

November 20, 2008

A meeting of the Board of Election Commissioners of St. Louis County was held at its office located at 12 Sunnen Drive, Maplewood, Missouri, Tuesday, November 20, 2008, at 3:00 p.m. on notice and call of the Chairman, John Fox Arnold.

Present at the meeting were:

John Fox Arnold	Chairman
Chaim Zimbalist	Secretary
Anita Yeckel	Commissioner
Bill Miller	Commissioner
Steve Garrett	Attorney
Joseph A. Goeke, III	Director
Joseph E. Donahue	Director

Mr. Arnold called the meeting to order and opened the Public Forum. Joan Botwinick, Denise Lieberman, Michael Moore, Cynthia Richards, Margaret VanDiggelen, Juanita Carl, Katharyn Davis, Virginia Harris, Arnie Dienoff, Darlene Braceful-Lewis, Deborah Cannady and J. A. Frank signed cards to speak.

Ms. Botwinick shared her voting experience by saying the election officials told the voters they weren't allowed to vote a paper ballot unless they were at a booth. At other locations they weren't requiring voters to be at the booth. She said this was very confusing and made the lines very long.

Ms. Lieberman, a voting rights attorney, shared the findings in her incident reports. 400 volunteers were placed outside polls and received these reports from actual voters. One of the main issues was how accurate are the registrations especially with the dual entry system and purging issues should be looked at in the future. Some other comments were problems with Palm Pilots, calling the BOEC and being on hold for 20 minutes, intimidating police presence, disabled voters waiting too long, machine malfunctions, supplies running out, improper ID, requested but not cast absentee ballots and of course, long lines. Despite the issues on Election Day, Ms. Lieberman thanked Judge Goeke, Mr. Donahue and the BOEC for the smoothly run election.

Mr. Moore stated that Judge Goeke and Mr. Donahue should not be commended but rather condemned. There was plenty of time to prepare and every right of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 was violated. He asked why every other area run smoothly except for North County. He said the employees of the Election Board should be fired, not the election judges.

Ms. Richards, a Velda City voter, said she went to the polls twice in order to vote. The first time she had to leave to go to the dentist and waited 5 hours. Ms. Richards was promised she could vote without a privacy booth and is frustrated in the BOEC that they didn't take action as soon as possible.

Ms. Carl has a son who lives in Germany and she called the second week in October to check on his ballot for November and it had been sent but not received. Also, at West County polling places they are asking for a photo ID.

Ms. Davis was a challenger at Koch Elementary School and believes there was gross negligence, disenfranchisement and under trained and understaffed polling place. She said the slow down wasn't because of paper ballots, but because the supervisor was overwhelmed and there was no high school student to work the Palm Pilot. We should have early voting in order to help the voting process.

Ms. Harris visited 4 polling places where one had a 15 minute wait and the other 3 in West County had long lines. She informed them they don't have to wait for a privacy booth in order to vote a paper ballot.

Mr. Dienoff stated he wrote several emails to the employees of the Election Board and because of no response, the communication from employees of the BOEC needs to be revisited. The treatment of citizens is poor and the election was not run smoothly.

Ms. Braceful-Lewis has a husband who was hospitalized on November 2 so she called the Election Board and was told to fax over all the needed information and the BOEC would deliver him an absentee ballot. Because her husband was not at a hospital in the county, he was not sent an absentee ballot. Ms. Braceful-Lewis is a nurse and said she will start an advocacy to fix this. Mr. Miller agreed that, within means, we should be able to vote someone out of jurisdiction.

Ms. Cannady wanted to report her bad experience at Velda City City Hall. She arrived at 7:40 am and voted at 3:30 pm. She had her 20 year old and 8 year old daughters with her as well. They should have used a different facility and the staffing was okay but the wait still shouldn't have been that long. They were never told it was okay to vote on paper without the privacy booth. Ms. Cannady wants something changed with the BOEC, such as early voting.

Mr. Miller agrees with a lot of what people are saying. We have good training for the poll workers but possibly not enough training and/or they forget. It is a long day for them to work and be alert so a suggestion is to have shifts and rotate the poll workers.

Mr. Zimbalist said there were lines in some areas and this was mostly in the early morning. The center of the county had full parking lots and by late afternoon there were barely any lines.

Ms. Yeckel believes there are volume/ration problems. Early voting was in the State Senate Bill in 2000 but it wasn't funded.

Mr. Arnold wanted to commend the poll workers for their hard work. St. Louis County has 716,000 registered voters, 449 polling places, 6,000 poll workers, 6,000 voting devices were deployed and 566,000 paper ballots were printed. We are larger than 11 states and Mr. Arnold wanted to say thank you.

As there were no more speakers, Mr. Arnold closed the Public Forum and proceeded to the next order of business.

Mr. Arnold called for the Directors' report. Judge Goeke said the biggest surprise was the time of turnout. After 4:00 there were virtually no lines. Absentee lines were 1-2 hour waits and wanted to commend the citizens for their congeniality.

Judge Goeke said we had 25% more machines than in the past. The BOEC gave Velda City City Hall 11 devices but they only set up 6 and 4:00 pm was the first time he heard about the long lines. Immediately he sent 2 BOEC employees. They were short poll workers but they never called to report they needed more help. We will continue training the poll workers on voter ID and that privacy booths are not required.

Judge Goeke continued to say that there were plenty of paper ballots and we never ran out at any location. \$98,000 was wasted on unused paper ballots.

Absentee had 44,337 mail-in ballots, which is more than total absentee ballots in 2004. Total absentee ballots were 72,290. In 2004, there were 1,958 provisional ballots. In 2008, there were 2,360 provisional ballots.

Mr. Donahue recognizes all the comments and they are taken note of. The job of a poll worker takes time and effort. This was the first time using volunteers from corporations, colleges and high schools. We need to improve on this and we are also going to look into early voting.

Mr. Donahue referred to the police intimidation in that we asked them to stand at the end of the line at 7:00 pm to make sure there were no incidents. As far as parking tickets, we ask voters to be aware of where they park.

Mr. Garrett said one of the polling places is close to a service station and the owner was upset that customers could not get in. Apparently the police were giving out tickets. Different stories were told but we asked if they could give them a break this one time.

Judge Goeke said curbside voting has to be within a certain feet of entrance. The Election Board is advertised as another polling place for the disabled on Election Day. We have to have a bipartisan team vote someone curbside so it becomes a logistical problem.

Mr. Garrett called Mr. Dienoff the day he sent the first email. He scanned the policy, emailed it and returned each phone call.


Mr. Miller applauded the BOEC employees. They have to do everything bipartisan, it is a process, they work very hard and never hear appreciation from the public.

Mr. Zimbalist wanted to commend all the people who came today to share their experience and comments.

There was no old business to bring before the Board. The MCVR transition will require overtime of supervisory personnel. The Board was asked that overtime pay be extended for the transition. Mr. Miller made a motion to approve. Mr. Zimbalist seconded. A roll call was taken and the votes were as follows: Mr. Miller, aye; Mr. Zimbalist, aye; Ms. Yeckel, aye; Mr. Arnold, aye. The motion was approved.

Mr. Arnold asked for a motion to enter into executive (closed) session. Ms. Yeckel made a motion that the Board enter into closed session to discuss legal and personnel matters. Mr. Miller seconded the motion. A roll call was taken and the votes were as follows: Ms. Yeckel, aye; Mr. Miller, aye; Mr. Zimbalist, aye; Mr. Arnold, aye. The motion was approved and the Board entered into closed session.

John Fox Arnold, Chairman


Chaim Zimbalist, Secretary