

Commissioners

MARISEL A. HERNANDEZ, *Chair*
WILLIAM J. KRESSE, *Commissioner/Secretary*
JUNE A. BROWN, *Commissioner*

CHARLES HOLIDAY, JR., *Executive Director*



Board of Election Commissioners for the City of Chicago
Minutes of the
Regular Board Meeting
December 29, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
69 West Washington Street, 8th Floor, Chicago, Illinois 60602

Board Members:

Marisel A. Hernandez, Chair
William J. Kresse, Commissioner/Secretary
June A. Brown, Commissioner

Staff:

Charles Holiday, Jr., Executive Director
Sandra Aspera, Assistant Executive Director
Adam Lasker, General Counsel
Max Bever, Director of Public Information
Audra Lewicki, Manager – Community Services
Amanda Robledo, Acting Purchasing Agent
Trish Sheehy

Guests:

Helene Gabelnick, League of Women Voters Chicago

- I. Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.
- II. Roll Call: All members were present.
- III. Consideration of Agenda: General Counsel Adam Lasker asked the Commissioners to pass on agenda item VII E (2) Approval of contracts for professional services – 2024 election judge trainers - Tim Thomas. Without objection, the agenda was approved with the stated change.
- IV. Approval of Minutes: No Minutes were presented.
- V. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Charles Holiday reported:

Vote-by-Mail applications opened last Wednesday, December 20th, including our new online application on chicagoelections.gov. We also have an online application available for the Permanent Vote-by-Mail Roster ("Permanent Roster") where voters can join, opt-out, change their Party preference, or change language for ballot information ahead of the March 19, 2024 Primary Election. We sent emails to over 100,000 voters already signed up for the Primary Election to confirm their information and help clean-up the roster ahead of the ballots being mailed out in February. We have already heard back from many Permanent Roster voters confirming or updating their information.

Record Examinations are happening daily on the 6th floor for cases before the Chicago Electoral Board.

Electoral Board notices and hearing dates are posted on the 6th and 8th floors as well as on our website.

Mr. Holiday participated in the interviewing of promising candidates for the position of Human Resources Director. We hope to make an offer in the near future.

Last Thursday, December 21st, Mr. Holiday presided over the Winter Conference for the Association of Election Commission Officials of Illinois. They received updates from the Illinois State Board of Elections on important topics including; cybersecurity, new IVRS (Illinois Voter Registration System) updates, and new legislative updates. We also heard from Legislative Liaison Mike Grady on expected proposals for the annual election omnibus legislation for 2024.

Also, on Thursday, December 21st, Mr. Holiday joined Max Bever, Derek Blaida and representatives from Cook County to meet with the Illinois Secretary of State and his staff to discuss a proposed expansion to the Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) ahead of next year's legislative session. We look forward to working more with the legislation's sponsor, Ram Villivalam, and the Secretary's office to provide our feedback and to bring more language access community organizations to the table to ensure their input.

The Chair had a question about the email that went out to the 100,000 voters asking them to confirm their information, specifically what happens if a voter doesn't confirm? Mr. Holiday said if the voter doesn't confirm, we will use the information that's in the system already.

Commissioner Kresse had questions regarding cybersecurity in the upcoming election year. What's the bottom line from the State, and how is the CBEC positioned for cybersecurity? Mr. Holiday stated that as far as the Chicago Board's cybersecurity, having spoken with our Security Manager Raul Patel, we're in good shape. The State is trying to continuously advise us of threats that may be out there; warning us and keeping us aware. Commissioner Kresse asked if we are constantly being updated by National Security. Mr. Holiday said that we are.

Commissioner Brown asked, as we enter into the fullness of the election season, are there particular administrative things that have not been concluded that he has a timeline for concluding? Mr. Holiday said, as he mentioned, we're trying to fill the Human Resources Director position. Commissioner Brown asked about contracts and other information that is still open. Mr. Holiday said that all of our contracts are in place and all the other items that may be open – we're working on them. He doesn't think there are any loose strings at the moment. Assistant Executive Director Sandra Aspera said that we still have pending contracts for tables and chairs. She believes that is a quick bid, but is not sure if Acting Purchasing Agent Amanda Robledo has started that process. Mr. Robledo said that it's in the works. Mr. Lasker said that another printing procurement will be published soon. Commissioner Brown asked for a summary so she'll be aware and can review what's pending and what's closed or closing.

