



## APPROVED MINUTES

### BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS REGULAR MEETING – JANUARY 15, 2021

The Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections met in Regular Session on Friday, January 15, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

## **VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.  
FGTV YouTube Channel**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYH7E0jH6HxE-3KTRluH8SQ>

**Presiding:** Ms. Mary Carole Cooney, Chairperson

**Other Board Members Present:**

Ms. Vernetta Keith Nuriddin, Vice Chairperson  
Mr. Mark Wingate  
Mr. Aaron V. Johnson  
Dr. Kathleen Ruth

**Staff Attending:** Mr. Richard Barron, Director; Mr. Ralph Jones, Registration Chief; Mr. Dwight Brower, Interim Elections Chief; Ms. Sharon Benjamin, Deputy Elections Chief; Ms. Nadine Williams, Elections Chief; Mrs. Pamela Coman, Registration Manager; Ms. Brenda McCloud, Administrative Manager; Ms. Breauana Jenkins, Administrative Coordinator I; Mrs. Cheryl Ringer, County Attorney; Mr. David Lowman, County Attorney; Mr. James Reese, Production Manager; Mr. Rico Dollar, Senior Graphics Designer, Jessica Corbitt, PIO; Regina Waller, Senior Public Affairs Officer

**Commissioners:** Commissioner L. Hausmann (D1)

**County Personnel:** County Attorney Patrise Perkins-Hooker, Bridgitte Bailey, Michael O'Connor (Hausmann)

**Guest Attending:** Aileen Nakamura (Coalition of Good Governance), Maggie Goldman, David Ross (Democratic Party of GA) Valarie Bolton, Rhonda Martin (Coalition of Good Governance), Chantel Mullen, Mary Baron, Majorie Pak, Cathy Payne, Eli Spencer Heyman, Jarwanda Harris, Michael Carson, Katrina Dinkle, Patricia Roberts, Joshua Snider, Shea Roberts, Hope Mays, Elena Merino, Travis Dauwalter, Max Bruk, Dolly Dil, Donnie Perry, Megan Harris, Eric Richardson, Sarah Johnson, Laura Patton, Cecil Fountain, Representative Mesha Mainor

**Chairperson Cooney announced that this teleconferenced meeting is authorized pursuant to §50-14-1(g) of the Official Code of Georgia because of the Public Health State of Emergency declared by Governor Kemp on March 14, 2020, and renewed through March 7, 2021, pursuant to which public meeting spaces in state and local Government have been closed due to COVID-19, and because means have been afforded for the public to have simultaneous access to this teleconference.**

### **#1– APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was made by Mr. Wingate, seconded by Mr. Johnson and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.**

## #2– COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RESPONSE

**Aileen Nakamura** stated:

“Good morning, I'm Aileen Nakamura from Sandy Springs.

As we all know, 2020 was an incredibly tough year, especially for Fulton Elections – you had minimal time to manage the implementation of an impossibly complex new voting system during a global pandemic – an extremely difficult task for a county whose population is larger than that of the six smallest States.

Having poll watched at many Fulton locations in the last 15 months, I applaud this Board, and especially Director Barron and his staff, for the improvements that have been made over that time.

However, there is still much that could and needs to be improved. As a non-partisan statewide poll watcher for the Coalition for Good Governance, on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and January 5<sup>th</sup>, I spent many hours at each of 7 Fulton polling locations, and I feel that the difference in the proficiency and efficiency between poll workers at each location is concerning. In other words, there are amazing poll managers who should be training others, and there are those who need a LOT more training, like those who give voters incorrect information.

These differences stem not just from inadequate training, but the fact that there is no conduit to share the wealth of knowledge and experience of exemplary poll managers with those who are less experienced.

In the last year, I have come to know some poll workers very well, and they all have one complaint in common about Fulton Elections – that their concerns, comments, and especially suggestions seem to fall on deaf ears most of the time. In fact, that complaint can be echoed in these public comments that some of us make every chance we get – our comments are almost never addressed during the BRE meeting, and there is never any acknowledgement that our voices are being heard afterwards.

