

CITY OF CRANSTON
BOARD OF CANVASSERS
Meeting of July 9, 2026 – OFFICIAL MINUTES

The Cranston Board of Canvassers met on July 9, 2026, in a meeting advertised in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act on June 29, 2026, and reposted on July 6, 2026. The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Kirk McDonough, at 5:47 p.m. It was held in the Third Floor Conference Room at Cranston City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Anthony Mastantuono, Bill White (for Ms. Moronta), Kirk McDonough

MEMBERS ABSENT: Quilcia Moronta

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT: Nicholas Lima (Registrar / Director of Elections)

The chair declared a quorum present.

AGENDA (*AS AMENDED)

- I. **Call to Order and Approval of the Agenda** (*votes may be taken*)
- II. **Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings** (*votes may be taken*)
- III. **Items for Discussion, Vote, and/or Other Action** (*votes may be taken on all items*)
 - A. 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*)
 - B. The Board may review and complete certifications for all nomination papers that have been validated to date in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-14-11 (*votes may be taken*)
- IV. **Updates from the Registrar / Director of Elections** (*no votes taken on any items*)
 - A. Status of 2026 election preparations to include the following topics:
 1. Possible voter turnout for contested September Primary contests
 2. Expected changes to election operations and staffing due to budget constraints
 3. Adjustments to election logistics due to staff reductions in the Building Maintenance Department
 4. Plans to ensure ADA compliance and improvements to polling locations for voter accessibility
- V. **Adjournment** (*vote may be taken*)

**The meeting agenda was amended and reposted only to change the advertised meeting location from Council Chambers to the Third Floor Conference Room due to the need for the City Council to utilize Council Chambers for an unexpected meeting.*

I. Call to Order and Approval of the Agenda (*votes may be taken*)

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

MOTION: By Mr. Mastantuono and seconded by Mr. White to approve the agenda as posted.
PASSED UNANIMOUSLY – VOICE VOTE

II. Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings *(votes may be taken)*

Mr. McDonough asked for a motion to approve the minutes as officially posted.

MOTION: By Mr. Mastantuono and seconded by Mr. White to approve the prior meeting minutes.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Mastantuono, Mr. White, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

III. Items for Discussion, Vote, and/or Other Action *(votes may be taken on all items)***A. 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. Lima informed the Board there were no mail ballot application certification sheets prepared and ready for the Board's review at this time, and they would likely be ready for the next meeting on Tuesday.

B. The Board may review and complete certifications for all nomination papers that have been validated to date in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-14-11 *(votes may be taken)*

Mr. McDonough asked for a motion to certify the nomination papers that have been validated to date. He noted that one of the nomination papers had a higher than usual number of rejected signatures, including four rejections due to signature mismatches. Mr. McDonough said he trusts the staff's judgement when it comes to these matters given their experience, and the staff flagged this particular form to the state Board of Elections for further review due to the number of invalid signatures as compared to other forms received.

Mr. White asked why the handwriting matched for the name and address fields for multiple voters. Mr. Lima said sometimes, although not usually, the signature collector or a household member completes those fields for multiple voters and asks them to sign. While it can be helpful to compare handwriting in those fields when reviewing possible patterns and discrepancies, the operative field to check is the signature column.

Mr. Lima explained that an "N" on the validation field may mean the voter was not found in the system, or not currently registered to vote. He said this is a common means of signature rejection and is by itself not an indicator of a pattern of forgery, as it has to be reviewed against the form as a whole and other indicators such as signature mismatch. He said there is one valid signature on the form, in the judgement of the staff, which is the first signature.

While we have flagged this to the BOE for further review, the Board's role is to certify the signatures that are believed to be valid. Discussion ensued. Because the form is related to a statewide office, the Board members decided to certify the one valid signature on the form in question as part of the overall certification of nomination papers, and allow for the BOE to review and make a determination on the other issues raised.

Mr. Lima explained the limited role of the Canvassing Authority in the event of a challenge filed regarding nomination papers for non-local offices, as those challenges are heard and decided by the state BOE. Our role is mostly limited to answering questions from the state BOE regarding

our work in the validation process, or providing testimony at the state hearing, if one occurs, regarding our rationale for approving or rejecting nomination paper signatures. The BOE members ultimately review all of the available testimony and evidence and make a determination. Mr. Lima noted that under the new regulations, we have a duty to report to the state BOE when we notice something that may be suspicious, which we have already done here out of an abundance of caution. That said, there is a fine line between an intentional pattern of forgery, and a sloppy nomination paper signed by voters in haste or by circulators who didn't properly explain the process to the voters they may be stopping at a grocery store, as opposed to a cleaner nomination paper that a circulator may have completed while going door-to-door using a voter list or at a signature party event and tend to have fewer errors as a result.

Mr. Lima noted that our experienced staff can often tell the difference between a nomination paper that may have been offered to random people coming in and out of a grocery store, versus one which was completed going door to door using a registered voter walking list provided by our office to a candidate.

