

CITY OF CRANSTON
BOARD OF CANVASSERS
Regular Meeting of July 9, 2020 – APPROVED MINUTES

The Cranston Board of Canvassers met on July 9, 2020, in a meeting advertised in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act on July 2, 2020. The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Randall Jackvony, at 4:13 p.m. It was held virtually via electronic means on Zoom, conducted in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order 20-46 in response to the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Randall Jackvony, Gary Vierra, Fred Joslyn

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT: Nicholas Lima (Registrar / Director of Elections), Alice Petrone (Alternate, Ex-Officio)

The chair declared a quorum present.

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 5-12-2020, 6-2-2020, 6-3-2020
- IV. PUBLIC COMMENT
- V. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS – RANDALL JACKVONY
- VI. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. THE BOARD MAY DISCUSS AND TAKE A FORMAL POSITION ON ELECTIONS LEGISLATION INTRODUCED OR PROPOSED IN THE 2020 SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, INCLUDING LEGISLATION SUBMITTED BY THE STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS S-2598 AND H-7896
 - B. THE BOARD MAY DISCUSS AND REVIEW THE CONDUCT OF THE JUNE 2, 2020 PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY
 - C. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AN UPDATE FROM THE REGISTRAR ON THE STATUS OF STATEWIDE PLANS TO CONDUCT REMAINING 2020 ELECTIONS AMID COVID-19, AND DISCUSS AND TAKE A POSITION ON PLANS FOR PROCESS AND POLICY RELATED TO THE CONDUCT OF THE SEPT. 8, 2020 AND NOV. 3, 2020 ELECTIONS
 - D. THE BOARD MAY DISCUSS AND FORMALLY APPROVE THE SELECTION OF CRANSTON POLLING LOCATIONS FOR THE SEPT. 8, 2020 STATEWIDE PRIMARY AND NOV. 3, 2020 GENERAL ELECTION
- VII. UPDATES AND REMARKS
 - A. REGISTRAR / DIRECTOR OF ELECTIONS – NICHOLAS LIMA
- VIII. COMMENTS OF BOARD MEMBERS
- IX. ADJOURNMENT

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

MOTION: By Mr. Joslyn and seconded by Mr. Vierra to approve the agenda as posted.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Jackvony said Mr. Lima is behind on minutes due to the volume of elections work in the office. Mr. Lima said he will work on getting them to the Board as soon as possible. Mr. Jackvony said that's understandable considering how busy the office has been due to responding to the pandemic, the rescheduled June 2 primary election, and the ongoing candidate declaration, endorsement, and nomination process.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Jackvony noted members of the public were present on the call. Mr. Lima asked if anyone from the public in chat on the Zoom call wished to speak, and none did.

CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHAIRPERSON – Randy Jackvony

Mr. Jackvony had no announcements.

NEW BUSINESS

A. THE BOARD MAY DISCUSS AND TAKE A FORMAL POSITION ON ELECTIONS LEGISLATION INTRODUCED OR PROPOSED IN THE 2020 SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, INCLUDING LEGISLATION SUBMITTED BY THE STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS S-2598 AND H-7896

Mr. Jackvony said a copy of the emergency voting bills submitted by the Board of Elections was provided to the Board of Canvassers in advance by Mr. Lima. He asked Mr. Lima to give a synopsis of what the bill would do. Mr. Lima said the bill was originally introduced at the start of the year in order to reform the antiquated emergency voting process, which operates under a decades-old statutory procedure designed to be used sparingly, that makes little sense when scaled up for volume.

Mr. Lima said that given the high interest in this election and upward trends in emergency voting since 2016, he anticipates thousands of voters appearing to vote early, under the current emergency voting statute, which is comprehensibly ill-equipped to handle that many voters due to the extraordinary amount of time it takes to process each one. He said that absent a change in state law to accommodate for this transformation in use of this procedure, the office will be completely overwhelmed and unable to effectively conduct and manage the election.