This must change. I urge you to quickly set up a serious undertaking to gather feedback from poll managers, poll workers, and poll watchers after EVERY election. Now is the time to set up a task force made up of election officers, poll workers, and poll watchers, to help improve the processes and procedures in Fulton County. Thank you.”

**Maggie Goldman** implored **BRE** to continue to make voting in the Fulton County easier not difficult. Ms. Goldman suggested due to the overwhelming response to become poll workers, the county should consider shifts instead of the long hours current poll workers have to endure.

**Mary Baron** commended the **BRE** for the improvements that have occurred in the county. **Ms. Baron** referenced some of the mechanism available for various voters to cast a ballot such as State Farm Arena and Absentee Ballot using drop boxes instead of the unreliable USPS. **Ms. Baron** implored the **BRE** to maintain the same level of voting in the future.

**Rhonda Martin** submitted:

“My name is Rhonda Martin. I am a Fulton County Voter and a board member of the Coalition for Good Governance.

I've offered comments to you on a number of occasions over the past year or so. Sometimes, I presented observations, sometimes recommendations, sometimes requests. Now that the most recent election cycle is just about finished, I'd like to suggest that you take advantage of this “downtime” to take stock of where you are. Revisit comments and recommendations that may have just been noise during the intense moments of the recent past. Examine your procedures. Implement changes and make sure all staff are well trained. Specific areas I would suggest for examination are:

Absentee ballot drop boxes - please fight any efforts to reduce the number of drop boxes. Also, work to put procedures in place to accept absentee ballots at polling places.

Seriously examine the issue of providing ballot secrecy to voters and implement changes in polling place layouts to ensure this right is protected. Also examine the handling of absentee ballots to ensure procedures are in place and being followed that prevent election workers from seeing a voter's name and vote simultaneously!

Determine optimal scanner settings that will reliably count every vote that a human would count. Use those settings going forward.

Improve poll manager/poll worker training - specifically in the area of reconciling the number of voters to the number of ballots.

Put procedures in place so that during adjudication, Vote Review Panels are encouraged to consult the original paper ballots whenever ballot images seem unusual.

When ballots are being hand-duplicated, make sure procedures are in place that follow the election laws and rules of Georgia. Duplicate ballots must be marked as such and labelled so that the originals can be referenced when conducting audits.

Finally, ensure that meaningful public access is provided as allowed by law throughout the entire voting process including Logic and Accuracy Testing, polling place set up, in person voting, tabulation, Absentee Ballot Application processing, Absentee Ballot processing, audits, and recounts.

I am happy to answer any questions or provide additional information at your convenience. Thank you!”

## OLD BUSINESS

## #3- APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **Special Meeting- December 1, 2020**
- **Special Meeting- December 4, 2020**
- **Regular Meeting- December 11, 2020**
- **Special Meeting- December 22, 2020**
- **Executive Session Meeting- December 22, 2020**

**Mr. Wingate** announced that he will provide written documentation on some items read in the minutes in the coming days.

**Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Regular, Special and Executive Session Meetings on December 1, 4, 11, and 22, 2020. The motion was made by Mr. Wingate, seconded by Mr. Johnson and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.**

## **#4- CERTIFICATION OF ELECTION RESULTS: STATE AND FEDERAL RUNOFF JANUARY 5, 2021**

- **US Senate (PERDUE)**
- **US Senate (LOEFFLER)**
- **Public Service Commission, D4 (PSC)**

Registered Voters: 488,843 of 818,555 (59.72%)  
Ballots Cast: **488,843**

**Chairperson Cooney** asked **Mr. Barron** was it his certification and testimony that the election results presented are a true and accurate count of all the votes cast in the Runoff Election held on January 5, 2021.

