

CITY OF CRANSTON
BOARD OF CANVASSERS
Regular Meeting of August 10, 2023 – OFFICIAL MINUTES

The Cranston Board of Canvassers met on August 10, 2023, in a meeting advertised in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act on August 4, 2023. The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, James Donahue, at 12:08 p.m. It was held in the Canvassing Authority Office, Room 100 at Cranston City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: James Donahue, Kirk McDonough (for Ms. Moronta)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Quilcia Moronta

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

The Chair declared a quorum present.

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER (NO VOTES TAKEN)
- II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS – 6-27-2023 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- IV. PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – CHAIRPERSON (NO VOTES TAKEN)
- V. PUBLIC COMMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- VI. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. 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 AUGUST 9, 2023 IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-14-13 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
 - B. THE BOARD MAY REVIEW AND APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 5, 2023 CRANSTON CITY COUNCIL – WARD 6 SPECIAL PRIMARY BALLOT CERTIFICATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-14-16 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
 - C. IF THERE IS NO CONTEST, THE BOARD MAY VOTE TO DISPENSE WITH A PRIMARY ELECTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-15-11 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- VII. UPDATES FROM THE REGISTRAR (ALL ITEMS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY; NO VOTES TAKEN)
 - A. UNITED STATES ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION LOCAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING REPORT
 - B. MS/EI-ISAC ANNUAL MEETING REPORT
 - C. AUG. 17 AND SEPT. 29 STATE ELECTION SECURITY TRAININGS
- VIII. ADJOURNMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Lima noted that Ms. Moronta and Mr. Barone were absent because they were both traveling abroad this week. Mr. Donahue asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

MOTION: By Mr. McDonough and seconded by Mr. Donahue to approve the agenda as posted.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 2-0 – Mr. McDonough and Mr. Donahue voting aye.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS – 6-27-2023 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

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

MOTION: By Mr. McDonough and seconded by Mr. Donahue to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2023 meeting.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 2-0 – Mr. McDonough and Mr. Donahue voting aye.

PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – CHAIRPERSON (NO VOTES TAKEN)

The Board had no public acknowledgements.

PUBLIC COMMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Bob Murray said the Canvassing Authority office staff and Ms. Madonna were very helpful in timely providing copies of nomination papers when requested.

NEW BUSINESS

A. 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 AUGUST 9, 2023 IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-14-13 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Lima said no objections were filed by yesterday's 4 p.m. deadline, so there is no action necessary to be taken on this item by the Board. Mr. Lima said no Cranston-related objections appear on tomorrow state BOE agenda, either.

B. THE BOARD MAY REVIEW AND APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 5, 2023 CRANSTON CITY COUNCIL – WARD 6 SPECIAL PRIMARY BALLOT CERTIFICATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-14-16 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Lima said since there is no primary ballot, the certification to the Secretary of State will reflect that fact and this particular item does not require a vote of the Board. Mr. Lima asked the Board to sign the Oct. 3 Special Election ballot certification in its place, following the conclusion of this afternoon's ballot placement lottery for independent

candidates. With no objections having been filed or in need of adjudication, the ballot certification is a ministerial task and does not require a vote of the Board – the Secretary of State simply needs a document from our office for which to base the ballot design off of. Mr. Lima said the Secretary of State didn't need the Oct. 3 certification until September, however as the next action of the Board is to officially dispense with the primary, he can get the candidate list to their office today, which means we can get ballot proofs to review sooner. The Board will not need to come in until the Final Canvass in September. Mr. Donahue thanked Mr. Lima for his efficiency.

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

Mr. Lima said the draft of this document was distributed for review last week. Mr. Lima said it is unusual in Cranston for there to be an election without a primary, so this statutory provision is not commonly invoked. To cross our T's and dot our I's, Mr. Lima said he prepared duplicate original copies, one for our permanent record and one for the Secretary of State, and because this will be official certification that there is no primary for a Council Special Election to fill a vacancy, he will transmit an emailed copy to the BOE, city administration, Council President, and solicitor's office. Mr. Lima informed the Board that when we have a final election certification, there will actually be triplicate original copies for them to sign, with the third copy in that case going to the City Clerk for the city's permanent records. That will be the case again this October when the Board certifies the Ward 6 Special Election results; the certification will be the legal evidence allowing the new council member to be seated and sworn into office.

MOTION: By Mr. McDonough and seconded by Mr. Donahue to dispense with the holding of the Sept. 5, 2023 Special Primary Election in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-15-11 due to there being no contest in either party.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 2-0 – Mr. McDonough and Mr. Donahue voting aye.

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

Mr. Donahue asked the Registrar to present his updates.

A. UNITED STATES ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION LOCAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

Mr. Lima said the LLC is a brand-new body created by the EAC to advise the federal agency on local election administration needs and concerns. There are 100 members, with two local election clerks from each state, and the meeting in July was in Washington, D.C. and the first ever in-person meeting for the LLC. Most of the content of the conference was getting the LLC's infrastructure off the ground, including the formation of an Executive Committee to provide guidance and direction in between annual meetings.