He said the solution, as proposed by the BOE, along with a competing solution also proposed by the Secretary of State for true early voting, as previously supported by the Board, would be a process change that would alter how early voters are handled when appearing at city and town halls in the 20 days prior to elections. Instead of being processed as mail ballot voters, including all of the paperwork, oath envelopes, certification sheets, copies, stamps, and data entry required to do so, emergency voters, under the BOE's bill, would be processed by poll workers just as they are at polling places, by using existing elections equipment to sign them in on a PollPad. Ballots would be cast at City Hall, and the voters would place them directly into a DS-200 to be tabulated, rather than inside an oath envelope to be reviewed and tabulated later at the BOE. Removing the paper-intensive nature of the process, along with the daily task of having to transport voted ballots and certification sheets to the BOE for three weeks, will free up a significant amount of time, allowing the process to be scaled up to accommodate more voters. Mr. Lima estimated that the time-saving process would be about 90% improved over what we do now.

Mr. Lima said that Common Cause and other groups have disagreed with the legislation because it does not offer a provisional voting component, and reduces the emergency voting period from 20 days to 12, among other technical factors. Mr. Lima said he has had numerous conversations with his counterparts in other cities and towns, the BOE, and Common Cause, and he believes those concerns will be mitigated in a soon-to-be released Sub A. He said the original version of the bill was pulled from House Judiciary a couple of days ago just prior to consideration in anticipation of these changes to save the bill and reduce concerns, because of how important changing the process is. The General Assembly is meeting in only an abbreviated summer session to respond to the pandemic, and any change to elections law must be done now in order to be in effect for the upcoming September primary.

Mr. Lima said the amended version, which was put together today, will keep the status quo of 20 days and mitigate the other concerns expressed by good government groups, which will garner widespread support for the bill. At recent meetings, both the RITCCA and BOE formally endorsed the bill, as well. He said the amendments to the bill are productive, because the original bill provided us relief but had flaws – the amendments maintain that relief, but eliminate the flaws. Mr. Lima asked the Board to support the legislation, with the caveat that the conceptual amendments he spoke about are part of the final package. He said he's spoken with counterparts in Providence, Warwick, Newport, Jamestown, Portsmouth, Bristol, and other towns, and the need for this bill to pass is significant.

It is just one part of the elections reform puzzle – dealing only with emergency voting – and doesn't solve logistical and operational problems with mail ballots, poll workers, or polling locations caused by the pandemic, but it does solve a significant component by giving us tools we need to be successful with emergency voting. Mr. Lima said it is his understanding that the General Assembly will act quickly on this, and this bill has the best shot of any elections legislation under consideration, so the Board's support today would be timely. He said every other elections reform bill that the Board has wanted in the past is on hold and not currently on the table. If we're looking for relief legislatively, it looks like we're not going to get it in all of the areas where we really need it, but this is one area where we do need it and the legislature is willing to act rapidly.

Mr. Vierra asked how provisional voting would work. Mr. Lima said that if a voter appeared, for example, without an ID, they could still vote a traditional emergency ballot, or vote a provisional at the polls on election day.

Mr. Joslyn said he was moved by Mr. Lima's presentation and said he supports passage of this in the General Assembly.

MOTION: By Mr. Joslyn and seconded by Mr. Vierra for the Board of Canvassers to support the emergency voting legislation, S-2598 and H-7896, and to conceptually support the pending amendments as explained by Mr. Lima provided there are no material changes thereto.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0

Mr. Lima said he would be making phone calls to the legislative delegation tomorrow to explain the Board's support, due to how quickly the General Assembly is expected to act on this.

B. THE BOARD MAY DISCUSS AND REVIEW THE CONDUCT OF THE JUNE 2, 2020 PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY

Mr. Lima said he put this on the Board's agenda in case the body wanted to discuss and debrief the outcomes of the primary, now that some time has elapsed with which to reflect upon it.