MOTION: By Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Mastantuono to certify all nomination papers received to date.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Mastantuono, Mr. White, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

IV. Updates from the Registrar / Director of Elections (no votes taken on any items)

A. Status of 2026 election preparations to include the following topics:

1. Possible voter turnout for contested September Primary contests

Mr. Lima noted that some candidates have not yet turned in enough signatures to qualify for the ballot, including some of the School Committee candidates who are unopposed. If they do not get their 50 valid signatures turned in by 4 p.m. tomorrow, those contests will be “write-in only” in November, which will be challenging to administer and tabulate.

He said we are paying close attention to the likelihood of a city-wide Democratic primary for City Council, which in past cycles when it has occurred has been heavily contested, generated a lot of campaign activity, and likely increased voter turnout. Similarly, contested Democratic primaries for Ward 1 and Ward 2 City Council merit increased attention in those areas for poll worker staffing. At this time, Mr. Lima noted that all six wards have the possibility of a Democratic Ward Committee election, although such an election is unlikely to change turnout statistics on its own given its niche nature as a party office.

Mr. Lima explained to the Board their roles as field technicians on Election Day. We typically focus more attention in higher turnout areas that have an increased likelihood of close results, which means the chances of a recount a higher, and we have to ensure that election certification paperwork is properly completed and minimize any other routine issues that often occur when running complex city-wide elections but could impact a recount in a close contest. Increased supervision by the Board of our poll workers is important to ensure we are doing everything possible for the election to run smoothly and efficiently. To that end, Mr. Lima said it is critically important for all Board members to attend both types of poll worker training classes so they are familiar with the responsibilities of the poll workers and can properly provide oversight as

technicians in the field on Election Day. He said the state BOE also provides technicians who visit all polling locations and respond to issues with voting equipment as they occur.

Mr. Mastantuono asked if we are out on the road all day. Mr. Lima noted that unless the Board must reconvene back at City Hall to discuss and take a vote in public, yes, each member is on the road throughout the day, individually supervising the conduct of the election and responding to minor issues as they occur, such as a polling place needing more paperwork or an extension cord, or a disagreement between party checkers and poll workers.

Mr. Lima said we have a dozen personnel in the field on Election Day, the Board included, visiting polling locations, and additional staff at City Hall assisting our full-time staff in the election operations center and responding to calls from poll workers and voters. The higher the turnout, the more issues that naturally occur, which can make for a very busy day for all.

He noted that statewide races, including the contested primaries in both parties for Governor, and local General Assembly contests, including Rep. 14 in the Primary and Rep. 15 in the General in particular, are likely to have a lot of statewide focus and added campaigning from the candidates, which is sure to result in increased turnout. Mr. McDonough said as chairperson he goes to the early voting site on Election Night to help the poll workers close out the poll there, while other Board members may respond to other polling locations that had issues during the day such as machine jams, or may have new moderators and clerks who need assistance in completing their tasks for the first time. Mr. Lima noted that under our continuity of operations plan, all Board members should be familiar with what we are all doing, because the potential always exists for someone to get into a car accident, become ill, or otherwise not be available, meaning the assignments for one Board member in the field become another's unexpectedly.

Mr. Lima noted that many races are uncontested in both September and November, including all four of the city's state Senate seats. Close Senate seat contests have, in past cycles, also resulted in increased turnout, so the fact that they are all unopposed means those candidates will likely not be campaigning as much as in the past. He said there will also be three candidates, including an Independent, on the November ballot for City Council in Ward 2.

2. Expected changes to election operations and staffing due to budget constraints

Mr. Lima said he reviewed this in detail at the last meeting with the Board, and that the reduction in poll workers as compared to the 2024 election cycle will be manageable.

3. Adjustments to election logistics due to staff reductions in the Building Maintenance Department

Mr. Lima noted that the Building Maintenance Department has lost a number of its personnel, which is a concern for our logistics, particularly in setting up the 26 polling places the day before each election, as a dozen or more of their personnel have historically assisted us with that. Hundreds of voting booths, tables, chairs, signage, and other equipment has to be set up at each location, mostly after business hours due to schools being in session, but before polls open at 6 a.m., which is usually a 12-hour operation even with 12 to 15 city personnel. Mr. Lima said we will need help from other departments to make up for that, including Highway and Parks and Rec., although all are stretched thin due to staffing levels and the city's budget. He will be

meeting with the administration and relevant department heads soon to ensure there will be enough personnel available this Fall to help with these tasks.

4. Plans to ensure ADA compliance and improvements to polling locations for voter accessibility

Mr. Lima said he has been receiving updated polling place diagrams from the state BOE. When he meets with Public Works and Highway regarding the need for set-up crews, he will also be asking if Highway crews can spend a day or two this summer filling in some cracks in pavement and sidewalks near polling place entrances that he spotted, and others that were pointed out to us by the Governor's Commission on Disabilities. He said Highway has been able to help us with this in past election years, including in adding missing ADA signage at parking spaces.

He noted that it is critically important for polling places to be ADA compliant under federal law, and that the U.S. Dept. of Justice and GCD both routinely send inspectors around the state to ensure compliance each election cycle. While most locations will never be perfect, particularly older facilities, we have a responsibility to exert an extra effort to remedy any issues we are aware of to ensure voters with disabilities can access polling places without undue hardship or obstruction.

V. Adjournment (vote may be taken)

MOTION: By Mr. Mastantuono and seconded by Mr. White to adjourn.
PASSED UNANIMOUSLY – VOICE VOTE

The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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