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**DORCHESTER COUNTY
BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

GWENDOLYN H. DALES
ELECTION DIRECTOR

BRITTANY M. PHILLIPS
DATA APPLICATION SPECIALIST

JESSICA R. NORANBROCK
DATA APPLICATION SPECIALIST

KIMBERLY K. JONES
ELECTION INFORMATION
SYSTEMS SPECIALIST

HUBERT H. WRIGHT, IV
ATTORNEY

ATTENDEES: Michael W. Detmer, President
Thomas M. Corkran, Vice President
Janet M. Livingston, Secretary
William Batson, Substitute
Ralph C. Lewis, Substitute
Hubert H. Wright, IV, Attorney

Gwendolyn H. Dales, Election Director
Jessica Noranbrock, Data Apps. II

ABSENT: None

GUESTS: None

MINUTES OF EMERGENCY BOARD MEETING March 30, 2018

Call to Order and Determine Quorum:

President Detmer called the meeting to order at 10:06 pm; quorum was determined.

Welcome any Guests:

Donna Hooper
Alton Hooper
Doris L. Hooper
Patricia A. Comella
Terry Wheatley
William H. Jones

Report any Board or Staff Absences:

None

Additions to Agenda:

None

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Early Voting Location:

- **Review of Facts**

President Detmer complimented Director Dales on how she has handled the current situation and addressed the public stating his assurance that the Board has an open mind and is on the side of the public.

Director Dales reviewed the past year, in regard to the Early Voting Site move. She informed the Board that, legally, we did not have to advertise the new Early Voting Site until 30 days prior to early voting beginning, but this office sent out a press release on March 14, 2018. Director Dales said that once the press release was published the public began to respond with their questions and concerns.

Director Dales went over the most recent letter from the County Council. The letter doesn't specifically state any alternative locations where they would like to see Early Voting. Director Dales then informed the Board the Fire Marshall checked the County Office Building Center Lobby and the Dorchester Center for the Arts Performance Hall, and both would be suitable for Early Voting. A moving line in the County Office Building hallway would not constitute an obstruction.

Director Dales spoke with the County Manager about getting on the next County Council meeting agenda and was told it was unnecessary.

- **Board Question and Answer Session**

President Detmer asked Director Dales if we didn't budget for a new Early Voting Site because they didn't know what would transpire in regard to either having to pay for a new Early Voting Site or sound proofing the County Office Building lobby. Director Dales said the potential cost of soundproofing or a move was listed on the budget, but this Board decided not to budget for either, just to show what it could cost.

Public Comment:

- **Lynn Scott, Republican Central Committee Chairman**

Ms. Scott asked to clarify some facts. She asked if there was a letter sent saying Early Voting couldn't be here, and since the Board didn't budget money for this will it be an expense they must incur. Director Dales said it was not budgeted for and the budget would come from county funds if our budget was over. However, we get a certain percentage to go over. President Detmer said this Board is stringent on budgets, and that this expense wouldn't come close to the county buffered amount, which is a certain percentage.

Ms. Scott expressed concerns about parking and signage at the Art Center and said there will always be noise in a County Office building because it is a public building. She asked the Board to send a letter immediately to get early voting back at the County Office Building.

- **Alton Hooper**

Mr. Hooper read all the Board of Elections minutes from 2017 and stated the Board has been as transparent as any organization could be. He did not see a credible reason for early voting to be moved. The Fire Marshall he spoke to said people are fine here. Regarding the noise complaint, in the county code on noise, there are exceptions and variances on the code. He said the Commissioners could issue an exception or variance for the Board of Elections to hold early voting at the County Office Building. President Detmer stated he did not believe this was a noise ordinance issue. Mrs. Livingston said the complaints came from employees that said there was a lot of noise in the hallways and could not work in that environment.

Mr. Hooper then quoted sections of Election Law saying it should help the Board. He read §2 – 303 Precincts and §8 – 103 Emergencies. Director Dales said these sections of Election Law were not applicable, the section that applies to Early Voting Sites is §10 – 301.1 Early Voting and Early Voting Centers.

Mr. Hooper is very dissatisfied with county management and will continue to help the Board of Elections.

- **Patricia Comella, Convener for the League of Women Voters**

Ms. Comella is familiar with the Art Center and its entrances and parking. She agrees with Ms. Scott about parking being difficult, but her major concern is the safety issue of a potential evacuation and the elevator not working for those who can't use the stairs. She's not sure if the elevator is accessible for three (3) people in a wheelchair.