Mr. Jackvony said that, considering the circumstances, he thought the Presidential Preference Primary went very well for both the City of Cranston and State of Rhode Island under less-than-ideal circumstances. He appreciates all of the hard work of the office staff who are working under unprecedented and difficult conditions. He said he hasn't heard any complaints from voters regarding the conduct of the election.

Mr. Vierra said that, all things considered, it went well, even with the turmoil that went on that day and the establishment of an extraordinary city curfew that night.

C. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AN UPDATE FROM THE REGISTRAR ON THE STATUS OF STATEWIDE PLANS TO CONDUCT REMAINING 2020 ELECTIONS AMID COVID-19, AND DISCUSS AND TAKE A POSITION ON PLANS FOR PROCESS AND POLICY RELATED TO THE CONDUCT OF THE SEPT. 8, 2020 AND NOV. 3, 2020 ELECTIONS

Mr. Lima said this is something we've been concerned about and deliberating now since early March, and that he's been pushing the state since March to answer questions on both big and small-picture items. For example, Mr. Lima said he has repeatedly asked the BOE to waive the requirement for Board members to come in daily to personally sign nomination and certification papers, to reduce unnecessary contact for what amounts to a ministerial formality, but after months of asking he had not received a response. When he again pushed the issue the other day, he was told the requirement would not be waived, despite the risk to staff and Board members. Requiring two original signatures on thousands of nomination papers and certification sheets creates a significant amount of avoidable contact, at a time when City Hall is effectively closed to

the public and many other offices are working from home remotely due to the pandemic, including most of the state employees themselves. Meanwhile, our office remains fully staffed and open to the public for conducting and election business, without an appointment, as to not disenfranchise anyone. Mr. Lima said that's just one example of numerous areas where concerns have been brought up that have not been addressed or adapted to the current crisis.

He said that's an internal operations example of one of several items he's sent to the BOE, but the bigger-picture concerns more relate to the voting public, one of which is emergency voting, which is pending General Assembly action with the support of the BOE and lobbying from cities and towns. Three other big-picture items are poll workers, polling locations, and regular mail ballots.

Mr. Lima said the poll worker recruitment issue, where we need as many as 300 each for the upcoming primary and general election, is our most pressing problem. The fact that we have to fill 600 positions between the two elections, given the challenges presented by the pandemic, is of grave concern. Mr. Lima said a high percentage of the regular, veteran poll workers the office is calling to ask to work are declining to work this year citing health concerns, and even among those who are committing, many are calling back days later to rescind their commitment. Others have called back after being confirmed because they got sick with COVID-19, or a family member has, removing themselves from the available workforce. For many of our poll workers, the risk is simply not worth it of sitting at the polls for 15 hours and interacting with thousands of people.

Mr. Lima said that the 600 number is just the current force – what is actually needed at the polls is more – and that we are instructed by the BOE to have a 10-20% back-up force in reserve. Between call-outs and securing that back-up, that's really closer to 700 that need to be recruited, and right now, we're over 100 workers, per election, short of that goal, which must be recruited in the next three weeks in order to be trained for the primary.

Mr. Lima said he has a weekly ad running in the Cranston Herald for poll worker recruitment; is asking the School Dept. to send out notices to faculty, staff, parents, and students; is reaching out to the political parties and councilmembers; and is reaching out to city departments like the Senior Center to help spread the word, among other efforts. Mr. Lima said that, so far, the BOE, which met yesterday, has not provided much assistance on this, except for only suggesting that maybe we could have split shifts. Unfortunately, split shifts would exacerbate the problem, requiring even more poll workers to be hired and adding logistical complications with call-outs.

