

MINUTES
Fairfax County Electoral Board
August 7, 2023

The Fairfax County Electoral Board (Board) met on Monday, August 7, 2023, in Conference Room 315 at the Fairfax County Government Center located at 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. Chairman Hon. Katherine K. Hanley; Vice Chairman Jeffrey K. Shapiro; Secretary Amb. (ret.) Christopher P. Henzel; General Registrar Eric L. Spicer; Deputy Director Cheryl Jones; and Clerk to the Electoral Board Beth Dixon Methfessel were present.

IT Manager Cord Whitehouse; Election Manager Ravi Udeshi; Deputy Registrar for Voter Registration Bushra Ardalán; Deputy Registrar for Voter Satellite Offices Florence Brown; Deputy Registrar for Absentee Voting Sean Stewart; Voting Equipment and Logistics Manager Tyrone Allen; Election Officer Manager Gretchen Coleman; Supply Manager Kay Garrison; Financial Specialist Teresa Maza; Mira Elliott, Abigale Peters, Jean Thoensen, and Elise Yang (Office of Elections (Office) staff); Andi Bayer, Jim Emery, and Shari Emery (Fairfax County Republican Committee (FCRC) Election Integrity Task Force); Jean Deavers (member FCRC); Maggi Luca (Fairfax League of Women Voters (LWV)); and Betty Hartmann, Jill Mobley, Benjamin Mobley, and Michael Martin (residents of Fairfax County and/or neighboring jurisdictions).

The following individuals participated using the Zoom videoconferencing platform: Human Resources Manager Yoon Choi-Lee; FOIA Coordinator Pat Ferguson; IT Business Analyst George Panagakos; Office staff and/or rovers Steve Barch, Mark Beale, Judy Clardy, Lisa Hogle, Kathryn Martin, Jerald Taylor, Fily Vilasanta, and Sam Walker; Christine Brim (FCRC Election Integrity Task Force); Richard Weiss (FCDC Voter Registration and Education); Maria Vorel (FCDC Precinct Operations); Deb Wake (VA LWV); Arina van Breda (Fairfax LWV); Stephen Spitz (member FCDC); Helen Chaikovsky, William Denk, Margaret Farrish, Phyllisa Goldenberg, Robert Jacobs, and Pat O'Brien, Fairfax County election officers and/or residents of Fairfax County or neighboring jurisdictions).

Ms. Hanley called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and introduced the Board. Mr. Henzel moved approval of the agenda, and the motion passed by a vote of 3-0. Mr. Henzel moved to adopt the Draft Minutes of the Board meetings held on June 14, 2023, and June 21, 2023. By a vote of 3-0, the Minutes of the Board meetings held on June 14, 2023, and June 21, 2023, were adopted.

Mr. Henzel made a motion to appoint of 62 election officers (EO) (30 Democrats, 9 Republicans, and 23 Unaffiliated) for a term ending February 28, 2025. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

Under the General Registrar's (GR) report dated May 1, 2023 (attached and made a part of this record), Mr. Spicer updated the voter registration numbers since the last Electoral Board meeting:

Registered Voters	As of August 3, 2023	Change from 5/1
Active registered voters	721,683	+6,676
Inactive registered voters	62,676	-3,257
TOTAL	784,359	+3,419

Registration Transactions	August 2023 (5/1 to 8/1)	Year-to-Date (1/1 to 8/1)
DMV online voter registration transactions	51,897	99,181
Web voter registration transactions	3,739	5,690
Third-party voter transactions	806	2,538
Other voter registration transactions	3,297	13,949
TOTAL	59,739	121,358

Voter Cancellations	August 2023 (5/1 to 8/1)	Year-to-Date (1/1 to 8/1)
Deceased	1,117	2,297
Out-of-state	646	6,244
Other	197	7,109
TOTAL	1,960	15,650

Mr. Spicer explained that the USPS National Change of Address (NCOA) confirmation mailing is part of a list maintenance process mandated by Va. Code §24.2-428 and the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) that is managed by the Virginia Department of Elections in Richmond (ELECT). During most years ELECT sends only the one legally required confirmation mailing. This year, ELECT sent out two confirmation mailings, February 3 and July 24, in an effort to improve the accuracy of the voter list. Prior to July 1, only voters who moved outside of their local jurisdiction or Virginia were automatically moved to an “Inactive” status approximately 30 days after the mailing date if no response was received back from an NCOA mailing. Beginning July 1, 2023, voters who move within the jurisdiction and fail to respond to the NCOA mailing will be processed in the same manner as “out of state” or “out of the jurisdiction” voters; they will now be coded as “Inactive” in VERIS.