Mr. Lima said he was one of 10 members elected to the Executive Committee for the Northeast Region, along with a colleague from Delaware. Mr. Lima said he was satisfied with that result and would not be seeking any additional responsibility, as he does not want to overextend himself, and being on the Executive Committee itself will be enough extra work. Mr. Lima said he is serving with some extremely qualified and experienced local election officials on the Executive Committee and knows they will step up and provide leadership for vacant officer positions of Secretary and Vice-Chair.

Mr. Lima said he is also a member of the EAC's Standards Board, and attended that annual meeting earlier this year. He said the LLC's meeting was the first true, organized national meeting of local election officials. Other national election organizations exist, but mostly for continuing education purposes, or with a focus on organizing state election directors and secretaries of state. He said the opportunity to meet both formally and socially with his peers from across the country was eye-opening, and there was a general feeling of satisfaction from all of the attendees he spoke with that the new LLC will fill a major gap in communications and coordination among local election officials, and provide a stronger voice in the federal government when it comes to policy, funding, and support.

Another takeaway Mr. Lima said he had was the realization that other states have much more in-depth, state-led training and certification programs for local elections staff. He said he took back a lot of information about those programs, and has reached out to the Secretary of State's office about the possibility of getting a similar, professionalized program supported in Rhode Island modeled after them. While we receive training now, it is not as universal or regular as it could be, and in fact is in other states.

Mr. Lima said the cost of his attendance was fully funded by the EAC.

B. MS/EI-ISAC ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

Mr. Lima said he last attended the MS/EI-ISAC Annual Meeting in Denver in 2019. This year's meeting in Salt Lake City showcased how much the security collaborative has grown since then, with over 1,000 attendees at the conference and multiple panels occurring simultaneously. Mr. Lima said election security was a prime focus of the meeting, among other critical infrastructure and cybersecurity themes.

He said he came away from the conference with a much greater understanding of the latest physical and cyber threats that elections are facing, and had the opportunity to meet and converse with dozens of election security experts from CISA, the FBI, and CISOs from several states. Mr. Lima said there are 10 regions for CISA, and they announced they will be adding a new Election Security Advisor position dedicated to election security for each region, including Region 1 which covers New England. The ESA will work with existing cybersecurity and protective security advisors to bridge communication gaps and ensure elections offices are being provided the support they need.

Mr. Donahue said it's great that Mr. Lima engages in professional development, and asked if there are things he has learned that can translate to changes and improvements for the city administration and the office to implement. Mr. Lima said he has brought up a long list of security improvements for the city IT Department based on his attendance both at this conference and in 2019, many of which have been implemented over the last few years or will be added in the coming months to strengthen the office's and the city's network defenses.

Mr. Lima said he also has a more fine-tuned viewpoint of the threat landscape we face in elections, from hostile nation-state threat actors to other physical and individual threats. One key point raised this year is that with the development of AI technology, the bar for entry for threat actors has been lowered, and it requires far fewer resources and skills today to launch a cyber attack or phishing campaign than it did just a few years ago. Mr. Lima said we were able to bring CISA in to do a city cyber assessment last year, and just earlier this summer to conduct a physical security review of the office and suggest improvements.

Mr. Lima said the Center for Internet Security runs the ISACs, through funding from the Department of Homeland Security. He said that he covered the cost of his flight and hotel, and will be reimbursed by DHS.

C. AUG. 17 AND SEPT. 29 STATE ELECTION SECURITY TRAININGS

Mr. Lima said the state and federal government are holding a nationwide elections security table-top exercise on Aug. 17, and the Board is invited and encouraged to attend if they are available. The event will take place at the state Board of Elections office in Cranston. Mr. Lima said he has attended this table-top training in the past, and it's a good opportunity to interact with other state election offices. Different scenarios are presented to the attendees, and injects are provided to test policies and reactions to evolving situations in real-time.

On Sept. 29, Mr. Lima said the state will be conducting their cybersecurity seminar, which is the largest event they conduct related to cyber training every two years. This will be tough for our office, however, because it is also the Friday before the Oct. 3 Special Election, and we need our office staffed to conduct early voting.

The summit is being held at Naval Station Newport, so for security reasons advanced registration is required. At this time it does not look like we will be able to send our staff, but Mr. Lima will try to attend in the morning.

Mr. Lima said he has reached out to Cranston's IT Director to see if she can attend, as IT officials from all 39 cities and towns are encouraged to attend as well. The Board is also invited to attend. Previous summits have had over 100 local election officials, board members, and IT staff from around the state, and featured unclassified security briefings from DHS and CISA, the RI National Guard, RI State Police, FBI, NSA, and cybersecurity specialists from the Pell Center.

ADJOURNMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

MOTION: By Mr. McDonough and seconded by Mr. Donahue to adjourn.
PASSED UNANIMOUSLY – VOICE VOTE

The meeting was adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

APPROVED by the Cranston Board of Canvassers: September 12, 2023