

A meeting of the Board of Elections Commissioners of St. Louis County was held by video conference, Tuesday, July 21, 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent executive order. Members of the public took the opportunity to attend the meeting by calling into a conference line.

Present at the meeting were:

Sharon Buchanan-McClure	Chair
Trudi McCollum Foushee	Secretary
Matthew Potter	Commissioner
Peggy Barnhart	Commissioner
Steve Garrett	Attorney
Rick Stream	Director
Eric Fey	Director
Christian Tolbert	Deputy Director
Julie Leicht	Deputy Director

Chair Buchanan-McClure called the meeting to order and a roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

Chair Buchanan-McClure took a moment to welcome the voters who called in and announced that we have fourteen days until the August 4 Primary. We have a series of finish lines to cross in these two weeks. Our employees are exhausted and anxious, and leadership is working hard to get everything done on time. Chair Buchanan-McClure thanked the staff for keeping this election on schedule and for honoring the voters during this unprecedented time. This is a team effort, and we all must rely on each other.

Chair Buchanan-McClure asked if everyone had read the minutes from the June 23 meeting. Secretary Foushee made a motion that the minutes be approved and Commissioner Potter seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved. Chair Buchanan-McClure asked if everyone had read the closed minutes from the June 23 meeting. Secretary Foushee made a motion the minutes be approved and Commissioner Potter seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved. Finally, Chair Buchanan-McClure asked if everyone had read the closed minutes from the special closed June 25 meeting. Secretary Foushee made a motion to approve the minutes and Commissioner Barnhart seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved.

Chair Buchanan-McClure announced that the directors' reports were submitted to the Board in writing and asked the commissioners if anyone had any questions. Deputy Director Leicht discussed filling vacancies at the polls. Chair Buchanan-McClure asked how we are preparing for cancellations and no-shows considering COVID-19 is projected to increase before August 4.

Deputy Director Leicht said we are using the same workers as the June election who are familiar with our safety precautions. We have also doubled our amount of standbys which provides us a large safety net. Director Fey discussed the process of sending out the absentee ballots. As of mid-day (July 21) we have processed 86,863 applications for absentee and mail-in ballots, almost

10,000 more applications than the 77,000 processed by the remaining Missouri counties combined. The mail-in applications include about 3% of the total number of applications. Staff will be working mandatory overtime tomorrow, July 22, which is the deadline to process these applications. We had good practice in June for the opening of ballots, when we had about 44,000. Thirty bipartisan opening teams have been recruited.

Director Fey then explained the process of opening and tabulating the absentee and mail-in ballots. Once they are opened, they are put in batches and scanned into the scanning software. Here, we can determine which ballots are too damaged to be scanned, and can duplicate the ballot if needed. On election night, we take those drives and tabulate them. All of this takes place in the tabulation room, which is air-gapped and requires bipartisan badge access from certain employees. Director Fey then mentioned that the Health Department has provided masks for polling places, and these masks will be available to voters who do not have one. Commissioner Barnhart asked what we predict turnout to be. Director Fey estimated a 25-30% turnout.

The Board discussed the sample ballot letter that was originally scheduled to hit mailboxes the week of July 6. Chair Buchanan-McClure asked why these letters did not start being delivered until July 17. Director Fey explained that the envelope supplier of Mulligan Printing, the printing vendor, ordered the wrong sized envelopes, as well as employees of Mulligan Printing contracting COVID-19. (it was later determined that the issue was not an incorrect envelope but an envelope that had to be manufactured and they had one employee test positive and they were shut down for a day and a half for a deep cleaning. Those factors, plus postal service delays caused a delay in the letters being received.) The commissioners discussed this issue and requested Mulligan Printing attend our August 18 Board meeting.

Under Old Business, the Board discussed the response by Verizon regarding encryption and security. The Board then discussed the absentee response rates from across the state. Director Fey explained that based on the data we found, it is logical to assume voters are more likely to return their absentee ballots if there is a contested issue or race to vote on. Chair Buchanan-McClure requested to continue this conversation at the August and future Board meetings.

Under New Business, the Board discussed the staff report requested by the Commissioners on the ramifications of allowing voters the option to vote at any polling place in the County. Chair Buchanan-McClure expressed her desire to make this option countywide so it would be equitable to all voters. Director Fey announced that Kansas City recently had an election where they publicly utilized this system. The Board discussed including this option on polling place postcards for future elections. Chair Buchanan-McClure made a motion to utilize technical capabilities we have from the new election voting equipment purchases to provide voters the ability to vote at any polling place; understanding that their assigned polling place would be, in most instances, the most convenient. Secretary Foushee seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was approved.

The Board then discussed planning for the November General election. Director Fey explained that the polling place coordinators are nailing down locations for November, and they are trying to break up places who have more voters, hoping to have about 225 locations total. Director Fey asked the Board if it was their desire to send another communication to voters regarding absentee,

as this will affect the planning. Chair Buchanan-McClure mentioned until they have meetings with Mulligan Printing, she is not comfortable with any more mailings. Director Fey announced we already have about 65,000 absentee and mail-in applications for the November election in-house. The more voters who vote absentee or mail-in, the less crowded polling places will be on Election Day.

Under Financial/Budget, the Board discussed what items are considered COVID-19 related, which we will seek reimbursement through the County from the federal COVID 19 relief funding.

The County has asked County departments, and included the Board of Elections in this request, to present a zero-growth budget. The Board then discussed the 2021 budget and possible responses to the County's request. The Commissioners instructed staff to communicate informally to County officials that the 2021 budget submission was below zero-growth except for the debt service payments in the Board of Elections budget. It was necessary to finance part of the new equipment purchase last year because the County could not pay that portion. Commissioner Barnhart made a motion to adopt the 2021 budget as presented with rationale discussed, and Secretary Foushee seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was approved.

There was nothing to discuss under Personnel in the open meeting.

There was nothing to discuss under Legal in the open meeting.

Secretary Foushee moved that the meeting be closed pursuant to RSMo 610.021(1),(2),(3), (12) and (13) to discuss litigation, real estate, and personnel matters. Commissioner Barnhart seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the votes were as follows: Chair Buchanan-McClure, aye; Secretary Foushee, aye; Commissioner Barnhart, aye; Commissioner Potter, aye.

The Board reopened the meeting and Chair Buchanan-McClure announced that no action had been taken. Commissioner Barnhart moved to adjourn and Secretary Foushee seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the meeting was adjourned.



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Sharon Buchanan-McClure, Chair



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Trudi McCollum Foushee, Secretary