

Election Process Review Committee

Final Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 17, 2015

The regular meeting of the Election Process Review Committee Meeting on February 17, 2015 at 5pm in the 1st floor Conference Room, Independence Hall, 725 Old Post Road, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824.

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

PRESENT:

Registrar Roger Autuori, Registrar Matthew Waggner, and Public

I. Call to order

Mrs. Albin opened the meeting at 5:18 pm.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. Albin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Cafferelli arrived at 5:20 pm

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from February 11, 2015 was made by Mr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Cafferelli, passed on a vote unanimously of 3 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

IV. Open Executive Session

Motion to go into open executive session for purposes for working on the committee report at 5:22 pm was made by Mr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Cafferelli, passed on a vote unanimously 3 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Mr. Pine arrived at 5:35 pm.

Mrs. Albin stated that this is the first rough draft for the report and reviewed the main points, which included the opening of polling locations, SEEC complaints, machinery, absentee ballots, training and operations. The report format was reviewed and suggestions were welcomed.

Opening of Polling Locations

Mrs. Albin asked Mr. Autuori how Moderators notify the Registrars when the polls are open and if there is a problem where they would open late.

Mr. Autuori stated normally they call in at 6am to open and call in before if not opening. The Deputy and Registrar assistant go to the sites starting at 5 am. Chris Lussem went to district three to help them get up and running. Moderators write what they want in the logs, open, close, if something blows up and you will see

some entries with only two or three lines written. This has been going for a long time and we never got around to change it.

Mrs. Albin asked if there are procedures the Moderators follow that the State Election Enforcement Commission (SEEC) of state recommends or do all the 169 towns in the state doing it their own way.

Mr. Quinn stated that in the Moderator's Handbook on page 56 section E1, in bold letters it states "The opening of the polls should not be delayed for any reason. At 6:00 am the Moderator shall declare the polls open." Clearly it was not done.

Mrs. Albin stated there is no reason the polls should not be opened if there is an issue with the machinery, the paper votes are still accepted.

Mr. Pine said the state clearly says the polls have to open at 6 am. We need information why they did not open.

Mr. Cafferelli stated we looked at the procedures and the moderator logs, people don't show up but that should not delay the polls opening.

Mrs. Albin asked if the polls do not open, do you have to report the secretary of state the time the polls open and to the SEEC.

Mr. Waggner said they (Registrars) are subservient to the moderators and give advice because we do this every day. We know how the machines work and the whole voter system. I have had a situation with district 3 they had someone who was late, one wanted to open one wanted to wait. We said yes, go open the polls.

Mrs. Albin stated that district 3 used their own digression not to open the polls.

Mr. Cafferelli said I think there is a head moderator of the whole town.

Mr. Autuori, the head Moderator at the end of the night fills out a report but does not oversee the site moderators, they checks the forms.

Mr. Cafferelli stated that the head moderator in Bridgeport goes around to all the polling sites.

Mr. Quinn asked, where is the chain of command?

Mr. Pine stated someone has to make sure the polls are opened.

Mrs. Albin stated our view is that moderators should open the polls and there should be a backup person working at the polls if needed.

Mr. Quinn stated each moderator has their own interpretation, there has to be one person that makes the ultimate call.

Mr. Pine stated that the Democratic Assistant Registrar called in sick and the moderator was reluctant to open the scanner.

Mrs. Albin stated the problem I see is poor communication. They may not understand that the equipment is not a reason to not open the polls on time. The issue goes to communication and it goes to training.

Mr. Pine stated training it has to be drilled into each Moderator and poll worker the polls must open at 6am.

Mr. Cafferelli suggested that every moderator email or text at 5:30am, to the registrar stating they are all set.

SEEC - State Election Enforcement Commission

Mr. Pine stated there were not sustaining mattering in Fairfield to investigate for November, December, January.

Mr. Quinn stated they may have been filings but they were not actionable complaints filled according to the SEEC.

Mrs. Albin stated we will include the SEEC report in the report of recommendations.

Machinery

Mr. Cafferelli stated that if I recall there is sufficient back up machinery. I do not think it is a split district problem. There are two machines per district and 8 backups, and they took too long to take action.

Mrs. Albin stated that after reviewing the machinery, there seems to a sufficient amount.

Mr. Cafferelli stated it is a training problem.

