

CITY OF CRANSTON  
BOARD OF CANVASSERS  
Special Meeting of November 7, 2024 – OFFICIAL MINUTES

The Cranston Board of Canvassers met on November 7, 2024, in a meeting advertised in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act on September 24, 2024. The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Kirk McDonough, at 9:00 a.m. It was held in the Canvassing Authority Office, Room 100, at Cranston City Hall.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Quilcia Moronta

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT: Justin Erickson (Board Alternate), Nicholas Lima (Registrar / Director of Elections), Theresa Bucci (Deputy Registrar), Maria Madonna (Election Operations Coordinator), Emerson Brito (Bilingual Elections Specialist); present for provisional ballot adjudication later in the day were Chris Orton (Assistant City Solicitor), David Igliazzi (Board Legal Counsel), Mark Hartmann (Legal Counsel for Maria Bucci), Robert Murray (Legal Counsel for Chris Paplauskas), Maria Bucci (Rep. Dist. 15 Candidate), Christopher Paplauskas (Rep. Dist. 15 Candidate); in the morning to view write-tabulation was Rob Rock (Deputy Secretary of State)

The chair declared a quorum present.

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER (NO VOTES TAKEN)
- II. OLD BUSINESS
  - A. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AND CONSIDER ANY ELECTION MATTER THAT REQUIRES AN IMMEDIATE RULING OR DETERMINATION RELATED TO THE NOVEMBER 5, 2024 RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ELECTION (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
  - B. THE BOARD MAY CONVENE FOR THE PURPOSE OF DETERMINING THE DISPOSITION OF PROVISIONAL BALLOTS CAST DURING THE RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ELECTION OF NOVEMBER 5, 2024, IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-19-24.3 AND 410-RICR-20-00-13 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
  - C. THE BOARD MAY TABULATE WRITE-IN VOTES CAST DURING THE RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ELECTION OF NOVEMBER 5, 2024, IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-19-31 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
  - D. DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF THE CONDUCT OF THE NOVEMBER 5, 2024 RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ELECTION (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- III. ADJOURNMENT (VOTE MAY BE TAKEN)

OLD BUSINESS

A. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AND CONSIDER ANY ELECTION MATTER THAT REQUIRES AN IMMEDIATE RULING OR DETERMINATION RELATED TO THE NOVEMBER 5, 2024 RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ELECTION (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

There were no outstanding matters that require an immediate ruling or determination from the Nov. 5, 2024 General Election.

B. THE BOARD MAY CONVENE FOR THE PURPOSE OF DETERMINING THE DISPOSITION OF PROVISIONAL BALLOTS CAST DURING THE RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ELECTION OF NOVEMBER 5, 2024, IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-19-24.3 AND 410-RICR-20-00-13 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

At approximately 2:20 p.m., the Board paused the tabulation of write-in votes to resume provisional ballot adjudication. Mr. Lima noted for the record all those present as listed in the header of the minutes.

Mr. McDonough noted that the supply closet near where the candidates and attorneys are observing the meeting has a water leak and black mold which the office staff have repeatedly been asking to be remediated but to date has not been corrected for a number of months. For health and safety reasons Mr. McDonough noted it for the record and so everyone present could be made aware.

There was one outstanding provisional ballot related to the Representative District 15 contest that was held at yesterday's meeting, for Beth Davis, pending review by the Board's legal counsel. Both Mr. Orton and Mr. Iglizzi were present to advise the Board. Mr. Orton reviewed the facts of the matter before the Board. It was noted that, at the time of yesterday's meeting, it was believed the voter did not provide appropriate photo ID, which is what was marked on the provisional ballot by the poll workers. The voter also had an affidavit of voter requiring assistance on file from the polling location.

In reviewing the discrepancy reports from the polls, it was noted the poll workers referenced the voter did have a form of ID which they did not recognize, as they were unfamiliar with it and no image of the ID is provided in poll worker training, which is an RI SOS-issued voter ID card. This card is valid for voting purposes, so the poll workers clearly erred in having the voter cast a provisional ballot and it she should have been issued a regular ballot. Mr. Orton noted he has consulted with Mr. Iglizzi and it is their opinion that the provisional ballot should be accepted given this information. Mr. Iglizzi signaled his agreement.

Mr. Lima noted we have a standing motion still in place to accept provisional ballots by unanimous consent unless there is disagreement, and asked how the Board would like to provide. Mr. McDonough said the Board should take a vote on this one. He asked for a motion.

MOTION: By Mr. Piscopiello and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to provide a full ballot for provisional voter Beth Davis in Precinct 0704.  
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Piscopiello, Mr. Rivelli, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

Mr. Murray asked if any other District 15 ballots have been discovered since yesterday in drop boxes, the vault, or anywhere else beyond what has already been acted on or has been noted as being in possession of the BOE or Board of Canvassers. Mr. Lima said there were none, and that all ballots are accounted for. He said that Category 3 military/overseas FPCA ballots are pending, as they have been pending since Election Day, but those are in the possession of the state BOE, not our office. He said the deadline for the state BOE to receive those has not passed, which is 4 p.m. on Tuesday. He said there were 14 FPCAs outstanding in the entire city he is aware of, three of which are in District 15, and two of which are full ballots and one is a federal only ballot which would not have an impact on this race. Mr. Lima noted those ballots may or may not arrive by the deadline at the BOE from those military/overseas voters.

