

**Montgomery County Board of Elections**  
**Staff Recommendations for Implementation of Vote by Mail**

*Pursuant to the Proclamation of Governor Larry Hogan and the  
Comprehensive Plan of the Maryland State Board of Elections*

**I. Vote by Mail (Outgoing)**

- a. Ballot printing and mailing.** Ballots are being printed and mailed statewide by a vendor, SeaChange, under contract with the State Board of Elections. Ballots will be mailed on or around May 1, 2020. Unless federal funds are used to offset the cost, it will be split 50/50 between the state and the county.
- b. Ballot inserts.** Insert materials have been designed by the State Board of Elections and are provided as an attachment to this report.
- c. Voter registration.** The deadline to register to vote and change party affiliation has been postponed to Wednesday, May 27, 2020. Voters who are mailed a ballot and then make a change to their voter registration will be issued a new ballot and the previous ballot will be invalidated.
- d. Absentee voters.** Voters who previously requested an absentee ballot—including nursing home residents and military and overseas voters sent a ballot—will vote the same ballot as those who did not request a ballot. There is no difference between the ballots, and they will be tabulated using the same database and software.
- e. Last-minute requests.** The state vendor will no longer mail ballots after Memorial Day (Monday, May 25). Montgomery County staff has received updated inserts to fulfill requests that week as needed and will work with the county mail room to ensure daily outgoing mail. Voters may also request a

web delivery ballot until Friday, May 29.

- f. Web delivery ballots.** The deadline to request a web delivery ballot is Friday, May 29. Fulfillment is not immediate. Incoming requests are batched by the SBE for LBE staff to review in the statewide voter registration system. Upon completion of data entry by the LBE, SBE then sends the ballot to the voter.
- g. Staffing.** Staff are working both in person with appropriate social distancing and on a telework basis to process voter registration changes and ballot requests. Additional laptops have been requested from Montgomery County to support expanded telework.

## II. Vote by Mail (incoming)

- a. Prepaid postage.** Prepaid postage is available only if the voter receives their ballot by mail.
  - i. If mailed to the voter.** Voters receiving a ballot by mail will receive a postage prepaid envelope.
  - ii. If requested web delivery.** Voters using web delivery will not receive a postage prepaid envelope.
  - iii. Cost.** Unless federal funds are used to offset the cost, costs will be split 50/50 between the state and the county. The cost will be paid by the county and applied as an offset to the state billing. Montgomery County staff have arranged for our return envelopes to be handled as Qualified Business Reply Mail (QBRM) which allows for automated handling and a lower cost than Business Reply Mail (BRM).
- b. Drop boxes.** Ballots can be returned at any USPS drop box or at a Board of Elections drop box location in Montgomery County. See the frequently asked questions on the website

and provided in the earlier attachment sent Saturday.

- c. Ballot tracking.** Voters will be able to track the status of their ballot using the state website at [elections.maryland.gov](https://elections.maryland.gov). Ballot tracking status is on the same voter lookup page used by the county's SMS texting tool (text CHECK to 77788). The direct link is <https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/VoterSearch>
- d. Mail pickup.** Mail will be picked up twice a day initially and more often as required.
- e. Intake in Training Room 1.** Mail intake will occur in Training Room 1 (TR-1).

  - i. Mail to rest or "cure".** Ballots will rest after intake for 24 hours prior to processing. Ballots will be segregated in TR-1 by date and time of delivery with a separate area for ballots received directly from Board of Elections drop boxes.
  - ii. Security.** TR-1 will be equipped with steel cages with padlocks and nightly lock-up procedures. Security seals will be used daily with a log sheet.
  - iii. Staff safety.** Gloves and masks are provided to staff handling the mail. Mail intake is designated by the department director as a front-line duty to be performed by staff eligible for premium hourly pay.
- f. Batching in Training Room 2.** Cured ballots will be transferred to Training Room 2 (TR) for batching and preliminary processing.

  - i. Staff safety.** Gloves and masks are provided to staff processing ballots. TR-2 will also be set up to ensure a ensure six-foot distance between each workstation.
  - ii. Pre-canvass processing.** Ballots will be sorted into batches of 100. Pre-canvass processing to occur in

Training Room 2 includes examining ballots for signature and postmarks and add timestamp.

- iii. **Imperfect ballots.** Ballots returned as undeliverable or with missing signatures or other defects will be detailed to the absentee section for further review.
- iv. **Security.** Nightly lock-up procedures will be followed for TR-2. Security seals will be used daily with a log sheet.

### III. Canvass Preparation

- a. **Entry of voter history in Absentee Warehouse.** Batches of 100 ballots will be scanned using bar codes as received.
  - i. **Ballot tracking.** Data from MDVOTERS is uploaded nightly to the online voter lookup tool at [elections.maryland.gov](http://elections.maryland.gov) so that voters can see the status of their ballot as received once this step is completed.
  - ii. **Batch header sheets.** Each batch will receive a header cover sheet with a batch number assigned via the MDVoters system. Batch sheets will include the voter identification number of each voter within the batch. This record is maintained for audit purposes and to allow staff to locate and remove a ballot from the batch when required.
  - iii. **Security.** Prepared batches will be placed in ballot cages for transfer to the canvassing area in the lower level warehouse. Batches will be sealed in early voting supply cages until canvass begins on Thursday, May 21, 2020.
- b. **Equipment preparation in Information Technology warehouse.** A combination of high-speed scanners and DS 200 units will be prepared to scan ballots.

