



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

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COMMISSIONERS

Ethridge A. King, Jr.
Larry W. Ward
Charles J. Marquardt
Victoria A. Harris

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Tanya L. Ford-Crump

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Lesley Waxman

BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Minutes of May 1st, 2024

Commission Chair Ethridge King called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm on May 1, 2024 via Zoom.

Roll Call:

Commissioner King	Present
Commissioner Marquardt	Present
Commissioner Ward	Absent
Commissioner Harris	Present

Also present were Executive Director Tanya Ford and Assistant Director Lesley Waxman.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Motion: To close public comment
Moved: Commissioner King
Seconded: Commissioner Marquardt

Roll Call:

Commissioner King	Yes
Commissioner Marquardt	Yes
Commissioner Ward	Absent
Commissioner Harris	Yes

Passed: 3-0, with 1 member absent

II. MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes of April 17th, 2024 with corrections

Moved: Commissioner King
Seconded: Commissioner Marquardt

Roll Call:

Commissioner King	Yes
Commissioner Marquardt	Yes
Commissioner Ward	Absent
Commissioner Harris	Yes

Passed: 3-0, with 1 member absent

III. REPORTS

1. Assistant Director's Report

Ms. Waxman included in the agenda packet the text of MGL Chapter 54 Section 33I regarding the use of poll books, which was part of the Votes Act. She emailed the Secretary of State's office to see if they have promulgated regulations. The Secretary of State's office replied that they are in the process of developing state-wide certification standards.

Commissioner Larry Ward joined the meeting at 5:39 pm.

Discussion followed regarding the approval process, which includes obtaining approval from the City Council. Ms. Waxman stated that approval to use poll books needs to be obtained 60 days before the first election for which the poll books will be used. This means that if poll books are to be used for the state primary on September 3, then their use would need to be approved by the City Council by July 5. Since the Council does not meet in July this would require approval at the last Council meeting scheduled for June.

For the November 5 general election, approval would need to be obtained by September 6. Since September 6 is the first Friday after Labor Day, the Council would need to approve the use of poll books during their summer meeting.

2. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Marquardt stated that Commissioner King had an announcement regarding Cambridge Rindge and Latin School as a polling location for the September 3rd primary. Commissioner King stated that Commissioner Ward had reached out to Damon Smith, the principal at the High School, and Mr. Smith had approved the addition of Ward 7 Precinct 3 as a polling location within the school. Commissioner King will send an email regarding the arrangement to Commission and Cambridge Public School personnel, and upon the recommendation of Ms. Ford, will include Vedad [Konjic] (Director of Facilities for the Cambridge Public School District). Commissioner King will also include the Chief Operating Officer of the School District [David Murphy] on the email.

Commissioner Harris reviewed her announcement made earlier in the week to the City Manager, the commissioners and the Commission's executive director that she would be resigning her position as of May 24, 2024. She will be working with all present to wrap up her work and effect a smooth transition to help prepare the next commissioner. Commissioners thanked her for her work during her tenure on the Commission. Commissioner Harris stated that she appreciated the opportunity to serve as a commissioner and of working with many good people during elections and at the polls during the past six years.

Commissioner Harris also informed the Commission that Mamie Harris-Scruggs, an inspector at Ward 10 Precinct 3 at Cadbury Commons, had passed away the previous week. Ms. Harris-Scruggs had worked at the polls for at least eight years, and was a lovely and warm person. Commissioner Harris has information on visitation hours and funeral if anyone is interested.

III. ACTION AGENDA

Old Business

- Presidential Primary, March 5, 2024 - Election Debrief

Commissioner Harris stated that she had sent a document to all present outlining the issues discussed previously with regard to the March 2024 presidential primary. This is a working document, and is intended to provide guidance regarding best practices with respect to future elections.

- State Primary, September 3, 2024

- Early Voting Schedule

A schedule and list of early voting sites for both the September state primary and November general election were included in the meeting packet. The commissioners were asked to review the locations, days, and times, and were told that the locations and schedule had not changed from what was established for the presidential primary in March. It was noted that while Ms. Ford had received approval from the Water Department to hold early voting at that location, the Commission was still waiting to get approval from Cambridge Public Library staff regarding the use of the Main Library and the Valente Library as early voting sites. Any vote this evening to approve the schedule and location, therefore, would have to be done on a provisional basis.

Commissioner Marquardt commented that while the number of people voting in-person early had dropped in the past few years, it was best to keep the schedule as is for now, and to evaluate activity afterward to consider allocation of resources in the future. Commissioners agreed that it was best to maintain continuity in locations and schedules for voters.