**Mr. Barron** answered yes

**Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to certify the election results. The motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Vice Chair Nuriddin and carried by a vote of 5-0.**

## **#5– MONTHLY OPERATIONS REPORT FOR DECEMBER 2020:**

- December General Runoff Election December 1<sup>st</sup>
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional and 39<sup>th</sup> Senate: Special Runoff Election
  - 146 Participating Polling locations
    - Voters that live in both Districts SD39 and CD5:
    - Required to check-in twice
    - Cast a ballot on two separate sets of voting machines
    - 44 Polling locations are affected by overlapping
  - Mobile units deployed on Election Day:
    - 2 polling places tested positive for Legionnaire's disease
- Preparation for January 5<sup>th</sup>, Federal/ State Runoff Election
- Early Voting (EV) began December 14<sup>th</sup> – December 30<sup>th</sup>
  - 30 Permanent EV locations**
    - 2 Mobile Voting RVs
    - 2 Outreach locations
- A legal hold remains on the **DRE** voting units from the April 18, 2017 and June 20, 2017 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional Special Election and Runoff Special Election (**Relocated to offsite facility**)
- D.R.E.A.M. located an Auxiliary Warehouse in Hapeville
- Developing an Inventory Tracking System
- Wi-Fi System installed on Mobile Voting RVs during the **EV** in December
- Total voter registration applications received in 2020: **322,685**
- **26,889** voter registration applications received in December
- As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, **859,338** (821,320 active and 38,018 inactive) registered voters reside in Fulton County

- Total New Applications: **124,654**
- Felon Hearings: **0**
- Felon Letters Mailed-**746**
- List Maintenance guide
- Supplemental staff last day January 19<sup>th</sup>
- Administration maintaining expenditures from Grant Funds and County Budgets
  - Processing Invoices
  - Grant Funds were a huge success
- Campaign Contributions and several Campaign Termination Reports were filed
- Personnel Vacancy- Pending

**Dr. Ruth** thanked **DRE** for providing the list maintenance procedures for voter registration. **Dr. Ruth** inquired about the databases that voter registrations are matched against

**Mr. Barron** explained:

- An application is processed
- The application is placed in pending status in ElectioNet (ENet) database
- SOS runs through various databases overnight
- **Databases:** Social Security and Department of Drivers Services (**DDS**)

**Mr. Barron** asked **Mr. Jones** did he want to add anything

**Mr. Jones** listed additional databases for list maintenance of the voter registration system through Vital Records and the Department of Corrections

**Dr. Ruth** asked when is a voter flagged or removed or does that occur at the State level

**Mr. Jones** explained that when a voter is flagged they are notified by letter and if the **VRD** does not receive a response from the voter within 30 days, the voter is removed by staff. Additionally, **Mr. Jones** mentioned a voter's record being a "Tight Match" meaning name, DOB, and SSN matches the Secretary of State (**SOS**) will remove that voter for the counties where they exists.

**Vice Chair Nuriddin** asked **Mr. Jones** about the vital records matches that are removed by **SOS**. How are the **DRE** informed and then how is this Board informed?

**Mr. Jones** explained a list maintenance report is run from ENet that indicates all voters and the reason for removal; this information can be found in the Monthly Operations Report (page 5)

**Vice Chair Nuriddin** asked **Mr. Barron** to discuss why he returned Grant funds to Southern Poverty Law Center (**SPLC**)

**Mr. Barron** mentioned the county had invested in procuring additional drop boxes prior to receiving the grant funds. However, the **DRE** was able to add a few additional and assist one of the municipalities with purchasing their drop box and Surveillance system as well. There are no additional locations to add drop boxes throughout the county. If the Legislature would change the Election Code to allow quasi-government the county could have used a variety of other facility, such as Marta

**Vice Chair Nuriddin** inquired about the amount of fulltime permanent employee

**Mr. Barron** answered 38 total personnel once all vacancies are filled

**Vice Chair Nuriddin** mentioned the staff size appear to be the same as before in 2019 when the **BRE** requested additional personnel and the **BOC** approved the request

**Mr. Barron** responded that in 2019 the **DRE** total personnel was 21 fulltime employee and it has been gradually increasing since that time

**Mr. Wingate** referenced personnel numbers from the Monthly Operations Report

**Mr. Barron** explained that number is for personnel in the Voter Registration Division

**Mr. Wingate** asked **Mr. Barron** of the **322,685** voter applications received in 2020, how many are new applications