In a further effort to improve the accuracy of the voter rolls, in September the sample ballot mailer will be sent “Return Receipt Requested.” If the mailer is undeliverable, it will be returned to the Office.

Earlier this year, the General Assembly changed the statutory requirements for absentee by mail voting (Va. Code § 24.2-706). Effective July 1, absentee voters are required to provide the last four digits of their Social Security number and year of birth instead of a witness signature

when completing their “statement of voter.” Due to these legislative changes, the absentee ballot return envelope will be redesigned. The new absentee envelope will continue to provide an intuitive template for absentee voters to complete their voter statement while providing for the privacy of their newly required personal information. The return envelope will allow the absentee voter submission to be processed while the ballot remains sealed in the envelope. Staff continues to work with the third-party printer/mailer to ensure that the return envelope complies with USPS guidelines and supports effective postal processing.

To establish consistency, the November 2023 early voting schedule will be the same as 2022. Three locations (Government Center, Mount Vernon, and North County) will be open starting on Friday, September 22 and they will also be open on Saturday, September 23. An additional 13 locations will open on Thursday, October 26 after which all locations will be open for 10 days in a row until November 4 including Sunday, October 29.

Government Center

Monday – Friday	8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Saturdays (9/23, 10/28, 11/4)	9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday (10/29)	1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Mt. Vernon and North County

Monday – Friday	1 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Saturdays (9/23, 10/28, 11/4)	9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday (10/29)	1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

13 additional locations

Monday – Friday	1 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Saturdays (10/28, 11/4)	9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday (10/29)	1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Training for satellite staff is scheduled for the week of September 11 and the weeks of October 9 and October 16. The satellite Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs will be prepared for Same Day Registration.

The following is the Logic and Accuracy Testing Schedule for the November 2023 Election:

Friday, September 8 (9:00 a.m.) (Fairfax Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA) (Suite 251) – Testing and setup of Poll Pads for in-person absentee satellite voting.

Tuesday, September 12 (9:00 a.m.) to September 13 (Morrissette Warehouse, 8600 Morrissette Drive, Springfield, Virginia) – Testing of voting equipment and Ballot on Demand systems for three (45-Day) Satellite Voting locations.

Tuesday, September 26 (9:00 a.m.) to October 13 (Morrissette Warehouse, 8600 Morrissette Drive, Springfield, Virginia) – Testing of voting equipment and Ballot on Demand systems for the remaining 13 (10-Day) Satellite voting locations and all Election Day polling places.

Tuesday, October 10 (9:00 a.m.) to October 11 (Fairfax Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA) (Suite 339) – Testing of DS850s that will be used to count mail ballots.

Sunday, November 5 (9:00 a.m.) (Fairfax Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA) (Suite 251) – Testing and setup of all Poll Pads for Election Day

Nazila Arefi was hired as an Administrative Assistant for the HR Division on July 15. Cheryl Jones was selected as the Deputy Director of Elections. Florence Brown will assume the role of Deputy Registrar for Voter Satellite Offices. Gretchen Coleman will start on August 21 as the new Election Officer Manager.

Research is ongoing in the voting equipment and replacement project. Of the four certified vendors in Virginia that have developed or are developing voting equipment that would meet the new 2.0 standards, two vendors have agreed to attend the September Electoral Board meeting to present their 2.0 compliant equipment. The current plan is to make a decision concerning the purchase of new voting equipment by December 2023 or January 2024, work on the contract during 2024, and acquire the new equipment in early 2025. No possession of any equipment will be authorized until it has been certified under the new 2.0 standards.

