggested color coding ballots in the future for split districts.

Mr. Waggner stated that it was not successful using colored ballots. The one polling site with colored ballots did not go well.

Mrs. Albin will contact other towns to obtain how they count the Absentee Ballots to determine, which practice is best.

Mr. Pine stated that according to the testimony the moderators said with the Absentee Ballots they could not do their jobs at the districts.

Mr. Quinn questioned if it was because of the new process or is it fundamentally flawed. Both options are valid and it may just be a learning curve for a new process.

Mrs. Albin did not feel the committee should decide on which process should be used. There are a number of questions on why it was not successful, was it the new process, training, and we do not know we answer or have a preference. If the moderator feels they need to be in charge all day at the polls, they can assign the assistant moderator or someone else to manage the absentee ballots.

Mr. Pine stated the testimony of moderators and poll works is they were not properly trained.

Mr. Quinn stated that maybe with a larger track record to look at and training they can work out the issues.

Mrs. Albin stated this was the first year. We recognize this was the first year, committee is not giving a recommendation for central or district, and every new system has to work out the bugs.

Mr. Pine asked when we contact the other towns to find out the reasons they count centrally.

Mr. Quinn requested if there is a better way to do it, let us here it. It is not a sufficient excuse that it is done because it is always done that way. I do not have the experience to make that determination.

Mr. Waggner prepared two cost reports for the absentee ballots. The motivating factor was the amount of reporting work doubled. It went from 6,000 figures to 13,000 figures for and individual number to compile in each district. He requested when you call pier towns to ask what time was their absentee ballot counting done by? The auditing feature is that the absentee ballots counted centrally is not audited with the district ballots. The town saved about \$3,500 dollars to count at the polls, without the split districts the savings would be smaller. The Fairfield election budget is 10% of other towns, we get a good service for what we pay for considering other town budgets. District 8 handed out the wrong ballots for the longest period of time, this location had the different color ballots and lists. District 8 was the one where they found the most discrepancies. The following districts handed out the wrong ballots. District 3 for 2 minutes with 22 spoiled/abandoned, District 4, 24 minutes with 15 spoiled/abandoned, District 7 for 31 minutes with 27 spoiled/abandoned, District 8 for 1 hours and 50 minutes with 22 spoiled/abandoned. In District 8 the beige ballots were not handed out properly and 15 of the 19 people were give the wrong ballots.

Mr. Quinn stated that in Section F2 page 67 of the Handbook outlines the process for spoiled or abandoned ballots.

Mrs. Albin said thank you Mr. Waggner and that the reports are helpful.

Mr. Quinn asked with regard to the Absentee ballots given all the information you have would you proceed having the ballots counted district wide.

Mr. Quinn asked Mr. Waggner would you count the votes centrally or in the districts.

Mr. Waggner stated that counting at polls makes sense time to time. With looking at the bad customer experience, we did save money, saved time and ballots were audited. The thing people were dissatisfied with was there was more paperwork. The ballots were delivered bipartisan. It was successful but we did not consider the political constitutes. They do not need to write the number at the polling place, they need to report the numbers. If we can report the numbers earlier, the Constitutes would be happy. We can save money and time in different ways. There were memos back and forth to decide which process would be better. I am inclined to keep it counted in the districts.

Mr. Pine stated it was clear that Mr. Autuori did not agree with counting in the districts and the stature states if there is a disagreement that it is counted in the districts.

Mr. Pine stated there has to be a lot of communication between the registrars and considering their issues is there a problem.

5. Training & Operations

Mr. Quinn stated that the ballots handed out incorrectly is part of training

Mr. Pine stated Mr. Elworthy could not find the ballots at the opening of Election Day.

Mrs. Albin stated registrars have difficulty working together. I have tried hard to make it about the election. I am not interested in personality conflicts. Unfortunately, I feel and have had conversations with committee members as the results of asking questions, seeing dynamics and getting answers there is an issue with the registrars working together. I would like to put in the report that the registrars need to work in the same office, the continuity did not happen in 2014. The training is important to confirm everyone is getting the same message. Training is the biggest problem, and there has to be continuity. The two key people in the election have difficulty working with each other. That brings me to a question, Mr. Waggner do you have a protective order from the court.

