

CITY OF CRANSTON
BOARD OF CANVASSERS
Meeting of July 16, 2024 – OFFICIAL MINUTES

The Cranston Board of Canvassers met on July 16, 2024, in a meeting advertised in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act on June 27, 2024. The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Kirk McDonough, at 5:02 p.m. It was held in the Canvassing Authority Office, Room 100, at Cranston City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kirk McDonough, Steven Piscopiello, Peter Rivelli (Alternate, for Ms. Moronta)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Quilcia Moronta

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT: Nicholas Lima (Registrar / Director of Elections), Theresa Bucci (Deputy Registrar), Maria Madonna (Election Operations Coordinator)

PRESENT FOR THE BALLOT PLACEMENT LOTTERY: Anthony Melillo (candidate), Marcus Stephenson (candidate), Anna Medeiros (candidate)

The chair declared a quorum present.

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER (NO VOTES TAKEN)
- II. THE BOARD AND CANVASSING AUTHORITY STAFF MAY CONDUCT A BALLOT PLACEMENT LOTTERY TO DETERMINE THE ORDER OF CANDIDATES ON THE BALLOT FOR THE SEPT. 10, 2024 STATEWIDE PRIMARY ELECTION FOR SCHOOL COMMITTEE WARD 2 AND FOR THE NOV. 5, 2024 GENERAL ELECTION FOR SCHOOL COMMITTEE WARDS 2, 4, 5, 6, AND CITY WIDE (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- III. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS – 7-9-2024 AND 7-12-2024 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- V. PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – CHAIRPERSON (NO VOTES TAKEN)
- VI. PUBLIC COMMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- VII. OLD BUSINESS – NO MATTERS ON THE TABLE
- VIII. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. THE BOARD MAY DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION TO CERTIFY TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE THE FINAL FORM OF REFERENDA TO BE PLACED ON THE NOV. 5, 2024 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT, INCLUDING TWO LOCAL CHARTER QUESTIONS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-19-7 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN):
 1. LOCAL CHARTER QUESTIONS
 1. QUESTION 6 – PROBATE JUDGE RESIDENCY
 2. QUESTION 7 – CITY SOLICITOR RESIDENCY

- B. THE BOARD MAY VOTE TO CERTIFY ALL MAIL BALLOT APPLICATIONS THAT ARE RECEIVED TO DATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-20-10 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- C. THE BOARD MAY REVIEW AND COMPLETE CERTIFICATIONS FOR ALL NOMINATION PAPERS THAT HAVE BEEN VALIDATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-14-11 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- D. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AND DECIDE ON OBJECTIONS TO THE ELIGIBILITY OF CANDIDATES OR SUFFICIENCY OF NOMINATION PAPERS FOR LOCAL OFFICES THAT WERE TIMELY FILED BY 4 P.M. ON JULY 15, 2024 IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-14-13 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- E. THE BOARD MAY REVIEW AND APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 10, 2024 PRIMARY BALLOT CERTIFICATION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-14-16 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- F. IF THERE IS NO CONTEST, THE BOARD MAY VOTE TO DISPENSE WITH A PRIMARY ELECTION FOR UNCONTESTED OFFICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-15-11 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- G. IF THERE IS NO CONTEST, THE BOARD MAY VOTE TO DECLARE CANDIDATES TO EITHER BE ELECTED OR NOMINATED TO UNCONTESTED OFFICES, AS THE CASE MAY BE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-15-11 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- IX. UPDATES FROM THE REGISTRAR (ALL ITEMS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY; NO VOTES TAKEN)
 - A. STATUS OF 2024 ELECTION PREPARATIONS TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:
 - 1. VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE
 - 2. MAIL BALLOT APPLICATION PROCESSING AND VOLUME
 - 3. POLL WORKER RECRUITMENT
 - 4. EARLY VOTING PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT
 - 5. POLL WORKER TRAINING CLASSES
 - 6. POLLING PLACE CHANGE AND REFERENDUM MAILINGS
 - 7. ELECTION SECURITY
 - 8. VOTER INFORMATION AND ELECTION LEGAL ADS
 - B. REPORT ON ANY NEW GUIDANCE RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REGARDING ENACTED ELECTIONS LEGISLATION INCLUDING CHANGES TO PROCEDURES RELATED TO PARTY DISAFFILIATION, MAIL BALLOT APPLICATIONS, AND MAIL BALLOT DROP BOXES
- X. ADJOURNMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