Mr. Lima said there are also deficient mail ballots that have been received by the BOE which can be cured by voters and/or adjudicated by the state Board. Those ballots are either missing a signature, or the signature was deemed by the BOE to not match during certification. He said he is aware of two deficient ballots in possession of the BOE that relate to District 15. The deadline is likewise 4 p.m. on Tuesday for voters to cure deficiencies.

Mr. Lima said that all drop box and receptacle mail ballots in our possession were delivered via police escort to the state BOE the night of the election after polls closed, so all are in possession of the state BOE. No mail ballots are in the custody of the Cranston Board of Canvassers. He said the BOE is processing these mail ballots on a daily basis, and the vast majority seemed to have been added to the public totals last night. When he spoke to BOE staff this morning, they informed him there are several hundred more they are still working on. About an hour ago, he received an email from the BOE noting that all mail ballots were scanned in, although they may not all be reflected in online unofficial results yet.

Mr. Lima said there are 89 provisional ballots to be adjudicated by the Board later today for president-only, and a few others flagged by the staff for the Board to review but that are not in District 15. He said in reviewing the election certificates and Election Night returns, there are no manual count ballots in the entire city.

Mr. Hartmann asked if the Board could go through one more time the names of the full ballots adjudicated in District 15 so he could make sure he had his notes correct. Mr. Lima said there were 11 total full ballots, no federal only ballots, and no qualified pending mail ballot provisionals in District 15. Ms. T. Bucci provided the 11 qualified provisional ballots to Mr. McDonough, who read off the names.

Mr. Murray asked if we will be notified by the BOE when the outstanding military and deficient ballots are added to the total. Mr. Lima said we are not typically directly notified, no. He did note that deficient ballot adjudication by the state BOE and mail ballot certifications by BOE staff are publicly posted.

Mr. Murray noted that in the media it was reported that Ms. Bucci had requested a recount from the BOE, and asked what happens next. Mr. Lima said he expects the BOE will notify us, but the deadline is 4 p.m. on Tuesday and we have not been formally notified yet. When we are notified, we will likely be informed of what day next week the recount will occur, and we will be directed to transport early voting and District 15 precinct ballots, as well as provisional ballots, to the BOE, which will be done with police escort. He noted the recount process can take several days if there are requests filed and approved by the BOE in multiple towns and contests. Mr. Lima said as soon as he is notified, he will notify and contact all of the involved parties.

The attorneys and candidates left the meeting at this time. The Board resumed adjudicating provisional ballots. Mr. Iglizzi remained to provide legal counsel on the provisional ballots left to review. Ms. T. Bucci reviewed the ballots with the Board, which adjudicated them by unanimous consent.

Two of the provisional ballots involved voters who registered from suspected commercial property addresses. Mr. Lima explained the procedure our office established in the past for voters who we identify registering from commercial addresses. He noted the Board will have to consider these matters at a future meeting and determine whether or not to file formal challenges against these voter registration records, however that is a multi-step, multi-month process. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Piscopiello asked if the fact that these voters are asserting their domicile on the provisional ballot application is enough. Mr. Iglizzi recommended we should lean towards not disenfranchising the voter based on suspected commercial property without going through the process because at this time there is no one challenging or supporting it, and the Board only has limited information to work with to adjudicate the provisionals. Mr. Iglizzi said that Mr. Lima created a thorough process to handle voters at commercial property, so we should be careful not to short-circuit it here.

Mr. Rivelli asked if there was a way these people could have voted twice. Mr. Lima said that would be highly unlikely, because they were inactive at the prior address which would have required checking in on a PollPad and an affirmation. Ms. T. Bucci advised the Board of the circumstances for each provisional ballot and the recommended disposition.

The Board reviewed additional provisional ballots and approved the disposition changes by unanimous consent and the provisional totals were updated accordingly. The Board then continued with write-in tabulation, and later in the evening adjudicated the 89 President/Vice President Only provisional ballots.

#### C. THE BOARD MAY TABULATE WRITE-IN VOTES CAST DURING THE RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ELECTION OF NOVEMBER 5, 2024, IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-19-31 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

The Board continued write-in tallying starting at 9 a.m. and for approximately 13 hours throughout the entire day and into the evening. After all write-in votes cast were reviewed by the members in public session, Board alternates assisted in the process of

tallying the numbers up and transferring them to BOE-provided tally sheets while the rest of the Board adjudicated provisional ballots. Board members noted two full days have already been spent on the process.

Rob Rock, Deputy Secretary of State, visited the meeting at Cranston City Hall to observe the write-in tabulation process in the morning.

#### D. DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF THE CONDUCT OF THE NOVEMBER 5, 2024 RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ELECTION (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

The Board members noted the write-in tabulation process is antiquated, inefficient, and in need of significant changes. Mr. Lima noted the Rhode Island House of Representatives has passed a write-in tabulation reform bill three times, but it has never been taken up for a vote by the Senate.

Board members lamented at the absurdity of the process, noting that the vast majority of the write-ins they were hand counting were for fictional characters, non-existent persons, or ineligible persons. Many others were frivolous, contained vulgar or racist statements, were blank, or were completely illegible.

It was noted that there were no write-in campaigns in the City of Cranston yet there were over 4,000 write-in votes to be reviewed, tallied, and added up by hand to comply with current state law. Board members expressed their willingness to testify to the General Assembly in the 2025 session to change this process.

#### ADJOURNMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

APPROVED by the Cranston Board of Canvassers: December 5, 2024