

**BERKS COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
MEETING MINUTES
August 24, 2023 – 12:15 P.M.**

Lucine Sihelnik, Chair
Honorable James E. Gavin, Vice Chair
Honorable Jill Gehman Koestel
Anne Norton, Chief Clerk – not present
Christine M. Sadler, County Solicitor
Cody L. Kauffman, First Assistant County Solicitor – not present

CALL TO ORDER: 12:15 P.M.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On the motion of Judge Gavin, seconded by Judge Koestel the Board approved the minutes for the August 10, 2023, meeting as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

Jeffrey Wolfe, of Brecknock Township, made comments related to Agenda Item #1. Mr. Wolfe remarked that poll worker pay should be higher for Judge of Elections due to their greater burden of responsibility. He also made comments regarding voters' right to privacy on Election Day, including that no one presenting themselves at the poll should see the signatures on file for voters and that poll workers are vigilant to not allow anyone in the voting booth unless a voter requests assistance.

Agenda Items

1. Poll Worker Training & Poll Worker Pay

On the motion of Judge Koestel, seconded by Judge Gavin, the Board approved the poll worker training schedule and compensation rates for the November 7, 2023, Municipal Election as presented (see attached spreadsheet).

2. Review of Campaign Finance Complaint

County Solicitor Christine Sadler gave an overview of a complaint that the County received alleging that the Berks County Republican Committee failed to file any Campaign Finance reports, as required by the Election Code, since the 2022 annual report was filed. Sadler said that based on the information provided to her office and the appropriate statutes, she recommended the matter be referred to the Berks County District Attorney's Office for appropriate investigation.

On the motion of Judge Koestel, seconded by Judge Gavin, the Board approved referring the complaint to the District Attorney's Office for further investigation.

Election Director's Report

Assistant Director Stephanie Weaver gave the report on behalf of Election Director Anne Norton. Ms. Weaver noted that she and Ms. Norton attended the Pennsylvania Election Officials Conference the prior week in Lancaster County. The three-day conference included

various sessions, including presentations from the Department of State, CISA and the FBI, and allowed for networking with other election officials throughout the state.

Ms. Weaver noted that August 23 was National Poll Worker Recruitment Day and said the elections staff would be manning a stand at RiverFest in Muhlenberg Township that weekend as part of the office's voter outreach and poll worker recruitment efforts.

Ms. Waver explained that today, August 24, was the deadline for parties to submit substitute nominations for offices with vacancies. She said that an unofficial candidate list was also available on the elections website.

Finally, Ms. Weaver shared that the staff was continuing their Thursday training sessions through the end of the month and highlighted that the office's Administrative Assistant, Marsha Muth, recently passed the notary test.

Public Comment

Susan Bernhardt, of Reading, said she was elected as the new chairman of the Berks County Republican Committee in June and wished to comment on the complaint discussed earlier in the meeting. Ms. Bernhardt said the committee's last treasurer resigned at the end of the year and agreed that no other reports had been filed since that time. She said it took several months to find a new treasurer and the new treasurer has had difficulty accessing the necessary information in the committee's software program. She said she has a team working with the treasurer on this matter and they hope to file all the reports correctly soon. She apologized and said she believes this was a big mistake that should not have happened, noting the importance of having the committee's financial records available for all candidates and voters to review.

Adjournment: On the motion of Judge Koestel, seconded by Judge Gavin the meeting was adjourned at 12:33 p.m.