THE BOARD AND CANVASSING AUTHORITY STAFF MAY CONDUCT A BALLOT PLACEMENT LOTTERY TO DETERMINE THE ORDER OF CANDIDATES ON THE BALLOT FOR THE SEPT. 10, 2024 STATEWIDE PRIMARY ELECTION FOR SCHOOL COMMITTEE WARD 2 AND FOR THE NOV. 5, 2024 GENERAL ELECTION FOR SCHOOL COMMITTEE WARDS 2, 4, 5, 6, AND CITY WIDE (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

A ballot placement lottery notice was separately posted and run concurrently with the Board meeting due to a quorum of the Board being present and participating.

A Bingo lottery machine was utilized to draw placement orders for contested races, all of which were for the Nov. 5, 2024 General Election due to only two candidates qualifying for Ward 2, negating the need for a run-off primary. An even number of odd and even balls were placed in the machine, and candidates were assigned an ODD or EVEN number in alphabetical order, with ODD going first. The drawing of an ODD or EVEN ball would determine ballot placement order. Balls were returned to the machine after each drawing and tumbled. All candidates and members of the public were notified and invited to attend. Board members took turns drawing numbers from the Bingo tumbler. Mr. Lima explained the process to the attendees and removed the seal from the lottery machine.

The following were the official results:

School Committee – Ward 1

Keith Catone – Uncontested (1.)

School Committee – Ward 2

Anna Medeiros EVEN drawn first #20 (1.)

Gregory Charpentier ODD (2.)

School Committee – Ward 3

Domenic F. Fusco, Jr. – Uncontested (1.)

School Committee – Ward 4

Melanie Marchetti – Uncontested (1.)

School Committee – Ward 5

Andrea Nadeau EVEN drawn first #4 (1.)

Jeffrey DeVarnne ODD (2.)

School Committee – Ward 6

Marcus Stephenson EVEN drawn first #4 (1.)

Kathryn Crowley ODD (2.)

School Committee – City Wide

Robert Lancia ODD drawn first #7 (1.)

Anthony Melillo EVEN (2.)

No discussion or actions of the Board were necessary. The lottery concluded, and Mr. Lima updated CVRS listed public ballot orders accordingly for all School Committee candidates.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

MOTION: By Mr. Rivelli and seconded by Mr. Piscopiello to approve the agenda as posted.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Piscopiello, Mr. Rivelli, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS – 7-9-2024 AND 7-12-2024 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

MOTION: By Mr. Piscopiello and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to approve the minutes of July 9, 2024 and July 12, 2024.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Piscopiello, Mr. Rivelli, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – CHAIRPERSON (NO VOTES TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough had no public acknowledgements.

PUBLIC COMMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough noted no members of the public were present or appeared to speak.

OLD BUSINESS – NO MATTERS ON THE TABLE

Mr. McDonough noted no old business items were posted on this agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

A. THE BOARD MAY DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION TO CERTIFY TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE THE FINAL FORM OF REFERENDA TO BE PLACED ON THE NOV. 5, 2024 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT, INCLUDING TWO LOCAL CHARTER QUESTIONS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-19-7 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN):

1. LOCAL CHARTER QUESTIONS

1. QUESTION 6 – PROBATE JUDGE RESIDENCY

2. QUESTION 7 – CITY SOLICITOR RESIDENCY

Mr. Lima said Asst. Solicitor Igliozzi reviewed these with him and we're satisfied that the questions match the language approved by the Council and are formatted correctly for ballot placement. Both Council resolutions were adopted in February. He asked the Board to sign duplicate original copies of the certification; one for our office, and one to be hand-delivered to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Rivelli asked what the effect of the charter questions will be if passed. Mr. Lima said these positions require residency per charter, which conflicts with state law, and if passed it will be clear that the occupants of either position simply need be residents of the State of Rhode Island. Mr. Piscopiello said it's really a clean-up of the Charter since the state residency overriding requirement was passed by the state many years ago.

