

**BERKS COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
MEETING MINUTES
May 25, 2023 – 12:15 P.M.**

Lucine Sihelnik, Chair
Honorable James E. Gavin, Vice Chair
Honorable Jill Gehman Koestel
Anne Norton, Chief Clerk
Christine M. Sadler, County Solicitor
Cody L. Kauffman, First Assistant County Solicitor

CALL TO ORDER: 12:21 P.M.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On the motion of Judge Gavin, seconded by Judge Koestel, the Board approved the minutes for the May 11, 2023 meeting as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

None

Agenda Items

1. Receipt of the official computation and Canvassing of Votes Cast at the May 16, 2023, Municipal Primary and Commencement of the Five (5) Day period of Public Inspection

On the motion of Judge Gavin, seconded by Judge Koestel, the Board received the Official Computation and Canvassing of Votes Cast at the May 16, 2023, Municipal Primary and announced the Commencement of the Five (5) Day period of Public Inspection.

2. Unofficial Returns Reporting Form

On the motion of Judge Koestel, seconded by Judge Gavin, the Board authorized the execution of the Unofficial Returns Reporting Form.

The Board announced it would be entering into an executive session regarding personnel prior to discussing agenda item #3. Judge Gavin said he was aware of the issue that would be discussed during the executive session and believed it was appropriate to recuse himself from the discussion.

The Board broke for executive session at 12:26 p.m. The Board returned and resumed the meeting at 12:41 p.m.

3. Decision regarding the referral of a violation of the Election Code to the District Attorney's Office for review and investigation.

First Assistant Solicitor Cody Kauffman announced that, pursuant to the discussion held in executive session, an issue was brought to the Election Board's attention regarding an alleged violation of the Election Code by a County employee. He said that, if it is the will of the Board, he believes it would be appropriate for the Board to entertain a motion to refer the matter to the District Attorney's office for further review and investigation.

On the motion of Judge Koestel, seconded by Commissioner Sihelnik, the Board approved referring the matter to the District Attorney's Office for review and investigation.

Commissioner Sihelnik thanked Anne Norton and her staff for doing a phenomenal job preparing for and running the Election on May 16. Ms. Norton thanked the Commissioner and said it was only because of the hard work of the entire Election Services team of 20 employees that the day was a success.

Election Director's Report

Anne Norton said the Election Services staff is still busy completing the post-election work, including the review and processing of roughly 18,000 write-in votes. She noted that the snippets of the write-in votes are available for review on the County's website and that candidates can begin submitting petitions to cumulate those votes on May 26 during the 5-day review period. She said the staff is continuing to review the write-ins to determine which match candidate's registered names and can be accepted automatically.

She said the staff is also going through the various items returned to the office from the polling locations and reconciling all the paperwork. She noted that while the work has kept the staff busy, there is an end in sight.

Commissioner Sihelnik noted that most people only see what happens on Election Day and not all of the build-up leading up to it or all the work that follows. She encouraged residents to continue to utilize the County's website to ensure they are getting accurate information through the correct channels.

Public Comment

Jeff Wolfe, of Brecknock Township, shared about his observations and reflections from being a poll watcher at four precincts on May 16. Mr. Wolfe outlined several minor issues he observed, but said he believed all of them could be easily addressed in future trainings. He said that in all cases the poll workers were courteous to the voters and he saw no evidence of partisan behavior. He said the poll workers were very professional and appeared to have taken their trainings seriously.

Adjournment: On the motion of Judge Koestel, seconded by Commissioner Sihelnik, the meeting was adjourned at 12:48 p.m.