A. Assistant Executive Director's Report

Assistant Executive Director Sandra Aspera reported:

Ms. Aspera gave special recognition to Derrick Hurde, Assistant Manager of the Board's warehouse, and the Warehouse staff for the monumental task of completing the upgrade and maintenance of all voting equipment ahead of schedule.

As of Thursday, December 28th, there are: 3,903 election judges and 894 election coordinators who have confirmed that they will be returning.

As of this morning, the total number of Vote-by-Mail applications is 103,612 of which 102,177 are Permanent Roster voters; regular Civilian Vote-by-Mail applications is 1,435.

Ms. Aspera is working with the Finance and Purchasing Departments to make sure that we are in the best place possible for fiscal year-ending 2023 budgets.

Human Resources (HR) has hired college students to assist with projects in HR, Purchasing, and IT.

Commissioner Kresse asked as to the space at Block 37 for training, and the necessary buildout, has that been accomplished or will it be ready in time for training? Mr. Holiday said that he believes it will be ready in time for our training start.

Commissioner Kresse also asked about Mikva Challenge and high school students working the polls. Are we expecting to get a good number from them? Is that open only to Chicago high school students or suburban Cook County as well? Community Services Manager Audra Lewicki said that it is open to suburban Cook County high school students, as well. Mr. Bever said that they have a goal of 1,500 judges for March 19th. We are helping them promote. We're looking to get as many high school student and college judges ahead of March 19th as possible.

Commissioner Brown asked if we are doing anything with anyone other than Mikva in recruiting high school students. Mr. Bever said that he believes we have a regular relationship with Chicago Public Schools, community organizations including League of Women Voters – who's present here today, and other community organizations that help us get the word out about our high school judge program. We do have that on our website as well as information for our college judge program. Commissioner Brown asked if we are also using regular media. Mr. Bever said, yes, he has a press release that will be going out soon as a reminder for election judge recruitment overall as well as the high school and college programs.

The Chair and Commissioner Kresse asked if we send schools something to post, or something that they can print themselves, and post on their bulletin boards. Mr. Bever said that he would be happy to follow up with the Community Services team on some.

The Chair asked Ms. Aspera how the number of judges that she just reported looks in comparison to what we need and compared to previous years at this

point in the cycle. Ms. Aspera said that at the last Board meeting we had 2,913 so we have about 2,000-plus in the last 2 weeks. Our goal is around 6,000 to 6,500. So, we're a little over half and hope that by the next two weeks that we get another 1,000. Judge training is scheduled to be done at the end of January, beginning of February.

B. Public Information Director's Report

Director of Public Information Max Bever reported:

Our updated ChicagoElections.gov is now live. We went live on the 13th and our Vote-by-Mail Application went live on Wednesday, December 20th. We've been getting a lot of good feedback. We have also been making updates in real-time as that feedback comes in.

We have a new search bar on the website that definitely helps people find what they're looking for. Also, our new website is fully accessible, which was a big goal of this new update.

We now have a voter lookup tool that voters can use to look up their Permanent Roster information. Mr. Bever detailed a number of other features and improvements to the Board website.

The Chair said that she thinks the emails from the Board are great. It's great for the voters to be able to do so many things on the website – to do whatever they need to do.

All of our former e-pollbooks, keyboards and charging stands were successfully donated to the non-profit PCs for People. We have received our receipt of final data checks and sanitization; all the memory deletion had been done by our warehouse team, but it's always good to get a double-check. Mr. Bever said a special thank you to Lashelle Fisher and our whole Warehouse team for making this a smooth delivery and process. The majority of the items will be recycled, but nothing's going to a landfill and nothing's going to waste. PCs for People is a good nonprofit partner of the City, the County and many other government agencies throughout Illinois so we know that it's going to a good cause and that they follow through with all of their e-recycling of this equipment. We donated just over 4,300 of the e-pollbooks, but it was really more of the keyboards and old charger stands that were taking up a lot of space at the warehouse.

In addition to the meetings that the Executive Director had mentioned, we also received an invitation from the Illinois House of Representatives to participate in an upcoming subject matter hearing on January 10th. The subject is Vote-by-Mail and preparations from different Election Authorities across the State. Mr. Bever will be representing the Board on a panel alongside representatives from downstate Clerks' offices and other Election Authorities. We look forward to answering questions and sharing more information on our program. We have a lot of things that we are proud to point, especially our Permanent Roster System.

