

HART COUNTY BOARD OF REGISTRARS

DATE: Tuesday, August 21, 2012
LOCATION: Office of the Hart County Board of Registrars
ATTENDEES: Elizabeth G. Forbes, Chief Registrar
Hilda B. Mauldin, Board Member
Ronald J. Walker, Board Member
Mary S. Stephens, Deputy Registrar/Clerk

This meeting was called to order at 5:20 P.M. by Elizabeth Forbes, Chief Registrar. Today is the Republican Primary Runoff Election. All Board Members are required to staff the Board of Registrars office today to answer registration questions from the polling sites and close out the Absentee Poll at 7:00 P.M. All results are collected by the Office of the Superintendent of Elections at that time for processing and counting. The Chief felt it in the best interest of the operation to hold this required Board Meeting during a quiet portion of this Election Day.

1. Reviewed reports for Month end July, 2012. The reports reflect that voter information processing volume was very light due to the moratorium on changes required during the normal election cycle. Work will resume in full after the Runoff is certified. Processing will then resume at an accelerated pace to insure all additions and changes are in place prior to the General Election processing cutoff date on Monday, October 8th at 5:00 P.M. The Chief and the Clerk will share the heavy work load.
2. Current election turnout numbers for Advanced and Absentee voting were reviewed with the Board Members. Advanced Voter “in person” head count reached 136 for this Republican Runoff. Mail out Absentee ballots reached a total of 82 ballots mailed with 52 ballots returned. The Registrars will now start an advertising push to notify Hart County voters of our Advanced voting and Absentee voting options with additional signage, postings around town and use of the media. Every effort will be made to use the lowest cost and no cost options available to make the public more aware of the voting dates and locations.
3. A discussion was held regarding several of the new ideas implemented in test phase during the General Primary and Runoff Elections. The designated “Absentee Ballot” processing station worked very well and helped to avoid back and forth traffic to reach files, the copy machine, supplies etc. Board Member Ron Walker graciously gave up his desk area for this test phase. Additional thought needs to go into the control of traffic flow in the main hallway of the building. Large crowds during the application completion phase clogged traffic flow and caused visitors and building employees to travel directly through the registrars office to reach the Probate Office and the building’s only rest rooms. This must change for the General Election!

4. Chief Forbes discussed her presentation to the Grand Jury on Monday, August 20th. She informed them of the many areas that need improvement in the Registrar's Office to better serve the needs of the voters of Hart County as follows:
 - a. There is a desperate need for more space. We are in violation of current space requirements to insure voter privacy during the Advanced voting period or allow space for additional Poll Workers to assist during heavy voting periods (a minimum of 3 are required by law). This can result in hefty fines for the County by the Georgia Secretary of State. Due to the tight budget, and lack of space, our workers staff the Poll for the required 9 hour days without meal breaks. Meals are consumed whenever and wherever possible on site.
 - b. Compensation for the Registrar position needs to be increased to attract capable people with good people and technical computer skills. In the past, Registrars' were only required to attend a monthly Board Meeting and work each election. Now they are required to perform data entry and computer searches, make voter ID's using electronic equipment and many other technical functions involving the registration and voting process.
 - c. The Clerk's hours should be increased to a 24 hour work week (from the current 21.5 hours) to insure office coverage for our customers. The current schedule results in the office being closed Wednesday afternoons from 1:30 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. This does not result in positive comments from our Hart County customers. They expect a government office to be open during normal business hours.
 - d. Extremely tight budget restrictions stop us from utilizing updated systems to aid in streamlining and accelerating the voting process. Our used computer equipment was allocated to our office from another department after they received a new updated system. Our office furniture is mismatched and was donated from other departments as well. The purchase of updated voter registration hardware and software has been denied.

e. The law states that Registrar's must attend 12 hours of training sponsored by the office of the Georgia Secretary of State each year. This training is accomplished by attending a 3 day conference each summer. Current budget restriction allow for only 2 to attend training each year. It is imperative that the Chief and the Clerk attend training each year due to the changes in law and law election process. By the Registrar's having to "take turns" this results in the Chief and the Clerk missing training every other year.

f. Most of all, what Hart County needs most is to combine the Superintendent of Elections office with the Board of Registrar's to create a Board of Elections. This combination of personnel, equipment and functional responsibilities will avoid duplications in processes and maximize use of individual abilities and talents.

Chief Forbes thanked all for their dedication and hard work during this Election period. Preparations need to continue for our goal of a successful and trouble free General Election cycle.

With no further discussion this meeting was adjourned at 5:50 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary S. Stephens

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Deputy Registrar/Clerk