



Board of Election Commissioners Meeting
Tuesday, June 29, 2021
Election & Census Conference Room
6:00 PM

MEETING MINUTES

1. Roll Call and Attendance
Start Time 6:06

Meeting called to order by Chair Zoe Dzineku. All commissioners present.

2. Old Business

- a. Vote to accept minutes from prior meetings.

MOTION by Zoe Dzineku to accept May 18, 2021 and June 15, 2021 meeting minutes, seconded by Beverly Anthes. All in favor.

3. New Business

- c. Update on voter outreach regarding polling location changes for 2021 Municipal Elections.

Mr. Veloso informed the Commissioners that fourteen individuals had registered to speak on agenda item 3C: Dawn Grenier, Eileen Morrison, Kim Scott, Corey Robinson, Anthony Milsci, Marty Hogan, Ryan Rourke, Aurora Erikson, Kei Kawashina-Ginsberg, Robert Gignac, Stephen Malagodi, Touch Van, Geoff Foster, Mary Taraus and Councilor John Drinkwater.

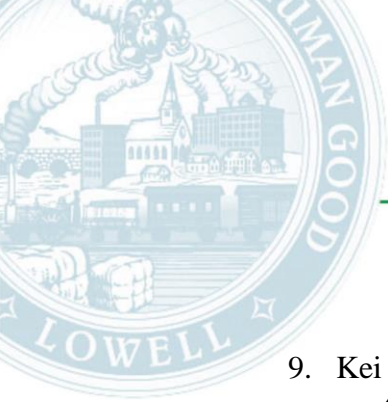
MOTION by Chair Zoe Dzineku to move agenda item 3C to the front of the agenda so that public discussion could come first. Seconded by Mark Paton. All in favor.



Mr. Veloso began the discussion by reiterating the reasons and circumstances that necessitated the changes that were made with polling locations. Under the federal consent decree, the 2021 municipal elections are required to be done under the new “hybrid” system with eight municipal districts for City Council. Under the consent decree, the City’s wards and precincts would have been redrawn when the U.S. Census data was released in March of 2021. However, the U.S. Census data is now not being released until late September of 2021. This prevents the City from redrawing its wards and precincts to fit into the new municipal districts. These circumstances prevent the City from using its past wards and precincts. As a result, one polling location in each municipal district was determined as the only way to ensure that voters would vote in the correct district. The Election Commission voted to approve this plan in its June 15, 2021 meeting.

Persons who registered to speak were arraigned in the order they submitted their requests:

1. Dawn Grenier: Thanked Mr. Veloso for his comments and explanation, stating that the reasons for the polling location changes “made more sense now.” Expressed concern that change will make it harder for people to vote and inquired about educational outreach to inform the public on the changes.
2. Eileen Morrison: Thanked the Commissioners for their time and asked for a reconsideration of the June 15th vote. Expressed concern that changes would make it harder for the public to vote.
3. Kim Scott: Thanked the Commissioners for their time. Expressed concern about changes caused by polling location closures and informing voters during door to door outreach. Inquired about early voting.
4. Corey Robinson: Agreed with Ms. Scott’s comments. Expressed hope of increased voter turnout in this election, and asks for reconsideration of plan.
5. Anthony Milsci: (Did not attend the meeting.)
6. Marty Hogan: Expressed opinion that changes would make it harder for people to vote and would hurt voter trust. Inquired about possibility of two polling locations for each district. Inquired if City could send a person to speak to each civic organization.
7. Ryan Rourke: Expressed opinion that he was not in favor with plan. Expressed believe that each district should have 2 or three voting places.
8. Aurora Erikson: She hoped a motion would be made to reconsider the vote of June 15th. Expressed concern regarding voter confusion in the Acre.



9. Kei Kawashina-Ginsberg: Expressed concerns about the youth vote and increasing youth participation in elections.
10. Robert Gignac: Expressed concerns that voters would be confused and not go to polling places. Expressed concern changes would create long lines.
11. Stephen Malagodi: Expressed concern that changes would be problematic for voters in District 4, which he believed needed more than one polling place.
12. Touch Van: Expressed belief that plan's reduction of polling locations was not a good idea and asked that it be reconsidered.
13. Geoff Foster: Expressed concern about reduction in polling locations would have negative impact on voters; stated reduction constitutes 40% of polling locations. Expressed support for voting by mail and other financial support. Expressed hope that two or more schools be opened up to allow for two polling places per district. Expressed issue with lack of public input on polling location changes.
14. Councilor John Drinkwater: Expressed understanding that delay in the federal census data created an issue, and understood the need to ensure voter integrity. However, he requested reconsideration of the plan.
15. Mary Taraus: Discussed existence of Lowell Votes for 6-7 years and its role in helping voters, getting out the vote, and translation services. Asked for reconsideration of polling location plan and need for public process. She also mentioned the idea of bundling up with her organization and other civic organizations.

Chair Zoe Dzineku thanked the registered speakers. She then asked if there was anyone else who was not on the list of speakers who would like to speak.

16. Paul Bellamy: Expressed concern with District 4, expressing concern that having voters cross the river to vote would be an issue for voters.
17. Justin Ford: Stated he has been voting since 2012. He expressed belief that the reduction of polling locations would be a big issue.

The Chair closed the public portion of the meeting.

MOTION by Chair Zoe Dzinku to reconsider the vote of June 15, 2021 to accept the Municipal District Election Central Location Polling Locations for 2021, seconded by Commissioner Anthes. All in favor.



Mr. Pope expressed his belief that the Election Commission board did not have a say in the make-up of the districts and that the board had to “rubber stamp” them. That the board was locked in to these districts.

Chair Dzinku informed the people in attendance that every issue that was brought up by at speakers was also discussed at the June 15th meeting.

Interim Director Veloso stated he would look into the issue. Mr. Veloso expressed his concern in light of the delay in U.S. Census Data whether anything could be done beyond the plan approved by the Commission in the June 15 meeting.

- a. Discussion of June 23, 2021 meeting with Huot plaintiffs’ counsel and community groups on voter education and outreach efforts.

Mr. Veloso provided an overview of the meeting and the presentation he made. Mr. Veloso indicated that voter outreach would be performed and that the office would look into taking regional dialects into account during these outreach efforts.

- b. Discussion on start of poll worker recruitment for 2021 Municipal Elections.

Mr. Veloso informed the commissioners that letter have gone out to last year’s poll workers to determine interest in working the 2021 elections. Mr. Veloso stated that outreach would also be done for poll workers through UMass Lowell, the career center, and other organizations. Social media outreach would also be examined.

- d. Status on nomination papers and candidate reporting requirements for 2021 Municipal Elections.

Mr. Veloso informed the commissioners that at least 30 individual have pulled papers to run in the 2021 municipal elections. Mr. Veloso stated that each candidate has to get 150 signatures and the nomination papers have to be back to the Election Commission by 5:00 pm on August 3, 2021. He stated that nomination papers have been pulled for all districts. However, he stated that we would have to wait till August 3rd to see if they all come back with the required signatures.



e. Logistics plans and setup of polling locations for 2021 Municipal Elections

Mr. Veloso stated he was working on the logistics plan, and would be contacting DPW and the Lowell Public Schools on polling locations and setup.

The Chair, Zoe Dzineku thanked everyone for attending and for the speakers' input.

4. Adjournment

MOTION by Commissioner James Pope, seconded by Commissioner Beverly Anthes to adjourn the meeting. All in favor.

END TIME 6:52 PM