The Community Services team has been hard at work at several community events. They will continue through January. Just before the holidays Jane Lau attended an event in Chinatown with over 90 Senior Citizens. Several people were signed up to be bilingual judges, as well as new voter registrations taken at the

event. Many other team members are going to additional college events. Several are planned for January and we'll report back on that continued outreach. They are very hard at work especially throughout the holiday season. We share that work on our social media. Mr. Bever believes more invitations have been coming in because that work has been so visible.

VI. Old Business

- A. Infrastructure Projects and Changes in Election Administration: nothing new to report.
- B. Electronic Poll Books: The new e-pollbooks are still being prepared for the upcoming election
- C. Voting Equipment: Voting Equipment is also being prepared for the upcoming election.
- D. Legislation:
The General Assembly won't be back in session until January 16th.

VII. New Business

- A. Adoption of 2024 Schedule of Regular Board Meetings.
Commissioner Kresse moved to adopt the 2024 Schedule of Regular Board meetings. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed by 3:0 vote of the Board.

- B. Approval of small-bid purchase of Paper Mate Flair ballot marking pens from Garvey's Office Products.

Acting Purchasing Officer Amanda Robledo presented:

The Procurement Office issued a Small Bid (RFQ) Request for Quote for Paper Mate Flair Pens for the 2024 Elections. These new pens have replaced the Sharpies that have been bleeding through the paper ballots and causing voter concern. This is the 2nd year that we will be using Paper Mate Flair pens.

The Procurement Office has reviewed, evaluated and is recommending an award for the "Small Bid Request for Quote: Paper Mate Flair Pens for the 2024 Elections." The Procurement Office is recommending the award to Garvey's Office Products.

The Small Bid was competitively bid, the award selection was based on comparative total cost meeting the lowest bidder's requirements. In response to the Small Bid, the Board received a total of two (2) responses, one from Garvey's Office Products and one from Warehouse Direct. The Board also received a late bid from Accurate Office Supply.

Garvey's Office Products is the apparent lowest bidder to provide the Board with Paper Mate Flair Pens for the 2024 Elections. Garvey's has proven to be reliable and responsible with providing the Board with various office supplies. Ms. Robledo had provided the Board members with supporting documentation.

Ms. Robledo asked that the Board consider granting the award for the "Small Bid (RFQ) Request for Quote: Paper Mate Flair Pens" to Garvey's Office Products in the amount not to exceed \$45,954.00.

Commissioner Kresse asked Ms. Robledo if these are just for the Primary, or will we need to get more pens for the November election? She replied that there might be a need to order more for November, depending on the report she receives from the Warehouse following the Primary. She will have a determination later.

Commissioner Brown moved to approve a small bid purchase of Paper Mate Flair ballot marking pens from Garvey's Office Products at a price of \$45,954.00. Commissioner Kresse seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote of the Board.

C. Approval of a small-bid purchase of printer toner for early voting ballots.

The Procurement Office has reviewed and evaluated and is recommending an award for "Request for Quote (RFQ) for Hewlett Packard (HP) Toner 26x for the 2024 Elections." The Procurement Office is recommending the award to Next Day Toner Plus.

An RFQ was competitively bid and the award selection was based on comparative total cost meeting the lowest bidder requirements. We received 3 responses, Garvey's Office Products, Amazon.com and Next Day Toner Plus. Next Day Toner Plus is the apparent lowest bidder to provide the Board with HP toner 26x. Next Day Toner has proven to be reliable and responsible with providing the Board with toner and desktop printers for the office. Board staff has been satisfied with Next Day Toner's service and products. Bid tabulation documentation supporting Ms. Robledo's recommendation to award the approval and purchase for HP toner 26x to Next Day Toner Plus was provided to the Board members.

This request includes toner for printers at the Early Voting sites as well as for Election Day polling places.

Commissioner Kresse moved to approve the purchase of 1,000 printer toner cartridges from Next Day Plus with a total cost of \$199,700. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion passed by 3:0 vote of the Board.

D. Approval of a professional services agreement with Derek Blaida and Associates for legislative liaison and lobbyist services.