Today at the Secretary of State's COVID-19 Elections Task Force meeting, help was proposed in the state reaching out to colleges, universities, civic groups, large employers, and the state employee workforce itself, which would be helpful to drive new recruits to the cities and towns. Mr. Lima said he is also concerned, given the number of Rhode Islanders who are unemployed, that many are hesitant to work because it may negatively affect their unemployment benefits or status. He said there are talks at the state level regarding an exemption for that, but he hasn't heard of any of these concepts

proceeding beyond an idea stage or actually being implemented, and we need help now.

Mr. Lima expressed frustration that the discussions at the state level were, so far, based in concept and not practice, and even if all were implemented, would likely not be sufficient enough to help make up the significant shortfall that the office currently has in poll workers. Mr. Lima said an option of last resort would be to utilize city workers to supplement poll workers if we simply cannot find enough people willing to work the polls. That would be in technical violation of state law, which allows city workers to work the general election but not the primary, but we may not have a choice, and cannot allow polls to go understaffed given the expected high turnout. Mr. Lima said he will be bringing this up to the administration so that staff can be prepared to be pulled from other departments if needed to keep the polls functioning on election day. He said the National Guard has also been mentioned as a possibility, however there is concern about involving the military in the direct conduct of elections. Mr. Lima said this is our number one concern, because we both need such a large workforce, and a significant portion of our existing workforce from prior elections simply can't or won't work. This also creates concerns about continuity of operations and institutional knowledge, since among those who can't work are many of our best and most seasoned poll workers, who may be replaced by people doing this for the very first time, if we find replacements at all. Mr. Lima said we will continue doing everything we can to recruit more workers, but at the end of the day, he's not sure if it will be enough.

The next major concern is polling places. Mr. Lima said that many cities and towns are really struggling with this right now, due to capacity restrictions and the fact that many locations are shut down due to the pandemic. Mr. Lima said, by sheer luck, Cranston is in better shape because the function halls are willing to work with us because they need revenue, and the vast majority of our other locations are schools and municipal buildings under direct city control. However, we still do have challenges in terms of the manors, as both Arlington Manor and Budlong Manor are unavailable because of their status as housing units. Additionally, the community rooms where we conduct voting there are two of the smallest spaces, by square footage, of any polling places in the city, and can't logistically be set up for social distancing and still be in compliance.

Mr. Lima said the challenge, generally, with polling places for September and November is logistics. Even the social distance dots stuck on the ground – which for June 2, we had 45-50 available at a cost of a few dollars each – become a significant operational cost and hurdle to overcome, because we would need hundreds purchased at a cost of thousands of dollars, and set up in advance at 30 locations, which takes time. In lieu of that, Mr. Lima said he will be providing vinyl floor-marking tape to each of the polls, which is less of a cost and leaves it up to the moderator at each location to mark the floor for traffic flow and stations accordingly. For June 2, with just two locations, about 4 hours was spent setting up each location. Because of the Labor Day holiday and other logistical complications, there isn't time or staff available to set up all 30 locations to that extent on Labor Day and guarantee we could be ready for 6 a.m. on primary day. Additionally, many of the locations are still in active use – meaning we can't set up more than a couple of days in advance. This puts us in a scenario where we have to make significant adjustments to the level of set-up we did for June 2 in order to make it work.

Mr. Lima said the overtime cost for operating the office and setting up the polls over the Labor Day weekend alone will be thousands of dollars, all of which is unbudgeted for. We will need dozens of city workers from Building Maintenance, Highway, Parks and Rec., and other departments to get this done. He also said that due to material shortages, he is unsure if he can get the 160 plexiglass screens that will be needed at the locations. He has asked the state for help, financial support, or guidance on this, however so far we have been on our own in figuring this all out. While Building Maintenance built 13 plexiglass screens for June 2 in-house, they don't have the staff or materials to spend the next two months building another 150 or 160, so they will have to be custom built by a vendor to fit the PollPad specifications and purchased.

