

LANCASTER COUNTY ELECTION BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2022

The Board of Elections met today for an Election Board Meeting.

Present at today's meeting:

Ray D'Agostino, Chairman
Joshua G. Parsons, Vice-Chairman
BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Also present:

Natalie Scinta, Deputy Chief Clerk
BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Hilda Sierra-Marrero, Resident
LANCASTER CITY

Commissioner D'Agostino called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Commissioner D'Agostino announced the postponed approval of the February 9, 2022, Election Board meeting minutes.

Update on the 2022 Primary Election

Natalie Scinta, Deputy Chief Clerk, Board of Elections

Ms. Scinta reported that their current voter registration is 345,347 voters; their current mail-in and absentee applications is 10,591; they still have approximately 5,000 paper applications to go through and more are coming daily.

Voter Registration / Elections staff met with our vendor, NPC, to confirm the dates for processing ballots. They talked through a condensed schedule should court proceedings hold this up. NPC has also confirmed that after the initial mailing has gone out, ballots will be sent out to voters within 48 hours of receiving the file from the Voter Registration office.

The Congressional Maps were confirmed on February 23, 2022 by the PA Supreme Court. Lancaster, as a whole, will remain in the 11th Congressional District. There is also now a court case that has been escalated to the US Supreme Court concerning the congressional maps and election calendar. The Voter Registration office has not been given any direction that this will affect or suspend the election calendar at this time by the Court or Department of State.

Regarding Election Calendars: the US Senate and House, and the Governor and Lieutenant Governor petition dates are February 25 through March 15, 2022. Those are filed with the State. Objections are due March 16 through March 22, 2022. Hearings and decisions must be made on the objections by March 29, 2022, and the UMOVA ballots must begin going out by April 2, 2022.

The maps for the PA General Assembly (House and Senate) have been approved 4-1. However, they are still in the 30-day appeal window. Appeals are due March 7, 2022 and the hearing for the appeals is on March 11, 2022.

The petition calendar is temporarily suspended by the Court until after the hearings. The calendar will need to be in sync with the congressional calendar by April 2, 2022.

The Voter Registration / Elections office is waiting on a response from the PA Supreme Court regarding a request submitted by the Department of State for them to clarify the Pennsylvania State Party Committees and Local Party Committees candidates' petition filings. Those involved had until 12:00 p.m. this past Friday, February 25, 2022 to submit any responses. They had several responses including a few counties.

The petitions calendar is temporarily on hold until the Voter Registration office receives clarification from the Court. The calendar will need to be in sync with the congressional calendar by April 2.

Regarding Mail-in ballots: the oral arguments will be held on March 8, 2022 by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. The Commonwealth Court stay on the case, that would have ended on March 15, 2022, has been vacated by the Supreme Court yesterday afternoon. The stay has been reinstated until a decision is made by the Court.

Ms. Scinta said that testing on the new SURE system went well. They are working with Hart on how to import the ballot set-up, and they have also created a ballot to have as a backup. The new SURE system will go live on March 15, 2022.

Commissioner Parsons thanked Ms. Scinta, Ms. Miller, Chief Clerk/Registrar, and their team for all the work they are doing in trying to stay on top of this, which is an impossible task in many ways, because there are so many changes. Commissioner Parsons said that to have no settled election law; to have no settled election districts; to have separate petition periods, and to not even have the courts address it, is very outrageous and it is embarrassing for Pennsylvania to be once again in a chaotic election, because this was predictable. What the Board of Elections wants is clear, simple rules. Commissioner Parsons stated it was hard enough to run an election pre-Act 77, and then to throw all this other chaos in, is unfair to Counties and it is unfair to the people of Pennsylvania. He stated the reason why people are losing faith in the election system is because we do not have clear, simple, black and white rules that everybody understands.

Commissioner Parsons stated right now there are counties talking about whether they should try to set their own petition periods for party committee races, which is insanity – there should be one set of rules for everybody in the Commonwealth.

Commissioner D'Agostino agreed with Commissioner Parsons and added that the election is in the hands of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and what the Supreme Court needs to keep in mind when making decisions, is that the Voter Registration / Elections office has to run these elections, and if they do not have clarity and enough time, that creates more chaos and chum.

Commissioner D'Agostino expressed his disappointment in the Supreme Court's decision to stay the Act 77 issue. Commissioner Parsons explained that the Commonwealth Court ruled Act 77 unconstitutional, which would mean that we were back to pre-Act 77 rules without mail-in ballots, and there would be an automatic stay on that ruling. The Commonwealth Court was set to lift that automatic stay on March 15,

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2022, meaning we would be back to pre-Act 77 rules. The Supreme Court has said that the stay is going to stay in place until the Supreme Court rules on the substance of the case, which means, as of now, we are using post-Act 77 rules with the mail-in ballots.

The Commissioners and Ms. Scinta addressed questions raised by Ms. Sierra-Marrero.

On motion of Commissioner Parsons, seconded by Commissioner D'Agostino, the meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Lydia Kovalchuk, Executive Assistant
Commissioners' Office