- **Terry Wheatley, Democratic Central Committee**

Ms. Wheatley agrees with Ms. Scott. This is a public building and there's going to be noise. She does not see the noise being detrimental. She asked who the County Council's letter was from. Director Dales told her Ricky Travers. Ms. Wheatley asked for a copy. Director Dales said she would provide everyone copies and read the letter aloud. Ms. Wheatley asked what he was suggesting in the letter and Director Dales said it was up to interpretation. Ms. Wheatley stated early voting should be brought back to the County Office Building.

- **William H. Jones, State's Attorney**

Mr. Jones is impressed by this local board and staff. He said the Art Center is inferior to this building, but was the best decision we had. Parking is a major issue at the Art Center. He's been a tenant of the building for four (4) years and said the common areas are always loud, but behind closed doors he's never had a problem with the noise during early voting. He said most of the offices in this building keep their doors shut. The County Council's office is the only one that keeps their door open. The noise is not a factor. He encourages the Board of Elections to get early voting back in the County Office Building. He is willing to help advocate to SBE and will send a letter.

Board Discussion & Reaction to Public Comment:

- **President Detmer**
Mr. Detmer said it is a privilege to work with this Board and the caliber of discussion is high. He is interested to hear the Board discussion.

 - **Mr. Corkran**
Mr. Corkran said his opinion hasn't changed, bring early voting back here. Advertise if it changes back. We were pushed to find a new location, and should do everything in our power to bring it back.

 - **Mr. Lewis**
Mr. Lewis said the parking lot at the Art Center is always full, now. He's been upstairs in the County Office Building and asked about the noise problem, he was told it must have been another office that complained. Two (2) of our election judges from the 2nd Ward are up in arms and say the people won't vote. Other comments heard have been indifference and not liking the way it was handled. He votes to stay.

 - **Mr. Batson**
Mr. Batson believes that based on past experiences the County Office Building is the best location. People are not familiar with the Art Center, but they are familiar with the County Office Building. There will be trouble with parking at the Art Center. His main deciding factor was the Fire Marshall's report. He votes to stay.

 - **Mrs. Livingston**
Mrs. Livingston would like to see early voting back at the County Office Building. The staff went through a list of 21 possible places and the Art Center was the best option.

 - **Mr. Wright**
Mr. Wright said the contract was signed on July 24, 2017 and this will be a 2 – step procedure. The contract is binding, we need to talk to Barb Seese at the Art Center about the contract. He suggested the Board take Mr. Jones' help and get the Senator and Delegates involved. In the contract, parking is part of the lease. The Board was unanimous in not wanting to move. We need to undo the contract. Director Dales said she would contact Barb Seese at the Art Center today and see what SBE says. Director Dales also said, in response to the noise complaint, that we use Mrs. Livingston's previous suggestion of hanging signs asking the public to be respectful of those working in the building.
- Mr. Corkran asked for a motion. President Detmer said to keep in mind SBE may not see this as urgent. If they don't approve the change, we can ask the City of Cambridge to block off parking on the street for voters. Also, advertise and offer absentees in the office.

Mr. Detmer asked for a motion to take the steps necessary to move the Early Voting Site back to the County Office Building. Mr. Lewis motioned, Mr. Corkran seconded the motion, and motion carries.

Mr. Detmer asked Director Dales what the steps are that need to be taken. Director Dales said she will draft a letter and talk to the State's Attorney, Mr. Jones to see if he can help with the local delegation. Mr. Detmer suggested the next meeting, originally scheduled for April 10, 2018, be moved to after the SBE meeting on April 12, 2018, and the Board would like to attend the SBE meeting on April 12, 2018.

Additions to the Agenda:

None

Confirmation of Next Meeting:

- Previously scheduled in Room #110, County Office Building for Tuesday, April 10, 2018 @ 2:00 pm; rescheduled till after the April 12 SBE meeting, in Room #110, County Office Building for Friday, April 12, 2018 @ 5:00 pm.

Closed Session:

- **Personnel**
 - There was no need for a Closed Session.

Adjournment:

Mrs. Livingston motioned to adjourn at 11:48 am, seconded by Mr. Corkran.

APPROVED:

Michael W. Dexter

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