Mr. Lima said the other logistical challenge is how to deliver, store, and set-up all of those screens over Labor Day weekend to 30 locations, most of which are operating on minimum staff, without breaking the screens, or disrupting operations at the locations that are still open. Additionally, they will all have to be retrieved and stored somewhere after the election, and prepared again for November. Mr. Lima said protecting our poll workers and protecting the voters is paramount, but there's limitations on what we can feasibly do, and we don't have an army at our disposal. Mr. Lima said set-up will be easier in November because there's no federal holiday complicating logistics. There's also additional folding tables, cones, and a significant amount of interior and exterior signage that has or is being acquired, which all also needs to be deployed.

Mr. Lima said the last major issue is the processing of mail ballots themselves. He said that over 12,000 applications were processed by the office in April and May, with the help of staff from five other city departments, which is four times the volume received in any election ever before. He said that if the state does this again in late July or early August, we could see 15,000 to 20,000 come back for September, and as many as 25,000 or 30,000 for the general election in November. This total of 40,000 to 50,000 mail ballot applications in a three-month period is an order of magnitude more than our staff can open, sort, process, copy, and input into the system.

For the June 2 primary, Mr. Lima said our staff worked from 7 a.m. to late at night daily, without ever taking breaks for lunch, in order to stay ahead, and that was with the help of staff from other departments each day. Mr. Lima said the state really needs to step up and figure out a centralized processing center to make this all work for us for the fall elections, because there's limits to what we can handle, and we and other towns met those limits this spring. He said he's ordered additional equipment and asked IT to set up new computer workstations in the office, but even then, there's a finite amount of physical space and staff available to handle several times the volume we're presently equipped to deal with. We just don't have the ability to scale up any higher than what we already did, and what we already did pushed us to extreme limits in May.

Mr. Lima said he has made this fact abundantly clear in his conversations with the Board of Elections and Department of State Elections Division.

Mr. Vierra asked what Mr. Lima recommends, and what the Board can do to help.

Mr. Lima said the BOE took a vote yesterday to not send mail ballot applications to all voters in September, and took no position for November. The SOS has been of the opinion to do so for both elections, however, the thought is that won't happen for September because of the cost, and that most cities and towns don't have substantial – or any – primaries. That said, Cranston has one of the only highly contested set of races on the ballot. Mr. Lima said that for us, money isn't even the factor here – it's not a cost problem for us, but a problem of logistics, staff, available equipment, and even physical office space that we have to work with. We can only fit so many staff members in our office, and we could try and figure out a way to run multiple shifts if we had to, but those options aren't realistic for a department of this size, and City Hall isn't operationally capable of supporting that for weeks on end. Even if it could be figured out, Mr. Lima said, it would be a disastrous way to do things, because the mail ballots would completely monopolize our time, and polling place logistics, poll worker recruitment, and emergency voting preparation would not get the attention they need to be successful. Mr. Lima added that voter registrations spike in a presidential year, meaning we also have thousands of time-sensitive voter registrations that need to be processed over the next several months, while all of this is going on simultaneously.

Mr. Lima said the main solution would be to centrally conduct the mail ballot application process, and take it, to the extent possible, out of the hands of local boards of canvassers. He said if you look at the states that do predominantly mail ballots, it's not done in a back-and-forth way between a BOE, SOS, and local board-type structure.

Mr. Lima said the state needs to remove the bulk of application processing from the 39 cities and towns, set up a centralized facility with a few dozen election officials, and open, sort, and process the applications. At the very least, the centralized facility would need to process the bulk of the applications, and send any questionable ones or rejections to the local boards to review.

Mr. Vierra asked if that would require legislative action. Mr. Lima said that's a good question. Authority can be delegated, and the state should be able to provide assistance without enabling legislation, provided they can set up the processing. The BOE has signaled, however, that they do not want to take over that process. The SOS, meanwhile, is understanding of the concerns local boards have expressed and is working on a solution. There is unanimous agreement among local election directors that something needs to be done to alleviate the burden on cities and towns, or we will be set up for failure by compromising both the mail ballot process and the other election processes where attention is being diverted from.