- i. **Staff safety.** Temporary staff, as needed, are scheduled to return on April 20, 2020, with masks and gloves available to staff and social distancing measures in place.
- ii. **Logic and accuracy testing (L&A).** Additional test decks have been ordered to prepare and test the scanners. L&A is scheduled to begin no later than the second week of May 2020.
- iii. **Public test.** The public test of the voting equipment will occur on May 19, 2020 and will be live streamed. Staff will explain the L&A process and the documentation that is prepared. At least one Board member is requested to log in and observe the process.

#### IV. Canvass

##### a. Swearing in.

- i. **Board members.** Board members will need to be sworn in as the Board of Canvassers by Circuit Court Clerk Barbara Meiklejohn prior to the start of the canvass.
- ii. **Canvassers.** Staff and Election Judges assigned to work during the canvass will be sworn in during training prior to the start of the canvass.

**b. Board of Canvassers to meet by videoconference.** Board member participation will be by videoconference by direction of the State Board of Elections. Board members will be provided with iPads to communicate with staff and the Board Attorney and to review and vote on ballots referred to the Board.

**c. Public observation to be virtual only.** One close-up camera and one long shot camera will be set up for live

stream viewing by the public.

- d. Timing.** Public notice will be given that the canvass will commence beginning on May 21, 2020, and staff will begin to scan ballots and hold results on that date until the polls close on June 2, 2020.
- e. Physical layout.** The area where the 2018 recount was conducted (Information Technology warehouse, north side) will be set up with tables arranged to comply with social distancing guidelines and procedural requirements of the State Board of Elections.
- f. Conduct of the canvass.**

  - i. Batches distributed to canvassers.** Runners will bring one batch at a time to each canvasser. Bipartisan teams will not be used by direction of the State Board of Elections. Canvassers will be supervised at a distance and all documents will be retained for audit.
  - ii. Canvasser duties.** Each canvasser will:

    - 1. Remove ballots from envelopes.** Each canvasser will separate each ballot from the envelope, remove the assistance oath or other documentation contained in the envelope for examination, and reinsert documents other than ballots into the envelope.
    - 2. Duplicate ballots as needed.** Duplicated ballots will be reviewed by another individual. The original and duplicated ballots will be marked for identification purposes. When each pair in the batch is completed and verified the original, duplicated ballots will be separated by colored sheets underneath the ballots prepared for tabulation.

**3. Place ballots suitable for tabulation in a folder.** Each ballot folder with the accompanying header sheet will be picked up by a runner.

**4. Refer ballots to the Board.** Canvassers will flag Board referrals to a runner. Ballots and cover sheets will be compiled and considered by the Board when the Board attorney calls a teleconference for the purpose.

**5. Bundle envelopes.** Envelopes will be banded together with the batch sheet and placed in the designated cart.

**g. Canvasser safety.** The work area will be designed for social distancing and masks and gloves will be available for canvassers. Work areas will be wiped down during breaks between batches.

**V. Staging of envelopes for audit in Training Room 3.** Empty envelopes that have had the ballot removed will be staged in Training Room 3 for audit.

**VI. Tabulation.** Ballots will be tabulated according to the same procedures that have generally been used for the absentee ballot canvass in the past.

**i. Schedule.** Tabulation of ballots will occur for eight hours daily until completed.

**ii. Results.** Results for ballots canvassed to date will be posted at 8:00 p.m. on June 2, 2020. IT staff will then follow daily procedures for uploading results until the end of the canvass.

**iii. Monitoring and quality control.** Review of batch sheets, referrals and ballot scanner reports will be monitored by the IT Manager to ensure the accuracy of workflow and tabulation.

**VII. Post-election audit.** The post-election audit will be overseen by the Director and the Deputy Director.

**VIII. Judicial questions.** Judge Greenberg is the assigned Judge for the Board of Elections.

**IX. Media and outreach.**

**a. State contract with PR firm.** The State Board of Elections has contracted a Public Relations firm.

**i. Cost.** Costs will be shared 50/50 between the state and counties unless federal funds are used to offset the cost.

**ii. Direct mail.** The scope of the state contract includes direct mail. Local Boards of Elections were told to not plan to print or mail a separate Specimen Ballot.

**b. County-level messaging.** The Board's public information officer is working in partnership with county public information and technology staff to do the following:

**i. Conduct traditional media outreach and advertising.** The Board's paid advertising budget is being leveraged consistent with the original media plan. Both paid and earned media is arranged with mainstream and ethnic media outlets. Google and Twitter ads are to restart on Friday, May 1, 2020.

**ii. Conduct social media outreach.** The county's Public Information Office has created images for web and social media, including the pictograph currently on the Board's website and the graphics that have been shared on social media, at the direction of the Board's public information officer and outreach coordinator.

