

Takoma Park's board of elections met on 12/11/2017 at the Takoma Park Community Center/Sam Abbott Citizens' Center in Takoma Park, Maryland. Present: Brian Ernst (board chair); Arthur David Olson (board vice chair); Greg Lebel (board member); Curtis Antonucci (board member); Jennifer Domagal-Goldman (board member); Jessie Carpenter (city clerk); Irma Nalvarte (deputy city clerk). Regrets: Lori Grazio (board member).

Brian called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m.

We approved the minutes of our 10/16/2017 meeting; we improved and approved the minutes of our 11/8/2017 meeting. We officially welcomed our new members, Curtis Antonucci and Jennifer Domagal-Goldman.

We appreciated the Board of Elections service of the late Beatriz York, and extend our condolences to Beatriz' family and friends. With Beatriz' death, there is a vacancy on the Board of Elections and there is currently no one on the board from Ward 5. Jessie undertook to remind Ward 5 Councilmember Smith of the vacancy. Jessie reported interest of one person in serving on the board.

We planned to meet on second Mondays during 2018, except for October and November when we planned to meet on third Mondays; we agreed to forego meeting in January.

We heard a report that documentation for a provisional ballot was found after our 11/8/2017 meeting and before the 11/9/2017 certification report to the council; the city clerk included this ballot in the certification report. We heard that after our 11/8/2017 meeting and before the certification report a ballot counted as a write-in for a candidate was determined by the deputy city clerk and city clerk to be a vote for an on-ballot candidate; the certification report reflected a vote for the on-ballot candidate.

Jessie reported that a non-profit group and a candidate were interested in reviewing Ward 2 ballots to see how many voters used second and third choices. Jessie believes the non-profit group's request can be filled with help from the board. We agreed to have Jessie proceed.

Irma reported that election expenses to date are about \$5,000 under the \$15,000 budgeted.

Brian presented a draft 2017 election report and solicited changes to be made for a final report. Brian noted that ward-level data is also tabulated and available.

We reviewed the 2017 election, planning to focus on changes for 2020 at our next meeting.

- Advertising. Jessie noted that several outreach efforts (including bus shelter ads and mailings) did not occur in 2017. Brian noted that we did not participate in the 2017 Independence Day parade and had fewer giveaway items than in 2015. Brian noted that in 2020 education will be more important than visibility; side-by-side elections will take care of visibility. Bookmarks were generally well accepted by merchants. We noted that we were able to recruit election workers at our festival presences; most visits at festivals were inquiries about registration status. Using neighborhood listservs to recruit election workers is a possibility.
- Training. Greg's sense was that the prepared material was great and that the time involved did not overwhelm participants. Brian sensed that more time spent on counting training would have helped on election night (perhaps two rounds of counting rather than one). We did not have poll books for training; the county did not provide us with separate training poll books this election, and did not provide election-day poll books in a timely manner. We heard the idea of having a notebook holding city-only registration forms to avoid the need to generate a (potentially out-of-date) list of city-only voters. We heard a suggestion to buy a poll book for training purposes; Jessie undertook to research the availability and cost of a poll book. Arthur David suggested developing an election worker training video; Jessie believes that Maryland county boards do not use training videos. We heard of situations where looking up voters in poll books failed after quick tries and voters were referred to the voter assistance room; more training on different ways of looking up voters would be useful; having folks work relatively low-key early days before election day would be useful.
- Ballots and ballot boxes. Jessie thinks the ballot boxes have worn out their welcome; smaller, more portable options are available. Getting ballots in to correct ballot boxes generally worked well; having color on the backs of ballots might have helped in the process. We reviewed the use of a window on ballot boxes. Another jurisdiction uses completely transparent ballot boxes. We heard of an Americans With Disabilities Act consideration of having ballot boxes into which all people can deposit ballots without assistance. "Future voter" stickers were well received; Jessie noted that the county may not be able to independently adopt them since the state controls county elections. We heard a suggestion for reviewing the number of ranked choices permitted, and specifying them by number rather than by checking different columns; Jessie noted that some such changes would require charter review.
- Election day. Traffic control was a challenge given multiple ways of entering and exiting the building. Setup went well. Voter assistance in the Rose Room was sometimes overcrowded; the auditorium might have been used for voter assistance. The voter assistance room got really busy at times; three or four people could have been used. Some same-day registrants had difficulty providing identification and proof of address; more publicizing of the need for these would be useful. Public processing of absentee ballots was good for transparency. In voting rooms, there were times when a rush of voters meant focusing on handing out ballots and deferring storing voter authorization cards; someone to focus on the cards would have helped. There was more staff than needed for slow times; more staff could have been used at hectic times; letting folks know during training there would be idle times could help. Jessie reported that some voters were mildly upset by reporters recording in the polling place; one reporter took longer than expected in doing so; we might want to limit reporting time; having our media specialist consider how to meet media needs might be helpful. At one point we ran out of ballots for one ward and had around seven people waiting on them to vote. We lacked accessible voting. On

one early voting day, we had a couple of dozen foreign-language speakers simultaneously requiring assistance; things were hectic; voters left in the face of long lines. Splitting voter assistance forms into voter assister and voter assistee forms might help; providing forms in advance might help; early voting at more sites (including those with many voters requiring assistance) might help; a separate voter assistance room on early voting days might help; translations of voter assistance forms and voter instructions in to foreign languages might help; advance preparation of voter assistance forms for voters might help. Arthur David suggested the need to track same-day registrants on election day to allow multiple vote attempts to be caught before (rather than after) voting.

- Counting. Quick counting led to small errors in counting; training can focus on getting it right over getting it fast. One counter was concerned about counting their own ward; a bit of time was needed to swap counters. Ensuring no counter counted their own ward could be cumbersome. Jessie noted the desirability of keeping piled ballots continuously visible. Having more room between the audience and the counters would have been helpful. There were stylistic differences among tables in the percentage of ballots set aside for review; this was in part a result of different levels of experience of counting teams. Having separate mayor and council ballots was useful.

Jessie noted that voting history data is available to show whether 16- and 17-year-old voters continue to vote in Takoma Park; mobility of folks of this age complicates generating accurate reports; any report based only on Takoma Park data would necessarily be incomplete. We heard of national efforts to generate statistics about college-age voters. Jessie shared that few people who registered as 16- and 17-year-olds are requesting absentee ballots. Data about Maryland voting could be purchased.

We adjourned at about 10:00 pm

Brian Ernst, presiding

Arthur David Olson, recording