Mr. Waggner stated there is a no contact order to have no unofficial contact.

Mrs. Albin stated that we want to stay with the facts and have Mr. Autuori here as well to be fair.

Mr. Pine stated the facts are the Mr. Autuori was arrested and is on accelerated rehabilitation.

Mr. Quinn would like to invite the registrars back to discuss, if a protective order does not exist and a no contact order does exist, how does it relate to working with each other? He would need to see the order and most are public documents.

Mr. Pine requested to get a copy of the order.

Mr. Quinn stated that he can obtain a copy from the Bridgeport Court House GH2.

Mrs. Albin requested that if he can get to share with committee it would be helpful.

Mr. Pine stated it is clear that the Registrars do not get along. In one case Mr. Autuori said Mr. Waggner was in charge and Mr. Waggner stated they both are in charge of the past election. They just do not get along.

Mr. Quinn is concern about training and that it cannot be done separate based on party affiliation, holding separately trainings. There needs to be one time one place, all worker need to get the same information from the same instructors at the same time.

Mr. Pine stated that the number one problem here is the lack of training.

Mr. Quinn stated that you may get a different answer to the same questions and it cannot be done that way.

Mrs. Ablin agreed it has to be at same time same place for everyone participating.

Mr. Waggner stated the training information is not different. Having class on different days is not a division. Historically, what happened is we get a couple of people from polling place at one, Assistant Registrars, checkers, tabulators and moderators. I have not heard of a problem about the training being on different day. I always thought the assistant registrars were there. There is a gap where two people did a different job. There are poll workers who did not follow the training. If that is the case, there is the option of not hiring them again if they defied too flagrantly. I do not know if the safety concern for myself relates to poll workers doing something wrong.

Mr. Quinn stated there are two issues. Unless I am mistaken several witnesses from both parties sated they were at separate meetings. There is no way to prove the answers given at each training. It leads to the potential of miscommunication. I am not leading to anything in pertinent but it leads to different results.

Mrs. Albin agreed.

Mr. Waggner stated there were five different classes.

Mrs. Albin stated that she spoke with Mr. Cafferelli, he is away on business. He agrees with everything said. We feel as a committee that the training should take place for everyone at the same time.

Mr. Pine stated we heard testimony dates changed for the training.

Mrs. Albin stated we heard testimony that people were trained differently.

Mr. Quinn suggested that if you need to have separate trainings that all the moderators be trained together, the assistant moderators, assistant registrars, ballot checkers. That would be his recommendation.

Mrs. Albin stated that she will ask about training as well, when talking to the towns about absentee ballots.

Mr. Pine stated that the point is well taken of how people work together and train together, I concur.

Mrs. Albin asked if it is an issue with two Registrars working together and if it is something that can be overseen.

Mr. Quinn stated the nuts and bolts of the Election Day is with the training.

Mrs. Albin stated that she appreciate the work of the registrars and that she did not envy their job. With the test documentation, training, acceptance of the chain of the command, communication, ease and know of the chain of command from the top down and bottom up. It is communication that will make a difference on how the election process works.

Mr. Quinn stated the issue we have to take into consideration at some point is redistricting. The issue in the next election will cause potential confusion with new districts and voting locations.

Mrs. Albin stated that we could give some recommendation and that some of the planning may already be happening.

Mr. Quinn stated even with notifying people, there will be confusion.

Mrs. Albin suggest they find funding in the budget for advertising, reverse 911, to notify the calls, everyone gets a call, and bulk mailing.

Mr. Quinn asked when talking to the SEEC are we required to send a copy of the report to them.

Mrs. Albin stated that the report will only go to the board of selectmen. The committee is planning to meet two more times before March 4th and vote on the March 2nd or 3rd to approve the report. She will send out notes and send a format of the report to the committee members. They can individually make notes and she will update them in the report.

We are planning to meet on Tuesday, February 17th at 5pm and Monday, March 2nd at 5pm to finalize the report.

VI. Adjournment

Motion made by Mr. Pine to adjourn the meeting at 6:24 pm, seconded by Mr. Quinn and passed on a vote unanimously of 3 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrea Flynn
Recording Secretary