Mr. Quinn stated that any difficulty in hardware was due training issues. The logistical deployment of the machinery was adequate.

Absentee Ballots

Mr. Cafferelli stated as it is a new practice counting in the districts, to me it just makes sense to have it centralized and there was not a huge savings cost having it in the districts.

Mrs. Albin said there was a savings. I have tried to contact the towns and have not been able to reach anyone but will keep reaching out to them.

Mr. Quinn asked if this was a case of first impression and switch over from prior to a new protocol. There was a training issue with the roll out of the new protocol.

Mr. Cafferelli stated that I find it works well to have it all together centrally verses to train ten moderators to count in the districts.

Mr. Quinn stated it was the first time run, would a seconded time run make a difference if trained properly.

Mrs. Albin stated I have given this good thought. My first reaction when I heard problem was, why are not doing it as we always did it. This was the first time and there are going to be issues with first time. This is one area I do not feel equip as to make a recommendation as to how it should be done. Training is vital, the security of the ballots from one place to the next is important, at smaller towns where, instinctually centrally,

Mr. Cafferelli stated that why train ten people when there is one person who is an expert, it makes absolutely makes no sense.

Mr. Pine asked Mr. Autuori, would you rather see the absentee ballots counted centrally or in the districts.

Mr. Autuori stated it is my opinion to have AB counting centrally because they have done it before. Even in the next election we are going to have to train. Maybe in five years they may be trained enough to know how to do it in the districts. In each polling district we see it change because the conditions. I think they should be centrally counted.

Mr. Pine, stated if they are counted together in a central location to ask questions, logically it makes to have the expertise all in one room to ask questions so there are no issues.

Mr. Quinn stated the question is will the efficiency in accuracy and quickness. Whatever system we choose should be accurate and efficient.

Mrs. Albin stated that only the ballots counted in the polling districts are put in the data that is eligible to be audited by the secretary of state. Do the people in charge of the elections feel it is important they are subject to be audited? Would it be safe to transfer of the ballots? It might be more cumbersome counting them district wide. There may be issues counting them centrally, but we have not witnessed this process. What were the major problems?

Mr. Pine stated that this is the first time in a long time it was counted in the districts. Is it important to have the absentee ballot audited?

Mrs. Albin asked Mr. Waggoner to state why the audits of the absentee ballots are important?

Mr. Waggoner, stated being on the committee of state technology people say they want to get rid of the audits. The response is the audit, it is the chance random that the audit catches tampering with machines or results.

Mrs. Albin asked when an audit is done what do they look for on the ballots.

Mr. Waggoner stated that the Secretary of State randomly picks towns, three offices on the ballots, they are examine by hand to look at the marks and compare it to what the machine read. We want to make sure the machines are working properly in reading the remarks.

Mrs. Albin asked, why do we need to audit the Absentee Ballots?

Mr. Waggoner said if you are not auditing, you are not monitoring the memory cards.

Mr. Cafferelli asked has there ever been an audit shown there was a machine was tampered with.

Mr. Waggoner stated that one has not been published to us.

Mr. Pine asked if it is such an important process why are there options for the town. The state should make the decision.

Mrs. Albin stated the statute was probably passed before the new machinery.

Mr. Pine stated that the State has not mandated a process.

Mr. Cafferelli stated the main thing is you have to make sure the tape matches the ballots.

Mr. Quinn stated I am uncomfortable recommending a central or district counting

Mr. Cafferelli stated I think we should make a list of pros and cons.

Mrs. Albin suggested to highlight the issues and let the board of selectmen know and ultimately it is up to the registrars.

Mr. Autuori stated the audit is not for every machine, this particular audit was in the district with 30 voters and 2 absentee ballots. If it was important every machine would be audited. It does not hold water.

Mr. Quinn stated that there is zero potential of the absentee ballots if centrally located to be audited.

Mr. Pine stated it comes down to the two registrars and on how they want to do it.

Mrs. Albin stated this report is intended to identify ways things can run smoother and in the best interest of the voters. If ballots are going to be counted in the districts, they have to be transported safely.

Mr. Pine stated that the same day registration votes are another consideration.

Mr. Cafferelli stated the same day registration is why one location was opened late waiting for one same day registration vote.

Mr. Albin stated if counting in district the ballots need to be there on a timely manner both the absentee ballots and same day registration ballots.

Training and Operations

Mr. Cafferelli stated my opinion is that there should be one centralized training.

