

Montgomery County Board of Elections

Acting Election Director's Report – March 2022

Notice and Distribution of Materials

The agenda for the meeting was posted and provided to Board members, along with the budget spreadsheet, on March 18, 2022. Maps of staff-recommended precinct boundaries for Election Districts 9 through 13 were uploaded to the redistricting section of the Board's website on March 14, 2022. Maps for Election Districts 1 through 8 were uploaded prior to the last meeting.

Action Items from Previous Meeting

Press Release on Personnel. The press release announcing the selection of an Acting Election Director and Acting Deputy Director was released on March 7, 2022.

Council district lookup by address. As suggested at the previous Board meeting, staff inquired about the existing Council district lookup feature on the county website. That lookup feature provides information only on the five Council districts from which the existing incumbent Council members were elected. Staff is working with the Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions to explore the possibility of updating this feature to reflect the new Council district boundaries and linking to it from the Board's website.

Election Postponement

On March 15, 2022, the Maryland Court of Appeals postponed the date of the June 28, 2022, gubernatorial primary election to July 19, 2022. The following key dates and deadlines also shift:

	Original date:	Previously rescheduled by Court:	Currently scheduled:
Candidate filing deadline	February 22, 2022	March 22, 2022 at 9:00 p.m.	April 15, 2022 at 9:00 p.m.
Deadline to withdraw a certificate of candidacy	March 4, 2022	March 24, 2022	April 18, 2022
Deadline to create or change a precinct boundary or polling place	March 29, 2022		April 19, 2022
Deadline to trigger inactivation of voter under NVRA	March 30, 2022		April 20, 2022
Deadline to fill a vacancy	March 8, 2022	March 28, 2022	April 20, 2022
Deadline to challenge a candidate's residency	March 9, 2022	March 29, 2022	April 21, 2022
Deadline for SBE to certify content and arrangement of the ballot	April 25, 2022		May 16, 2022
Authorization to begin printing ballots	April 28, 2022		May 19, 2022

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Deadline to begin mailing ballots to UOCAVA voters	May 14, 2022		June 4, 2022
Close of registration and party change deadline	June 7, 2022		June 28, 2022
Deadline to provide notice of the election (i.e. sample ballot)	June 9, 2022		June 30, 2022
Early voting period	June 16, 2022 – June 23, 2022		July 7, 2022 - July 14, 2022
Deadline to request a ballot by mail	June 21, 2022		July 12, 2022
Deadline to request a web delivery ballot	June 24, 2022		July 15, 2022
Election Day	June 28, 2022		July 19, 2022
Date required to begin the absentee canvass	June 30, 2022		July 21, 2022
Date required to begin the provisional ballot canvass	July 6, 2022		July 27, 2022
Deadline to receive a timely postmarked ballot/ date required to begin the second absentee canvass	July 8, 2022		July 29, 2022
Approximate date of certification	July 22, 2022		August 12, 2022

Impact on Election Preparations

Staff is currently working to shift staffing and transportation plans, and to secure early voting sites and polling places for the rescheduled election date. Proposals for voting location changes made necessary by the date change will be brought to the Board at its regularly scheduled meeting in April. At some locations, staff may recommend switching to different rooms to coexist with previously scheduled summer programs. The Board should also be prepared for the possibility that the election date may change again, depending on continued litigation over the redistricting plan.

Ballot Drop Boxes

Security personnel at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel & Conference Center have indicated that the release of video footage of the ballot drop box at that location will require a court order. We are working to clarify our options for retaining and securing footage from that site and will alert the Board if it becomes necessary to consider an emergency relocation.

State Board of Elections

Regulations. At its March 10, 2022, meeting, the State Board of Elections approved the final adoption of regulations to comply with changes in law regarding absentee and mail-in voting and adopted proposed regulations relating to voting in correctional facilities. These regulations are available on the SBE website.

Usability review of mail-in voting forms. The report mandated by the General Assembly regarding the usability of materials and forms related to mail-in voting was provided to the State Board at its meeting on March 10, 2022 and is available on the SBE website.

Electronic pollbook printers. On March 14, 2022, new pollbook printers were delivered and the legacy pollbook printers were picked by the State Board of Elections. Staff is currently conducting user acceptance testing on the new equipment.

FY22 Budget

Staff circulated a report to the Board on March 14, 2022, reflecting that year to date expenditures for FY22 are \$3,597,723.86. This is a significant increase from the previous month, reflecting payment of the quarterly invoice from the State Board of Elections. Rescheduling of Election Day will shift major expenditures, such as more than \$1 million in Election Judge stipends, from FY22 to FY23. While a supplemental appropriation will still be required for FY22, the amount of the request will be reduced. Staff is currently working to determine the amount of the supplemental budget request that will still be required for FY22.