**Mr. Barron** replied **124,654** new voter registration applications in 2020.

**Mr. Johnson** asked **Mr. Barron** did have any more information regarding the chatter about the Public Service Commission (**PSC**) race being omitted on the ballot

**Mr. Barron** mentioned that all ballots are proofed by precincts and the only reason that race would not be on their ballot is if they are a **UOCAVA** voter, which means you are only allowed to vote for Federal Races

**Mr. Johnson** asked did the **DRE** receive any other complaints regarding the concerns mentioned

**Mr. Barron** replied no, only this one and **Mr. Jones** wanted to follow-up with the voter

## NEW BUSINESS

### #6- REVIEW OF BRE BYLAWS

**Chairperson Cooney** announced the Bylaws are rules for ourselves and how we conduct our meetings. **Chairperson Cooney** suggested the Board take time at the next meeting to discuss, review, and or change the Bylaws

### #7- ISSUES OFFERED BY REPUBLICAN BRE MEMBERS FOR DISCUSSION

**Dr. Ruth** announced:

"I think we all can agree that this election cycle has been unprecedented, the Department has been so resilient during this very challenging times and we appreciate all that they have done to make our elections run smoothly. But there are some improvements that need to be made, there were improvements in Fulton since June and the work doesn't stop. So we now need to examine the gaps that still remain, in order to ensure security and integrity of the election process, as well as making the election process more transparent and rebuilding voter confidence.

#### **Self-Muted**

Mark and I put together this list based on feedback we received voters, poll workers, observers and based on knowledge as Board Members. These are not Partisan issues there are Nonpartisan they are not ideological." **Continued**

"Thank you **Ms. Nakamura** for your comments earlier, I think that you will see as we walk through these points that our hope is that these improvements will not go on death ears and that we will put these into action"

## Elections on November 3, 2020 and January 5, 2021 Issues offered by the Republican members of the Board

1. Build a logistical team to ensure more effective delivery of poll location equipment and materials including emergency/provisional ballot quantities.

[Dr. Ruth expressed concerns with delivery of equipment and supplies; suggested a build out to improve the process](#)

2. Examine wait times throughout Fulton County polling locations, build in efficiencies to reduce wait times and offer similar “super voting” (e.g., State Farm and Mercedes-Benz) opportunities throughout the county.

[Dr. Ruth mentioned the improvements with the App development and providing same voting option throughout the county](#)

3. Establish, document, communicate, and train on chain of custody procedures - including ballot storage, bi-partisan representation on pick-up and delivery point.

[Dr. Ruth suggested bi-partisan representation](#)

4. Perform data maintenance on current Registered Voter List. Written procedures of how this file is updated and schedule of updating.

[Dr. Ruth suggested modernizing and providing procedures](#)

5. Review the signature verification process by using the 2020 Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency risk assessment for ABM to identify gaps in processes and identify better strategies to accurately manage ABM ballots.

[Dr. Ruth suggested using this mechanism](#)

6. Review and uplift the absentee ballots delivery and reporting processing to ensure proper delivery and processing of absentee ballots.

[Dr. Ruth mentioned continuing to make improvements](#)

7. Explore ways to de-escalate partisan poll observation to ensure standardization across all polling locations.

[Dr. Ruth mentioned the complaints and provide training on de-escalation would be helpful](#)

8. Explore ways to be more responsive to requests for information and specific action requests from elected and Republican Party officials.

[Dr. Ruth suggested being more responsive to the Republican Commissioners and GOP Leaders.](#)

9. Distribute the newly acquired mobile voting units throughout all parts of the county.

[Dr. Ruth suggested fairness of allocation](#)

10. Conduct a technical performance assessment of the electronic voting platform to determine any bugs. Review technical performance related complaints throughout the county.

[Dr. Ruth suggested being responsive to complaints and taking action](#)

**Mr. Wingate** explained that this was not to take on a Partisan view in this matter. **Mr. Wingate** explained that Republicans understand that some of these matters can only be resolved by the Legislature. We clearly did a tremendous uplift in the job from the June Primary Election.

Areas of Procedures:

- Definition of process
- Documentation of process
- Delivery of process
- Periodic audits and review of process

**Mr. Wingate** stated I don't believe it is a massive amount of fraud but there is fraud in an election. **Mr. Wingate**

suggested a debriefing with Poll Managers to discuss and review feedback.