Mr. Lasker presented:

Derek Blaida of Blaida and Associates, LLC, has been providing legislative liaison/lobbyist services to the Board since September 1, 2023, under a short-term Professional Services Agreement (PSA) contract. He has been doing a nice job of tracking all election-related bills and keeping an eye on legislation and anything related to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Open Meetings Act (OMA), and employment related matters. If this contract is approved he will continue for a full year through 2024.

Commissioner Kresse asked if Mr. Blaida monitors what's happening on Capitol Hill in Washington, too? Mr. Lasker said that he does monitor election related stuff there for us, too. Commissioner Kresse said that he saw the list Mr. Blaida submitted of other clients and the Commissioner doesn't see any conflicts, but will he be updating this list. Mr. Lasker said that Mr. Blaida will always supplement the client list with us.

Commissioner Brown asked if disclosure clauses are included in that contract. Mr. Lasker said that yes, there's an Economic Disclosure Form. Mr. Lasker said that Blaida and Associates have already submitted one through the City of Chicago and he provided one on September 1st, but we'll have him supplement if there's any new information.

Commissioner Brown made a motion to approve a professional services agreement with Blaida and Associates, LLC, for legislative liaison and lobbyist services, at a cost not to exceed \$42,000 over the term of the agreement, which shall begin on January 1, 2024, and shall continue through and including December 31, 2024. Commissioner Kresse seconded the motion. The motion passed by 3:0 vote of the Board.

- E. Approval of contracts for professional services – 2024 election judge trainers:
Community Services Manager, Audra Lewicki presented:

We have 2 individual contracted trainers, George Munoz and Carmen Triche Colvin. They've both trained with us before for a few years. Then, we are using a variety of temporary staffing agencies to supply the rest. They are all very well qualified according to their resumés. Ms. Lewicki looks forward to working with them.

We have worked with a few of the temp agencies in the past. They always give us quality candidates. They are easy to work with.

Commissioner Brown asked about the number of trainers we looking to hire. Ms. Lewicki said that originally, we were looking to hire 16, but that number has dropped to 14.

Commissioner Brown asked if Ms. Lewicki had worked with LHH Recruitment before. Ms. Lewicki said she had, they supplied a few trainers at the last election. Commissioner Brown said that she has some concerns, but right now that's her question.

Commissioner Kresse said he is very happy to see George Munoz on the list again and asked if Mr. Munoz will be staying with us through to Election Day for Election Central. Ms. Lewicki said it is her understanding that this contract is only for training, but if the Board wants Mr. Munoz to stay Election Day she's sure he would gladly do it.

The Chair thanked Ms. Lewicki for everything she does.

Commissioner Brown directed comments to Mr. Lasker regarding concerns regarding LHH and what appears to Commissioner Brown as material changes to the contract. Colloquy ensued on this matter between Commissioner Brown and Mr. Lasker. The Chair asked Ms. Lewicki if consideration of the contract with LHH Recruitment Solutions could be continued until the next Board meeting, given the training schedule. Ms. Lewicki stated that would be fine, so long as it's taken care of by then. The Chair and Commissioner Brown expressed that they think passing on this contract at this time is a good idea. Commissioner Kresse stated that for the Board's purposes, it would be good if everyone was in the same situation for all these contracts.

Commissioner Kresse said the Board should move on the other contracts before them.

Commissioner Brown moved to approve professional services agreements with George Munoz, Carmen Triche Colvin, 22nd Century Technologies, Inc., Beacon Hill Associates, and LaSalle Network for professional trainer services at the rate of \$50 per hour per trainer, and with a durational term beginning on December 29, 2023, and continuing through December 28, 2024. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kresse and passed by 3:0 vote of the Board.

VIII. Legal Report

General Counsel Adam Lasker reported:

We have all of the Electoral Board cases pending. Things are moving relatively smoothly so far. We will be having an Electoral Board meeting next week. Mr. Lasker believes the County is having its meeting on Thursday and we will meet on Friday, and dispose of about half or maybe even two-thirds of the 55 cases on the docket by then.

IX. Financial Report: none

X. Public Comment: none

XI. Executive Session

XII. Adjournment: Commissioner Kresse moved to adjourn. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote of the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Submitted,



William J. Kresse, Secretary