MOTION: By Mr. Rivelli and seconded by Mr. Piscopiello to certify both local charter questions for placement on the Nov. 5, 2024 General Election ballot.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Piscopiello, Mr. Rivelli, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

B. THE BOARD MAY VOTE TO CERTIFY ALL MAIL BALLOT APPLICATIONS THAT ARE RECEIVED TO DATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-20-10 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough asked for a motion to certify for both the September and November mail ballot applications we have received to date.

MOTION: By Mr. Piscopiello and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to certify all mail ballot applications received to date pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-20-10.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Piscopiello, Mr. Rivelli, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

C. THE BOARD MAY REVIEW AND COMPLETE CERTIFICATIONS FOR ALL NOMINATION PAPERS THAT HAVE BEEN VALIDATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-14-11 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Lima said nothing else has come in since the Board's last action to certify nomination papers at the previous meeting, nor were any errors or omissions identified. He said no action would be required on this agenda item.

D. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AND DECIDE ON OBJECTIONS TO THE ELIGIBILITY OF CANDIDATES OR SUFFICIENCY OF NOMINATION PAPERS FOR LOCAL OFFICES THAT WERE TIMELY FILED BY 4 P.M. ON JULY 15, 2024 IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-14-13 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough said no objections were filed. Mr. Lima said as of 4 p.m. yesterday

nothing was filed so we can likewise skip this item without the need for any Board action.

E. THE BOARD MAY REVIEW AND APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 10, 2024 PRIMARY BALLOT CERTIFICATION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-14-16 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Lima said this certification has all local candidates that will appear on the ballot for the Sept. 10, 2024 Statewide Primary. Local offices in Cranston are Mayor, Council, School Committee, and the party Ward Committees. He said there is a Ward 2 Ward Committee primary, vote-for-up-to-9, with 10 candidates, of which 8 are endorsed. Both unendorsed candidates turned in at least 50 valid signatures to qualify for the ballot, and under SOS regulations, the candidates appear on the ballot in the order the Ward Committee certified the endorsement, and the two unendorsed candidates then appear alphabetically.

Mr. Lima said we also have a city-wide Republican primary for Mayor, with incumbent Mayor Kenneth Hopkins and state Rep. Barbara Ann Fenton Fung, who is unendorsed and will go second on the ballot. Mr. Lima said that's all we have, and all other contests on our Cranston primary ballots will be General Assembly or federal contests, which we have no role in. There are Democratic primaries in Rep. Dist. 14, 17, and 42, and Sen. Dist. 28. There is also a statewide U.S. Senate primary in both parties.

Due to these primaries Mr. Lima said he expects an active primary election in September and somewhat busy polling locations in the areas with hotly contested races for Mayor and General Assembly seats.

Mr. Lima asked the Board to review the certifications and affix their signatures upon their vote. The certifications include all ballot language including name formatting, the term of office, district number, the number of candidates to vote for, and the correct ballot order.

MOTION: By Mr. Piscopiello and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to approve the Sept. 10, 2024 Statewide Primary ballot certification and transmit to the Secretary of State.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Piscopiello, Mr. Rivelli, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

F. IF THERE IS NO CONTEST, THE BOARD MAY VOTE TO DISPENSE WITH A PRIMARY ELECTION FOR UNCONTESTED OFFICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-15-11 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Lima showed the Board a letter he prepared that lists all local and local party offices for which no primary need be held, which he will also hand-deliver to the SOS. By virtue of the Board's action, those ward party committee members who are unopposed are hereby elected automatically and immediately, per state law, taking office in January at reorganization.

MOTION: By Mr. Piscopiello and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to dispense with holding a primary for any uncontested local offices in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-15-11.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Piscopiello, Mr. Rivelli, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

G. IF THERE IS NO CONTEST, THE BOARD MAY VOTE TO DECLARE CANDIDATES TO EITHER BE ELECTED OR NOMINATED TO UNCONTESTED OFFICES, AS THE CASE MAY BE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-15-11 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Lima said this is the second motion required for the same letter he has prepared which has the same statutory reference.

MOTION: By Mr. Piscopiello and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to declare all unopposed party and independent primary candidates to be either elected or nominated, as the case may be, pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-15-11.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Piscopiello, Mr. Rivelli, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

UPDATES FROM THE REGISTRAR (ALL ITEMS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY; NO VOTES TAKEN)

A. STATUS OF 2024 ELECTION PREPARATIONS TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

Mr. Lima said if the Board required updates for any of the eight items listed, he would be happy to answer them.

1. VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE

Mr. Lima noted we have approval from the state BOE to utilize the drop box for the voter registration deadline.

2. MAIL BALLOT APPLICATION PROCESSING AND VOLUME

No updates.

3. POLL WORKER RECRUITMENT

No updates.

4. EARLY VOTING PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT

Mr. Lima said our first ever Saturday early voting will be a full day on Sept. 7. This will be a test run for October. Our staff will not be coming in on the Sunday registration deadline, but will be in on this Saturday for early voting, so we are trading one expense for another, but he feels this will be a better use of our funds. Mr. McDonough agreed.

5. POLL WORKER TRAINING CLASSES

No updates.

6. POLLING PLACE CHANGE AND REFERENDUM MAILINGS

No updates.

7. ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. McDonough asked about this topic. Mr. Lima said we were just awarded a \$50,000 grant by the SOS for physical election security upgrades to our office. This will include the installation of additional security cameras and improvements to the front counter, doors, and windows. Some projects will take several months and will need to be started after the election, and additionally will require BOCAP and administrative approval. The grant award allows us flexibility, so we can consider installation of various security devices such as panic buttons, ballistics glass, and upgraded locking mechanisms. The more disruptive a project will be, the more likely we will have to wait until 2025 to do the construction work involved, as we can't have large projects going on in the office while we are running the election.

Mr. McDonough asked how our security planning is going for the Primary. Mr. Lima said he will be discussing that with Cranston Police command staff and we will typically get a written security operations plan from CPD, along with detail officers and escorts for ballots. Mr. McDonough said it would be good to have a detail officer specifically assigned to City Hall for Election Day.

Mr. Piscopiello asked what the protocol is when Board members are visiting polls and encounter someone who is belligerent or physically or verbally violent. Mr. Lima said all of our field personnel will have phone numbers for the police detail, including the cell phone of the detail commander, so we can contact them immediately. He will provide that contact sheet as part of the Board's field materials on their clipboards. We can always call 911 as well, although in most non-emergency situations calling the detail commander can get an immediate response if we need a police presence at any poll.

Mr. McDonough asked if he can attend Mr. Lima's meeting with Cranston Police command staff, and he said he'll make sure he receives the invitation when it occurs.

Mr. McDonough said given the national political climate and presidential race, including the attempted assassination, he doubts that tensions will lessen much between now and November, and election security needs to be a high priority. Mr. Lima said this was already a unique presidential election year, and it is more unique now as the security threats to our elections generally on a national level are very apparent. We and our police details will be cognizant of hostile threat actors attempting to disrupt our election operations by creating incidents at polling locations, and we will be prepared accordingly.

8. VOTER INFORMATION AND ELECTION LEGAL ADS

No updates.

B. REPORT ON ANY NEW GUIDANCE RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REGARDING ENACTED ELECTIONS LEGISLATION INCLUDING CHANGES TO PROCEDURES RELATED TO PARTY DISAFFILIATION, MAIL BALLOT APPLICATIONS, AND MAIL BALLOT DROP BOXES

Mr. Lima said he's asked questions to the BOE about new disaffiliation procedures, and he did receive a response that they will be adding that to the poll worker training, in addition to us receiving new signage at the polls to inform voters of the changes to the process for disaffiliation.

Mr. Lima said that last week he spoke at an elections conference in New Hampshire for a showing of the NO TIME TO FAIL documentary, where he had a lengthy conversation with the head of the Massachusetts town clerks association. She told him that her state had similarly passed changes to their disaffiliation law a number of years ago, and it took a few cycles for their voters to become adjusted to the new rules, but it did work.

Mr. Lima said that at the point when voters check in with supervisors at the polls will be the key moment, as that's when their affiliated or unaffiliated status will be displayed on the PollPad and the poll workers, if properly trained, can inform the voters of the new law that does not require them to fill out disaffiliation paperwork after voting any more.

Mr. McDonough asked if the grade and title changes for our staff positions have gone through, and Mr. Lima said it took some administrative work but they are now in effect.

ADJOURNMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

MOTION: By Mr. Piscopiello and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to adjourn.
PASSED UNANIMOUSLY – VOICE VOTE

The meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas J. Lima
Registrar / Director of Elections
Cranston Board of Canvassers