FY23 Budget

The County Executive's recommended operating budget for FY23 includes a \$2.3 million increase for the Board of Elections. This includes a \$1.7 million increase to fund expenditures for the State Board of Elections invoice, a \$353,000 for Election Judge stipends and the conversion of three temporary positions to permanent in Information Technology. The increase for Election Judge stipends includes approximately \$100,000 to fund an increase in the minimum stipend for Election Judges from \$180 to \$200, consistent with the County Executive's support of legislation that would increase the minimum stipend for Election Judges to \$200 per day statewide.

Voter Registration

Monthly statistics. The Monthly Statistical Report for February was distributed to Board members on March 1, 2022. As of February 28, there were 677,870 active registered voters in Montgomery County and 67,520 inactive voters, for a total voter count of 745,390.

Municipal elections. Fifteen localities have municipal elections scheduled for 2022. While the Montgomery County Board of Elections does not administer municipal elections, the Board assists municipalities by providing lists of registered voters, precinct registers, and the loan of ballot drop boxes as available and upon request. Municipalities that have elections in 2022 are: Brookeville, Chevy Chase View, Chevy Chase Village, Garrett Park, Kensington, Laytonsville, Martin's Addition, North Chevy Chase, Poolesville, Somerset, Takoma Park, Town of Chevy Chase, Village of Chevy Chase - Section 3, Village of Chevy Chase - Section 5, and Washington Grove.

Nursing Home Program. The staff of the Board of Elections is currently working on implementing the Nursing Home and Assisted Living program, which is mandated by state law to assist residents of such facilities to register and/or vote. Fifty five large facilities have opted to take part in the program (86% of eligible facilities) and 31% of facilities have submitted initial lists of interested voters. So far, 30 facilities have agreed to have bi-partisan teams of election judges visit their facility. Participating Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities have 2,484 registered voters listed at their addresses. In addition, staff has mailed voting information packets to 184 small facilities that are not eligible to have Election Judges administer voting.

Vote By Mail. The State Board of Elections began mailing Vote By mail applications to registered voters affiliated with the Democratic and Republican parties on February 1, 2022. Applications will be mailed to Unaffiliated voters following the close of candidate filing on April 15. As of March 14, 2022, the staff of the Board of Elections have processed 25,253 applications for a vote by mail ballot for the 2022 Gubernatorial Primary Election. Approximately two thirds of those requests are for permanent Vote by Mail and 15% are for web delivery ballots.

Personnel

Retirement of Christine Rzeszut. With great regret, the staff of the Board of Elections must announce that Operations Manager Christine Rzeszut has announced her intent to retire during the 2022 election season. The county has approved a temporary overage to fill the position prior to her departure and an advertisement will be posted this week, to ensure that the voters of Montgomery County are served by as seamless a transition as possible in the role.

Permanent positions. The Election Director position has been advertised, the Office Services Coordinator position that became vacant with Michelle Gonda's promotion to Vote by Mail Specialist will be advertised shortly, interviews will begin soon for the Supply Clerk position that closed on March 10, and the position description for the vacant Management and Budget Specialist position is in classification review.

Temporary positions. The department currently has 43 temporary employees on the payroll, with an increase this month with the onboarding of Election Judge trainers to begin train-the-trainer. Interviews are ongoing for temporary positions throughout the department.

Facility Enhancement

Construction work is ongoing on modifications to the facility to accommodate the continued volume of vote by mail ballots while simultaneously providing for the return to full-scale in-person voting on Election Day. The wall has been removed between Training Room 1 and Training Room 2 to accommodate mail sorting equipment and shelving is being installed in multiple areas of the building.

Redistricting

Maps of staff-recommended precinct boundaries appear on the redistricting section of the Board's website. Due to the postponement of the primary election, the Board currently has until the April 19, 2022, Board meeting to finalize precinct boundaries and polling places. Staff recommends the approval of precinct boundary changes en bloc, so that new Voter Notification Cards can be mailed to all voters in the county at once, since they must be mailed to affected voters within 30 days of a Board action.

Voters will receive three pages of information, including their new Voter Notification Card and two pages of information on their voting options for the 2022 gubernatorial primary election.

Legislation

A printout of the current status of election-related legislation is attached to this report. Senate Bill 158, codifying the 50/50 split between the state and counties for the uniform statewide voting system, has been sent to the Governor for signature. In its final form, the bill does not make any substantive change to the cost-sharing arrangement between states and counties as enacted in 2001 and does not require the state to pay any share of costs borne by counties. An amendment to the bill was adopted establishing a floor for the number of polling places that must be used in the 2022 primary and general elections at the number that were used on Election Day in the 2018 gubernatorial election.

Website

The website has been updated to reflect the postponement of the upcoming primary election and to link directly to the maps of the proposed redistricting precinct boundary changes from the front page of the website. In addition, staff is working with the Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions to explore the possibility of updating this feature to reflect the new Council district boundaries and linking to it from the Board's website.