Mrs. Albin said we all agree, it does not have to be everyone, but by job. It has to be the same jobs trained together.

Mr. Pine stated the two registrars have to coordinate and agree.

Mrs. Albin stated with this issue with the wrong ballots that they should be color coded. How people manage to communicate and there has been discussion on the issue of the two registrars personalities and working together. I think there is leaning to having the registrars being in the same office.

Mr. Pine asked in reference to the no contact order, how would it work.

Mrs. Albin stated there is a no contact order, my understanding is that it is supposed to be ok in a professionally working environment and they are not to see each other socially. I went to the registrar's office to look at the space and the secretary was there and another town hall employee. The space is dismal and it is a tight space, and it could possibly be reconfigured with patricians or filing cabinets. Anyone working there would disrupt others if working on the phone. I do not know it is 100% necessary to be in the same location. The personality conflict and everyone sees that is why they are in different spaces. Anyone would need a partition in the office, they do not have to be there 8 hours a day and could have staggered hours. At the least the towns people ask them do it in the best interest of the voters to administer voting records and elections.

Mr. Pine stated that I think clearly they have to work together. To have separate offices due to a personality conflict is ridiculous. All the records are in the main office.

Mr. Cafferelli stated communication is the overall problem and if they have staggering hours it is not going to help. They have to work on the centralizing or decentralizing and training.

Mrs. Albin gave a layout description of the office. There is no way to have a private conversation in that space. She asked the Registrars what they thought about the current set up.

Mr. Waggner stated the recommendation of working staggering hours did not work well. Given the reality at hand the current situation is very close to an ideal situation. We are able to serve our voters, if something did not happen or get made, there are times we disagree in procedures. It seems to me, we have the communication that is necessary. I feel we do a good job in serving and being accessible to the public. It seems to me Mr. Autuori uses the secretary as needed. There should be communication and a problem arise, let us fix it. Putting everyone in the small box would disrupt what is currently working now.

Mr. Autuori, stated the situation is not the best. I do not know what they are doing downstairs. I am in charge of the office payroll and cannot confirm if people are actually there for the hours they say they are. The communication is not good, there are situation when people don't know I am upstairs. I will find out later people were told I was not there. That situation is not good, the situation has not been good since October of 2013. The emails are ok. It is less stressful being a part. Being together, I do not think is ever going to work until we both leave. I am not sticking around another term.

Mr. Pine asked if the two can have face to face conversations.

Mr. Waggner said he is not comfortable doing that without other people present, he fears for his safety.

Mr. Quinn stated they should be in the same location, proper modification to make one office into two office, along with the staggered hour approach should be efficient.

Mr. Cafferelli stated that it does not sound it is going to work having them both work in the same office. We have identified some things that did fail because of communication, we did find issues namely the training. Email chain on ballots and going back and forth fighting and not looking at what needs to be done for the voters. Each registrar conducted separate trainings the workers did not receive the same instructions.

Mr. Pine asked can they talk face to face.

Mrs. Albin stated there are things that can be fixed. Communication is the hardest one to fix, and there are only two people that can fix it. Anything that did happen in this election did seem to point to poor communication and training. This all leads back to the situation of friction between the two registrars. Their communication has broken down. You have heard all the issues and comments and what will be going into the report. What can the town voters expect from the two Registrars is the big question? The issue fundamentally is whether the two registrars of voters can get along. Two people who have great difficulty working together, the elected officials in town want to know things will run smoothly and they do not want to have to babysit. These are two jobs, and while they are part-time jobs, they are important jobs. The taxpayers pay the registrar salaries, they don't really have a say in their election, each party nominates one candidate and both are guaranteed election to the post. What can we anticipate in the future? I speak to both of you, actions are louder than words and that is what I am looking for, that adults show up and do the work they are supposed to do.

Mrs. Albin stated she will compile and update the report to send to the committee. They can send thoughts, suggestions, and updated to her or the recording secretary. The responses will all be compiled in a report for the committee vote at the next meeting. We are planning to meet on Monday, March 2nd at 5pm to finalize the report.

I would entertain a motion to adjourn, unless there is further business.

V. Adjournment

Motion made by Mr. Pine to adjourn the meeting at 7:04pm, seconded by Mr. Quinn and passed on a vote unanimously 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrea Flynn
Recording Secretary