Mr. Lima said failure is not an option, but he clearly sees the reality of the challenges we're facing and at the moment there aren't good solutions presenting themselves.

Ms. Petrone asked what the difference was in process as compared to other states. Mr. Lima said our system and our infrastructure is just not set up for this volume at the local level, nor can it be scaled up in the time we have. The states that switched to mail ballot voting did so on a centralized basis with a well-thought out transition process over many years; we have a couple of weeks to figure this out, possibly without state support. Mr.

Lima said that in Rhode Island, three agencies must interact for each and every individual ballot, which is a time-consuming and cumbersome process that breaks down when attempted at high volume without an infrastructure in place to support it.

Mr. Vierra said this is even more complex because two Board members must come in daily to sign every mail ballot certification sheet before it can be finalized, which is thousands of sheets. He felt we are being set up to fail.

Mr. Lima asked the Board to take a position wherein they signaled that they were OK with the bulk of the mail ballot application processing being taken out of our hands and handled by a centralized, statewide location. He said doing so would free up a massive amount of time, allowing us to handle emergency voting, recruit and train poll workers, and deal with logistics at the polling locations, along with bond question mailers, warrants, ads, and other responsibilities. He said failure comes when we attempt to do multiple processes, all to the most extreme level imaginable, all simultaneously. Something has to give to prevent a total collapse.

Mr. Jackvony asked who the most appropriate person would be to direct this statement to, who could actually get this done at the state level. Mr. Lima said the BOE has already signaled that they don't want to or can't operationally do it, but really, it should go to everyone: the SOS, BOE, General Assembly, and the Governor. He said that all of the agencies have the power to make something happen, either by executive order, legislative authority, or direct action, and given the gravity of our concerns, our appeal should be made to anyone who can help.

Mr. Lima said that he believes the SOS is actively trying to figure out a solution to this issue presently, and that the Board taking a formal position and signaling our need for assistance would help that.

Mr. Jackvony said he is concerned there could be a massive failure here if pressure isn't taken off the municipalities and local boards. He wants any letter drafted to be succinct and get the attention of the officials who need to act on this issue. He said the Board members and Registrar could also make phone calls.

Mr. Lima said he has been publicly talking about this issue for several weeks now because the state has not really presented any viable options since the June 2 primary. He said it would be helpful if, now, state leaders also heard from Board members about this as an additional voice.

MOTION: By Mr. Jackvony and seconded by Mr. Vierra to direct the Registrar to draft a letter, for the chairperson to review, indicating the Board's concerns and its support for a centralized mail ballot application processing center.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0

Mr. Lima said this is a most urgent matter, because it's currently July 9, and despite numerous requests, we still do not have a statewide COVID-19 operations plan to

conduct the September primary and November election. He said it's been a very disjointed effort, and there's not much in the way of unified action going on, aside from the BOE's action yesterday to state they would be purchasing 24-hour mail ballot drop boxes with federal dollars. Mr. Lima said he is concerned about the timeline there, too, because he said the state is still working on how to purchase them, and the drop boxes may not even be in place in time for the voter registration deadline or the primary itself.

Besides that, the SOS task force's recommendations, and the emergency voting bill, there is no other substantive action taking place at the state level at this time on the many other issues that face us in safely conducting the upcoming elections. Mr. Lima said that is frustrating and infuriating to him as an elections official, and he is very concerned at the overall lack of statewide conversation about or recognition of these challenges, considering how much focus other areas affected by COVID are getting. He apologized for taking up so much of the Board's time on this topic, but said he did so because we have very serious problems but very little unified direction from the state that is legally supposed to oversee, guide, and support us in ensuring elections do not fail.

