



CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

Northampton Board of Registrars

Date: March 8, 2022

Time: 5:30 pm

Meeting Minutes

1. Meeting Called To Order: At 5:36 pm Clerk Pamela L. Powers called the meeting to order. Present at the meeting were: Registrars Joseph Tarantino, Catherine Kay and City Clerk Pamela L. Powers.
2. Review Meeting Minutes From The Previous Meeting: Registrar Kay moved to approve the meeting minutes for the following meetings:
 - Sept. 14, 2021
 - Nov. 12, 2021
 - Dec. 14, 2021
 - Dec. 17, 2021Registrar Tarantino seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 4 Yes (Kay, Tarantino, Powers), 0 No, 1 Vacant.
3. ROV Statistics: not reviewed. Clerk Powers reports that the office has been getting caught up with voter registrations that had accumulated during the election season.
4. Update On Status Of Annual Street List: The annual street listing is delayed as our printer reports a world-wide paper shortage has been making it difficult to get envelopes. The revised target date to get the street listing out is March 21st. Two donation envelopes will be included with the street list this year and Clerk Powers asked the Registrars if they felt that the annual street list could go out later if a delay in supplies continues due to the non-profit envelope shortage causing the mailing delay.

Registrar Tarantino asked how many street listings were mailed out; Clerk Powers indicated over 14,000 are sent to non-vacant homes. Registrar Tarantino asked what percentage of request envelopes were returned to the non-profit; however, this information has not been made available to the city. Registrar Tarantino opined that it would be unfortunate for the non-profit if the city moved forward with mailing the street listing, especially if they paid for the donation envelope. Registrar Kay agreed as long as the city staff weren't burdened by the shortened deadline. Clerk Powers would consider separating the dog licensing from the annual street list to level out the workload. If necessary, the street list will be mailed separate from the dog licensing material giving a people an opportunity to license their dog earlier than responding to the street list.

5. Update on redistricting: Clerk Powers reports that the redistricting plan had been approved by the state, both at the Sec. of Commonwealth level with the redistricting committee, and at the state legislature level. The new ward and precinct lines are now official and the office is working

Catherine Kay . Joseph Tarantino . Pamela Powers
cclerk@northamptonma.gov phone 413.587.1291 fax 413.587.1220

on updating the voter registration system (VRIS). The Elections Division is providing help by taking our newly drawn lines and matching up addresses to determine which ward and precinct a residential address falls. Once we verify the information on the spreadsheet, the information will be updated by the Help Desk @ the Elections Division. Once this is done, the Board of Registrars will send a letter to the affected residential addresses advising affected voters about their new polling location.

The newly defined maps for the city will be uploaded to the city's website by GIS Coordinator, James Thompson. Clerk Powers shares that James has been instrumental as a city staff person in making the necessary revisions to both the city map and the newly defined descriptions. He has a remarkable mapping skill set and amazing attention to detail which were critical to the success of the project.

Registrar Kay asked if voting precincts needed to be changed; Clerk Powers stated that the committee redefined precinct lines so that there would be no new or different polling locations.

6. Update On Ranked Choice Voting Initiative: Clerk Powers reports that the RCV committee has completed its task to make a recommendation back to City Council on how to implement RCV in Northampton. Attorney Seewald has prepared the legislation that will be presented to the City Council for review and recommendation. Bob Boulrice, chair of the committee, and Catherine Kay, vice-chair of the committee drafted a letter/report outlining the recommendations of the committee. She feels that it is just a matter of time before RCV will be implemented in the city. It is highly likely that whether to use RCV in Northampton will need to be placed on a ballot for the voters to decide. If the state legislature is approved in 2022, then RCV could be the city's method for voting beginning in 2023.

Registrar Tarantino asked if there was anything he could do to object and stop the process from moving forward. Registrar Kay reports that the City Council will be discussing RCV at an upcoming meeting. There will be public comment. Registrar Tarantino can also contact city councilors to talk about why this is a very bad idea.

Registrar Kay clarified that the Charter Review Commission recommended RCV as the election method for the City. The RCV committee was tasked with deciding on the specifics of how RCV would be implemented. Attorney Seewald had initially been asked to draft legislation that matched what the Charter Review Commission recommended; however, Attorney Seewald did not feel comfortable with making policy decisions. If City Council approves, the state legislature will have to approve the revised charter language and then there will be a city wide referendum. Registrar Kay hopes that there is really good discussion about this.

Registrar Tarantino wondered what the problem was that this will solve. The Athenians used the current voting method since 2500 B.C. and he predicts that this will be a disaster. The process is too complicated. He looks forward to the discussion about this.

Registrar Kay noted that it eliminates the need for a preliminary election. This represents a cost savings and will be more efficient. It is thought that RCV increases participation of both voters and candidates. These are benefits of RCV. On the other hand, the major concern is the level of complexity that RCV brings to the voter. It will be the job of the Registrars to ensure that this voting method will carry the full trust and confidence of the public. Voter education is the number one factor in making RCV work in any municipality. While Registrar Kay feels confident that the RCV committee made good choices, she has a concern about voter education. Clerk Powers feels that Registrar Kay, in her capacity as a RCV committee member, represented the concern that whatever method that would be adopted, identified the intent of the voter. Registrar Tarantino is concerned that voters will develop strategies to out maneuver the system. He feels it

is a solution in search of a problem. Registrar Kay hoped that voters will understand what the pros and cons are. Registrar Tarantino is concerned that this will raise court cases because the process will deny voters the opportunity to bullet vote if they so desire.

7. New Business: Clerk Powers noted that the legislation to allow 16 & 17 year olds to vote in municipal elections is now in the hands of the state legislature. Attorney Seewald has been given ideas about how to maintain voter confidentiality for minor voters. The issue of 16 and 17 year olds running for office has also been addressed by adding a clause prohibiting them from running for a municipal elected seat. Minors who are allowed to vote will also be prohibited from signing nomination papers for local candidates.
8. Adjourn: At 6:10 pm Registrar Tarantino moved to adjourn the meeting; Registrar seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 3 Yes (Tarantino, Kay, Powers), 0 No, 1 Vacant.

Meeting Minutes recorded by Pamela L. Powers, City Clerk