Motion: To accept the early voting schedule and sites for early voting for the state primary and presidential elections, provisionally

Moved: Commissioner King

Seconded: Commissioner Ward

Roll Call:

Commissioner King Yes

Commissioner Marquardt Yes

Commissioner Ward Yes

Commissioner Harris Yes

Passed: 4-0

- Request for Police Coverage

Commissioner King brought forward the recommendation for police coverage at polling locations for all elections in 2024 as outlined in the document included in the meeting packet. Commissioner King asked Ms. Ford whether this document was included as information or whether it would require action. Ms. Ford responded that it is a recommendation from the Commission to the City Manager, and while it does not require a vote it might be best to conduct one. She also noted that on the memo provided Owen O’Riordan’s name would need to be changed to Yi-An Huang.

Commissioner Marquardt asked if the police staffing request presumes two officers will be at all school locations. Ms. Ford confirmed that this was the case.

Motion: To refer the recommendation to assign police officers for all elections in 2024 to the City Council

Moved: Commissioner King
Seconded: Commissioner Ward

Roll Call:

Commissioner King	Yes
Commissioner Marquardt	Yes
Commissioner Ward	Yes
Commissioner Harris	Yes

Passed: 4-0

Before moving to the poll worker training agenda item, Commissioner King raised the topic of the process and deadline for submitting poll worker lists, and what would be the optimal timeline. Commissioner Harris asked whether she should initiate the process or whether the person who would succeed her in the position should do so. The commissioners recommended that Commissioner Harris initiate the process with her workers, and Commissioner Harris will provide a spreadsheet outlining responses to the commissioners and office staff.

The date of June 12 was identified as a possible deadline for responses given that it is on a Wednesday, which is the day the Commission usually meets. The new commissioner may be appointed by that date as well.

Commissioner King also inquired about the process of appointing a new commissioner through the Cambridge Democratic City Committee (CDCC). Commissioner Harris responded that she had notified the Chair of the CDCC, George Varghese, on the process and suggested a timeline that could place a commissioner in the position by mid-June.

- Poll Worker Trainings

Ms. Ford stated that if commissioners are considering holding in-person training then she will need to contact the Senior Center to schedule meeting space. Usually, training sessions are held on a weekday and on a Saturday. The Commission proposed the following dates as options for training: Saturday, August 10; Tuesday, August 13; Wednesday, August 14; and Saturday, August 17.

New Business

Ms. Ford announced that the budget hearing for FY 25 will begin next Tuesday, May 4 at 9 am. The Election Commission is third on the list of departments that may be considered that day, and she is not sure if the Commission will be pulled or not for discussion.

Ms. Ford then raised the issue of the drop box schedules for the upcoming elections. She asked whether the boxes will be available on a 24-hour basis, or whether the commissioners would like to set a schedule for opening and closing each day.

The initial response from commissioners was that they thought the 24-hour availability worked well. Ms. Ford commented that with the presidential election in November there may need to be additional collections given the potential volume of ballots. She also stated that the drop box schedule will need to be formalized as to what day they will be open and which day they will close. Ms. Ford also asked whether the five satellite drop boxes will close the day before an election, as they have done in the past.

Commissioner King asked when ballots will be delivered to the office. Ms. Ford and Ms. Waxman responded that they did not know. Commissioner Marquardt suggested that he could review previous schedules for opening and closing the drop boxes and then develop a draft schedule for the upcoming elections for the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Harris stated that she will need to transfer the election worker application process to another commissioner. Ms. Waxman asked whether new applications should continue to be sent to Commissioner Harris, and it was agreed to do so for the time being. Commissioner King as chair and Commissioner Harris will discuss the transfer process and provide an update at the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Marquardt asked Ms. Ford if she will need a commissioner at the budget hearing process if the Commission is called to present. Ms. Ford responded that she is not sure if it is necessary to be at City Hall or if it is possible to attend remotely, but she will confirm.

The Commission then set the dates for the next meetings for Wednesday, May 15 via Zoom and May 29 via Zoom.

Ms. Waxman stated that she will not be available to meet on May 29 but can arrange to have the meeting conducted by someone else in attendance. Ms. Ford and Ms. Waxman also commented that they may not be available to meet on June 12, which had been discussed previously as a tentative meeting date.

With no further business the Chair proposed closing the meeting.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:13 pm

Moved: Commissioner King

Seconded: Commissioner Ward

Roll Call:

Commissioner King	Yes
Commissioner Marquardt	Yes
Commissioner Ward	Yes
Commissioner Harris	Yes

Passed: 4-0

A True Record

Attested by: _____
Victoria Harris, Secretary