Mr. Joslyn asked to clarify who would receive the letter. Mr. Lima said it would be the General Assembly leadership, to include the Senate President and Speaker of the House, along with the entire Cranston delegation, the governor, the BOE, the Secretary of State, and the congressional delegation. Mr. Joslyn said we are already absorbing the added expense and increased staff right now. He alluded to Mr. Lima's report that there are several million dollars of federal funds in possession of the state designed to help run elections in the pandemic, which the state is using for their own changing operations, but has not been distributed to cities and towns to provide aid.

Mr. Lima said that, ultimately, the state has a larger workforce, IT infrastructure, and access to funding sources to make a centralized center work far better than the 39 cities and towns simply figuring it out, independently of each other and on our own, without state help, ever could. He said that the BOE's new warehouse on Plainfield Pike, for example, is massive in size and could easily fit 100 people social distancing in one of its rooms for this purpose. It would by no means be an easy task, but if anyone could do it, it would be them because they have more resources than we do.

Mr. Joslyn said if this issue is taken up instead by the General Assembly, it would be important for Mr. Lima and his fellow election directors to appear and testify at the hearings. Mr. Lima said the problem there, presently, is that under the current COVID conditions, the State House is closed and there is no verbal testimony allowed – only legislators are allowed in the committee room. So while written testimony can be submitted in advance, there's currently no way to provide a passionate verbal plea or answer live questions from legislators in a normal hearing setting, which makes the argument tougher to get across. Mr. Lima said he was on a conference call with several communities this morning, and they are unanimously in support of this and willing to reach out to as many state leaders as possible to make it happen.

D. THE BOARD MAY DISCUSS AND FORMALLY APPROVE THE SELECTION OF CRANSTON POLLING LOCATIONS FOR THE SEPT. 8, 2020 STATEWIDE PRIMARY AND NOV. 3, 2020 GENERAL ELECTION

Mr. Jackvony said we are running a little late, and that Mr. Vierra has to leave the meeting soon for a commitment.

Mr. Lima shared his screen to show his draft list of 30 polling locations being submitted to the Board for the Sept. 8 and Nov. 3 elections. He also shared a city-wide GIS voting map that shows the location of each location in all of the precincts. Mr. Lima said there are very few changes from the 2018 election. The reasoning behind opening all 30 locations for both elections is that there is a highly contested mayoral primary in both parties, in addition to competitive primaries for state representative and city council races.

As the second largest city in the state with an open mayoral race on the ballot, Mr. Lima said Cranston probably has the most highly contested local elections in all of Rhode Island in 2020, in both September and November.

Mr. Lima said Ward 1 is unchanged, and Ward 2 is mostly the same. He said that in Precinct 0726 in Ward 2, the American Legion Auburn Post 20 was purchased by a church group in April, and is now known as Templo Biblico, who are still happy to work with us. As a result, that name has changed on the official list to "Templo Biblico – American Legion Post 20" so voters can still find it easily. Additionally, because Budlong Manor is no longer available, the CLCF Gym has been added to replace it in Precinct 0715.

Mr. Lima said CLCF has not served as a polling location before, which is surprising because it is a large, well-lit and open gym space with ample parking, located directly off Pontiac Ave. He said he met with the leadership of the organization last week, and had the BOE inspect the facility, which was approved and is fully ADA compliant. He said it's everything we want in a polling location, and is far superior to Budlong Manor, which is located inside a normally locked residential facility in a small community room off of an interior hallway. He said the location is just to the south of the precinct it serves, and for some of the voters who live in the precinct, they will actually have a shorter or equidistant drive to the location. Mr. Lima said there are no other viable locations in the area aside from Central Library, which is further away from the precinct.

Because it is an out-of-precinct move, the Board's vote to approve needs to be unanimous, Mr. Lima said, in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-11-1.

