

BERKS COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

MEETING MINUTES

February 8, 2024 – 11:00 A.M.

Michael S. Rivera, Chair
Christian Y. Leinbach, Vice Chair
Dante Santoni, Jr., Commissioner
Anne Norton, Chief Clerk
Christine M. Sadler, County Solicitor – not present
Cody L. Kauffman, First Assistant County Solicitor

CALL TO ORDER: 11:06 A.M.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

None.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Board approved the minutes for the February 1, 2024, Election Board meeting as presented.

Agenda Items

1. Early Processing of Mail-in and Absentee Ballot Applications

Ms. Norton noted that the reason for this request is because Election Services has received approximately 4,000 to 5,000 paper mail-in applications and 3,000 online mail-in and absentee ballot applications to date.

Per Election Code, Election Services can only begin processing mail-in ballot applications 50 days before an election. Approval from the Election Board is needed to begin sooner.

Commissioner Leinbach said he fully supports the Election Services office beginning to process mail-in applications now, noting that the law provides for this option.

On the motion of Commissioner Leinbach, seconded by Commissioner Santoni, the Board authorized the Office of Election Services to begin processing mail-in and absentee ballot applications as they are received, due to operational need.

Election Director's Report

Anne Norton noted that the Election Services office continues supply preparation for the General Primary. The staff is also taking advantage of the trainings that the Department of State is offering for Voter Registrars on voter registrations and mail-in and absentee ballot application processing. Future trainings will cover election night reporting and ballot building for the management team.

General Comments from the Board regarding current election-related issues

Commissioner Santoni stated that it does not cost \$250,000 for a drop box. He also shared a personal story about how the mail-in system works. His father applied during COVID for a mail-in ballot and he got a letter from Election Services stating that he had to register to vote, when he called Election Services he found out that his birthdate was entered incorrectly,

since 1976. He got it resolved and then was able to receive his mail-in ballot. Commissioner Santoni said the system works and a great team is in place.

Public Comment

Debbie Noel, of Robeson Township, was happy to report that the radial group, Project Veritas, who previously stated that Pennsylvania had large scale voter fraud, had recently publicly acknowledged that they were false, and this was not true. They rescinded their previous concerns. She is also hoping that the mail-in ballot drop box program increases.

Jeffrey Wolfe, of Brecknock Township, voiced concern regarding the “spoiling” of mail-in ballots if they would be brought to polling locations. He also suggested having the minority inspector accompany the Judge of Elections back to Elections Services on Election night to ensure security. Mr. Wolfe expressed concern with qualifying voters receiving voting assistance at the polls.

Adjournment: On the motion of Commissioner Santoni, seconded by Commissioner Leinbach, the meeting was adjourned at 11:21 a.m.