Under the Secretary’s report, Mr. Henzel informed the Board that the Virginia Electoral Board Association (VEBA), in cooperation with the group Informing Democracy, sent out a survey to all members. The communication conveyed that the survey was non-partisan in nature, however, Mr. Henzel indicated that he received information that the group was not non-partisan, and he did not plan to respond to the survey. He added that Informing Democracy has carried out studies in other states that resulted in identifying at least 200 electoral board members that have “anti-democratic tendencies or are threats to democracy.” On the Informing Democracy website, these “threats” include “probing for vulnerability in election law or process.” Mr. Henzel indicated that he plans to write the group regarding his concerns. Ms. Hanley remarked that she received the survey but since it was voluntary, did not respond to it. Mr. Shapiro said he did not receive the survey because for some reason, he is not receiving emails from VEBA.

There was no Vice Chairman’s report,

Under the Chairman’s report, on behalf of the Board, Ms. Hanley sent a letter to the School Board asking for a revision in the 2023-2024 school calendar to close schools for the March 5 Presidential Primary. She attended the School Board meeting in July to present the appeal in person, and the Board took the request under advisement. The Board agreed that she should follow up and emphasize the safety issue for the students and remind the School Board that 167 schools serve as polling places.

Ms. Hanley passed out an ELECT Advisory (attached and made a part of this record) that explained how the observance of the Veteran’s Day holiday on Friday, November 10, will move the date to receive post-marked absentee ballots from Friday, November 10 to Monday, November 13. The deadline to certify the election by submitting completed abstracts remains Tuesday, November 14. Ms. Hanley explained that this year is further complicated by the number of contests on the ballot. Last year legislation was proposed to extend the certification

from the Tuesday following the election to the Friday following the deadline to receive postmarked absentee ballots (an additional three days). The VEBA Legislative Committee and Executive Board met and confirmed that this recommendation will be part of their legislative package. Ms. Hanley noted that the Board of Supervisors also supports a legislative program, and she requested Board support to ask the Board of Supervisors to endorse extending the certification deadline by three days. Mr. Henzel commented that the bill extending the deadline failed in the 2023 legislative session in part because legislators also supported shortening the deadline to receive post-marked absentee ballots. He suggested that just extending the certification deadline without moving up the deadline to receive post-marked absentee ballots will fail again in 2024. He prefers recommending that both dates be adjusted to spread out the certification timeline. Mr. Shapiro agreed with Mr. Henzel and referenced the challenges to certify on time for the June primary election with only 10% turnout. He further opined that the General Assembly has made the election process “extremely complex” over the years and that the legislature needs to change the rules to provide funding and mitigate the complexity of the election process. He indicated; however, he would support a motion to move the certification deadline for delivering the abstracts of election from 7 days to 10 days following the election. Ms. Hanley so moved, and the motion passed 2-0 with Mr. Henzel abstaining.

Under New Business, the Board acknowledged the Resource Allocation for the voter satellite offices for the November 2023 General and Special Elections (attached and made a part of this record).

Under Public Comments, Ms. Hanley reminded the public that comments are limited to three minutes. The Board may provide the information; however, an answer may be deferred if more research is required.

Ms. Bayer confirmed that an SDR specialist will be assigned to every precinct. She thanked Mr. Udeshi for providing electronic applications for election officers, including the announcements for the job openings. She asked if there would be a separate email for applications for the Central Absentee Precinct (CAP). Mr. Stewart replied that currently the CAP is adequately staffed, however, if anyone has an interest in serving in the CAP, to reach out to him directly.

Mr. Martin expressed his support for ranked choice voting (RCV) in Fairfax County after Arlington County’s attempt at using this method for the June primary election. Mr. Henzel responded that RCV “unnecessarily complicates the process and detracts from the perception of transparency.” Mr. Shapiro agreed and reiterated that complexity in the electoral process is a “self-inflicted wound.” Ms. Hanley mentioned that the software is currently unavailable to count ranked choice ballots. She added that implementing ranked choice voting is premature in a jurisdiction the size of Fairfax County. Mr. Denk commented that ranked choice voting was used in a Republican primary and as a result, the third-place candidate prevailed. He added that he also opposes implementing RCV in a locality the size of Fairfax County.

The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday, September 27, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Henzel moved to adjourn. The motion was carried, and without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

Attachments

Hon. Katherine K. Hanley, Chairman

Jeffrey K. Shapiro, Vice Chairman

Amb. (ret.) Christopher P. Henzel, Secretary