Mr. Lima said the Senior Enrichment Center replaces Arlington Manor in Precinct 0701. He said the facilities are relatively close to each other, and that the Senior Center's main room is several times larger than Arlington Manor's community room, which is better for social distancing. Like Budlong Manor, Arlington is a residential facility, and many residents there have called the office and asked that it not be a public polling location for the 2,000 voters who would normally vote there on election day, due to concerns about the pandemic and the vulnerable populations who live there.

While this is also a permanent polling place change, redistricting in 2022 will shift the city's polling places and precincts again anyway, so in reality the change is just for the 2020 elections. Mr. Lima said Building Maintenance staff will ensure the Senior Center is fully cleaned before reopening after the election, and that they are willing to shut down for us both on election day and the day before to set up and secure equipment.

The only other change at this time is in Ward 3, where the Board previously voted in 2019 to permanently change Bain School to the Peter T. Pastore, Jr. Youth Center, located across the street, in Precinct 0722. Mr. Lima said Pastore is vastly superior, as Bain had been the smallest location in the city in terms of interior available space, and was located down a ramped hallway and through an industrial arts classroom in the school's lower level. Parking was also inconvenient at Bain, and the building had to be accessed from an inconspicuous side door.

Pastore, on the other hand, has a newly renovated and well-lit gym, ADA-compliant automatic doors, and ample ADA parking directly in front of the main entrance. The Parks and Recreation Department has welcomed the use of the facility as a new permanent polling place, and as a city building, it can be set up at our convenience.

Mr. Lima said there are currently no changes from 2018 in Wards 4, 5, and 6, with the exception of Santa Maria di Prata Society in Precinct 0703, where the lower level may need to be used because the top level will be unavailable for just Sept. 8. The lower level was recently inspected and approved by the BOE with Mr. Lima, although it is smaller in available space. However, because the event that was booked there Sept. 8 may be cancelled due to COVID, we may still be able to use the upper level after all. Functionally, the polling place is otherwise unchanged.

Mr. Lima said he does have some social distancing and set-up concerns about the next smallest location in the city in terms of square footage, which is St. David's in Ward 6, Precinct 0720. However, by chance, that facility serves one of the city's smallest precincts, with only a few hundred voters, so those concerns are mitigated, and capacity should not be reached due to voters being spread out throughout the day.

Mr. Lima said that at the RI National Guard Schofield Armory, Precincts 0728 and 0709, the BOE may authorize the poll workers of 0709 to cover 0728, which will reduce the number of poll workers we need to hire by three. Precinct 0728 only serves a couple dozen voters, nearly all of whom vote by mail at Eleanor Slater. If there are in-person voters in 0728, it's typically only one or two, which the existing 15 poll workers at 0709, in the same room, can handle. This remains the only "combination" polling place in the city. Mr. Lima said the Adjutant General has not yet signed off on use of the facility, despite him asking for confirmation since January of this year, however he is not concerned, as the facility staff and lieutenant colonel in charge have told him the facility is booked and the City should be fine to use it regardless.

MOTION: By Mr. Vierra and seconded by Mr. Joslyn to approve the full list of Cranston polling locations as recommended by the Registrar for the Sept. 8, 2020 Statewide Primary and Nov. 3, 2020 General Election.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0

Mr. Vierra had to depart the meeting at 5:27 p.m. Mr. Joslyn and Mr. Jackvony remained as voting members.

Mr. Lima informed the Board that all voters at Pastore, the Senior Center, and CLCF will be receiving a postcard from the Canvassing Department in the next few weeks informing them of the polling place change, ahead of the September primary.

UPDATES AND REMARKS

REGISTRAR / DIRECTOR OF ELECTIONS – Nicholas Lima

Mr. Lima had no additional remarks.

COMMENTS OF BOARD MEMBERS

There were no comments from Board members.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: By Mr. Joslyn and seconded by Mr. Jackvony to adjourn.
PASSED UNANIMOUSLY – VOICE VOTE

The meeting was adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

APPROVED by the Cranston Board of Canvassers: May 20, 2021