**1. Multilingual outreach.** Consistent with Voting Rights Act Section 203 requirements, all outreach is bilingual in English and Spanish. Several materials including



banner ads and pictographs are also translated into additional languages (Amharic, Chinese, Korean).

**iii. Messaging.** Emphasis of messaging is to urge voters to verify and update their address and party affiliation and to return their ballot by mail. Vote centers are only for voters unable to return their ballot by mail.

**1. Text messaging.** The county Department of Technology Services has established an SMS texting platform with the following highlighted options:

**a. Text CHECK to 77788** for the state voter lookup tool that allows a voter to verify their address and party affiliation and to track the status of their ballot.

**b. Text BOX to 77788** to find ballot drop-off box locations.

**2. Deadlines:**

**a. Ballot by mail request deadline** is Tuesday, May 26 (after the cutoff of state vendor mailing)

**b. Voter registration and party affiliation deadline** is Wednesday, May 27

**c. Ballot by web delivery request deadline** is Friday, May 29

## **X. Drop Boxes**

**a. State Contract.** Drop boxes are being installed by direction of the State Board of Elections under statewide contract.

- b. Purpose.** The purpose of the drop boxes is to provide voters with an option to return their ballot. Voters who wait until the deadline to return their ballot will be urged to use a drop box to eliminate the need for their ballot to be postmarked by the USPS and to avoid waiting in line at a vote center.
- c. Locations.** Drop boxes will be installed at the four vote centers. These are in addition to the drop boxes at the Board's office in Gaithersburg and at Rockville City Hall. Installation will be in consultation with each site to afford greatest security of the container and the security for voters.
- d. Pickup.** Ballots will be picked up as frequently as needed (currently planned for three times daily) beginning on May 21, 2020 when the installation is completed.
- e. Staffing.** On Election Day, drop boxes will have assigned staff during at least the last three hours of voting. Two individuals will lock the boxes promptly at 8:00 pm or when the last voter in line for the drop box drops the ballot into the box (pending clarification from SBE/AG).

## **XI. Vote Centers on Election Day**

- a. Sites.** The following sites will be used:
  - i.** Silver Spring Civic Building (Great Hall)
  - ii.** Praisner Community Recreation Center (Social Hall)
  - iii.** Germantown Community Recreation Center (Social Hall)
  - iv.** Activity Center at Bohrer Park (Gym)
- b. Layout.** Each site will have a limited capacity to serve voters. Every effort must be made to encourage voters to return their ballot by mail. The previous document provided to the Board at the April 8 meeting described the intent of layout planning. IT Staff will set up each voting center.
  - i. Barriers for worker safety.** Plexiglass barriers are being designed and constructed for the protection of

Election Judges. Considerations include public health, worker safety, facility requirements and prevention of damage to floors and furniture, portability, and cost and availability of items.

- ii. **Capacity.** The number of check-in stations, voting booths, and provisional tables that can be accommodated at each site is currently being determined based on public health and worker safety. Each facility will have at least 3 scanners.
- iii. **Line management.** Significant lines are expected at each site and line management is an emphasis of staff planning.

## **XII. Staffing.**

- a. **Board office closed on Election Day.** The drop box will be available at the Montgomery County Board of Elections, but the office will be closed to the public in accordance with requirements of the State Board of Elections.
- b. **Staff divided between vote centers and canvass.** Staff and Election Judges who work in front-facing roles at a vote center will not also be assigned to the canvass to avoid the operational risk to the canvass of exposure to COVID-19.
- c. **Telework.** Duties are being performed by telework to the extent feasible. The Board's office is currently open to the public and staffing will begin to ramp up as onsite preparations are required and as mail begins to return.
- d. **Safety supplies.** The following materials have been acquired or ordered:
  - i. Gloves – on site
  - ii. Anti-bacterial wipes – on site
  - iii. Sanitizer bottles – on site
  - iv. Sanitizer stations – three onsite, acquiring another
  - v. Cloth face masks for non-front-facing staff – on site (big shout out to Sara Harris who is making them)

- vi. Surgical masks – ordered
- vii. Face shields – 50 onsite, more ordered
- viii. Plexiglass – plans underway
- ix. Floor decals – ordered.
- x. Rope Stanchions – ordered
- xi. Sanitizing method for voting booths and equipment -- working with Emergency Management and Department of Health/Occupation Medicine

**e. Availability:**

**i. Permanent and temporary staff.** 122 total employees currently on payroll

- a. Authorized to conduct video-conference interviews for Voter Services Manager position despite hiring freeze
- b. Repurposing temporary staff (trainers and recruiters being assigned to IT and absentee)

**ii. Election Judges:**

- a. 2,549 Election Judges trained
- b. Includes 676 Chiefs and Early Voting Judges
- c. No further Election Judge training needed
  - a. Online videos as needed
  - b. Monday night meeting as planned

**iii. Stipends:**

- d. Staff recommends all Election Judges that serve receive a “hazard” payment of \$100 per position
- e. Staff recommends all who attended training receive training pay as promised
- f. Board Motion required to assign and pay Election Judges