**Vice Chair Nuriddin** mentioned that the Election was a tremendous success with very little wait time. **Vice Chair** stated “Sometimes the good news doesn’t make the news”. **Madam Vice Chair** expressed that the Election Day was success and thanked the staff for their work. **Vice Chair Nuriddin** mentioned an incident with a poll manager at a poll that was reported to her as closed. **Vice Chair** noted the response of the manager regarding her poll being closed was to laissez faire and the **Vice Chair** encouraged staff to have a sense of responsibility to resolve any possible concerns by voters or constituents. “Great Job on Election Day”

**Mr. Johnson** thanked his counterparts (**Dr. Ruth & Mr. Wingate**) for providing for the list. **Mr. Johnson** mentioned his preparedness to discuss the items on the initial list because it appeared less nonpartisan than previously stated. **Mr. Johnson** expressed full agreeance with some of the items and non-agreement on others. **Mr. Johnson** echoed Vice Chair Nuriddin comments and commended the Department.

**Mr. Johnson’s** commented:

“I think the thing that is getting lost, is the hard work that the election staff put in and the things the election staff had to deal with during this election. There were a lot of accusation and innuendos even before the elections started so people emotions were already heighten and super sensitive”

**Mr. Johnson** provided an example of heightened emotions

“I think if you look from June to January where Fulton County was as it related to the elections no one cannot say that we did not drastically improve in EVERY manner of the Election. I think there are some things that we have to be very careful about when we used the word FRAUD when we can use the term FLAWED. I say that because when you say FRAUD, it stirs up different emotions in people; as we saw last week the DISGUSTING display that we saw in Washington D.C. There were a bunch of people that believed our Elections were FRAUD, when in actuality there are certain aspects that were FLAWED.”

**Mr. Johnson** reference item #8 from Listing of Issues. **Mr. Johnson** noted that most of the correspondence was addressed to us and should be responded to by the Board collectively or individually.

**Mr. Johnson** stated:

As we drill down into these each and every one of these items, I think we can talk about ways to make things better but at the same time not lose the fact that this department has come a very long way and it’s not even the fault of the Department. Who knew when Rick was planning the 2020 Election that we were going to have COVID-19, no one knew that. What I do know in 2019, the voters that came to the Podium for Public Comment on numerous occasion said that this was not the best voting system (Mr. Johnson noted “Not my opinion”).

**Mr. Johnson** concluded with looking forward to working with his colleagues to make improvements and hopeful all parties come with a bi-partisan spirit.

**Chairperson Cooney** announced the intention of the **Board** at the next Regular meeting:

- Review Bylaws
- Draft Response from the Listing of Issues by Republican Members
- Provide Responses to Public Comments

**Chairperson Cooney** directed **DRE** personnel to contact attendees who asked questions during public comment for responses and noted that in accordance with the Bylaws questions will not be responded to during the meeting

**Vice Chair Nuriddin** interjected:

For the record: "I don't agree that the attendees questions should not be address, we have the Director and all the Deputy Chiefs and if they (attendees) post questions at 10:01am we should at least have some responses type out by 11:15am. I don't think that's unreasonable, I just want to say you speak for yourself when you say that you don't think those question should not be addressed; that is not the voice of at least me. I believe that our staff are more than capable and have proven there capability of responding in the past.

**Chairperson Cooney** referred **Vice Chair Nuriddin** to the Bylaws that removed responding during the meeting. **Madam Chair** explained to **Madam Vice Chair** that component can be discussed during the next meeting.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to close the regular session and convene into executive session to discuss personnel matters. The motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Vice Chair Nuriddin and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.**

After executive session, **Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to resume into regular session. The motion was made by Mr. Wingate, seconded by Vice Chair Nuriddin and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

With no other items requiring the Board's action, **Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to adjourn. Mr. Wingate moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion.** Collectively, the Board agreed to adjourn at 12:12 p.m.  
The meeting adjourned.

Prepared by,

Mariska Bodison, Board Secretary