

**SPALDING COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS & REGISTRATION**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**January 11, 2022**  
**Minutes**

The regular meeting of the Spalding County Board of Elections and Registration was held at the County Courthouse Annex, 109 East Solomon Street at 6 p.m. Attending were Chairman Ben Johnson, presiding and Board Members Roy McClain, Jim Newland, Jim O'Brien, and Alfred Jester. Also present were Elections Supervisor Kim Slaughter, Attorney Stephanie Windham, and Teresa Watson to record minutes.

**Call to Order**

Chairman Ben Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. (delayed due to technical difficulties) and welcomed everyone. He read a brief statement regarding meeting protocol.

**Invocation/Moment of Silence**

Jim O'Brien provided the invocation.

**Pledge**

Jim Newland led the pledge.

Chairman Johnson read the guidelines for Citizen Comment.

She

**Citizen Comment**

Signed to speak were the following:

Dr. Yoshunda Jones, 509 N. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Griffin, GA

She noted a list of issues, to include: proper notice not being given in the legal organ for the City of Griffin elections, the Griffin Daily News erroneously publishing a wrong date for early voting, a potential candidate for a City of Griffin commission office was qualified after the deadline in violation of state law, incorrect information was given on absentee ballots, voting information was verified over the phone within earshot of others in the room, absentee voting irregularities exist, names of candidates were missing on the ballot, early voting was occurring before poll worker training was complete, certain voting equipment was moved during early voting, cameras were monitored on someone's phone, timely responses to ORAs have not been provided, and agendas, minutes, and notices of meetings have not been provided in a timely fashion. She felt it incumbent on those interested in getting answers to keep this list in the minds of board members.

Dr. Karen Mathiak, Griffin, GA

She thanked the Board and Dr. Jones, so we can move forward and address these issues with answers. She relayed that the day after the last election, a gentleman brought forward 12 ballots that were delivered to his home. Representative Knight and she did not turn over the originals to ensure their safety, but they feel a real need to make sure everyone is aware. They gave the information to the Secretary of State's Office, along with others. Others watched people stuff outside ballot boxes with tons of ballots, instead of a few, as would be the case with family members. She wondered if the ballot boxes could be placed under surveillance. There has been a great deal of misinformation, and she was appreciative of this Board's efforts. The biggest thing we need is to protect the integrity of the voting process. She thanked Kim Slaughter for pointing out some issues herself, i.e., the excess of ballot paper and other things.

Chairman Johnson asked Ms. Slaughter to follow up with Dr. Jones to get proper inquiries and begin the research for answers.

**Adoption of Agenda**

*Mr. O'Brien moved to include a discussion in regard to a recent petition, and Mr. Jester seconded. Motion/second to approve the agenda as amended by Mr. McClain/Mr. Jester carried 5-0.*

## **Minutes:**

Consider approval of Minutes for the Spalding County Board of Elections and Registrations meetings on December 14, 2021 (Regular and Executive Session).

Chairman Johnson noted that the website is up to date on agendas but not minutes, but that will be remedied soon. He had one correction: on the last page, he stated that in his comments, the word recall should be changed to the word recommend.

*Motion/second to approve with the above-noted correction by Mr. Newland/Mr. Jester carried 5-0.*

## **Old Business**

- a. Update from Ad Hoc Committee regarding facilities and security.

Roy McClain appreciated the time to review the ongoing process of looking at different facilities and security type issues. A report is being drafted, and there has been a narrative in the board's minutes. Many items have not yet been completed because of staff illness, the inability to collaborate with our attorney, and with the County Clerk of Courts on storage. More definitive report will be provided by the next meeting.

With regard to records: 1) There is no file plan per se, so retrieval is very difficult with many records haphazardly thrown into boxes and put into storage with no rhyme or reason. They will propose a storage/filing protocol. Records hopefully can be moved back to the Board of Elections or have their own dedicated space at least, not dependent on the Spalding County Court Clerk. Some records will be eligible for destruction and others not. There will be other requirements, as well, for maintaining records; some recommendations will be short-term for accessibility, and some will address long-term storage. 2) We have a plan for reporting to the Secretary of State's Office now. We still have not been able to answer some ORA (Open Record Act) requests due to several issues. Right now, we must have an order from the court to access stored records which has made ORA responses very difficult to complete. We have yet to determine how much it will cost to plan this space and develop a workable plan for record storage. Ms. Windham urged the committee to not destroy anything that is needed for active ORA requests and to do everything according to the law. A couple of members have been there to oversee but we need a plan to execute after we get things moved. Videotaping and having a witness when accessing will be ensured. All these things will make it easier for staff to access records and speed the process.

- b. Discussion revolving email petitions received.

Mr. O'Brien requested this agenda item to address emails that have been received, beginning on the Friday after Thanksgiving with an email to the Board of Commissioners, our representatives, our senator, and the Elections Board. The emails suggested a forensic audit of 2020 and 2021 elections, an investigation, and a called meeting.

YouTube picked up the story and shared it, noted Chairman Johnson, and everyone got blanketed with emails after the initial impetus. We have received over 2000 or so, with only 50-60 from actual Spalding County residents. There was some question about our authority and any mandates we could make to protect the rights of all citizens to fair and clear elections. Chairman Johnson referenced comments from Dr. Jones – but Dr. Jones requested her name not be linked in any way to this email effort. People have different comments and questions about various claims. This Board can review and prove or disprove and investigate but cannot do a forensic audit ourselves. Further, even if an audit shows things to be done perfectly correct, it might not be enough based on how things have gone. It may not be adequate to quell the issues raised, probably not. It can be surmised that not everything was done perfectly because we are all humans. However, on Attorney General Chris Carr's desk, there is a huge amount of evidence that indicates a raised level of maladministration. And there will almost be additional things after the initial investigation. Chairman Johnson said a

decision made here in Spalding County may set a precedent on how to manage these issues with integrity. We can take the claims at face value and review them on their merit.

Mr. Newland and Mr. Jester felt we need to ensure voters that we are taking it seriously Mr. Newland also questioned the ability of a board to audit itself, and Mr. Jester agreed.

Mr. O'Brien had a different set of thoughts. First, he saw 30 residents of Spalding County, and that got his attention. Then came about 1900 more people who have no factual knowledge of things going on here. So, it really may be as simple as YouTube getting something started. Also, it could be a larger organized effort or cyber attack intended to harass. All kinds of accusations can be considered with few facts. The holidays impaired the effort.

Chairman Johnson categorically disagreed with the characterization of a cyber-attack. Mr. O'Brien was inundated with deleting and removing the ones from out of state. Something else may be going on that is not as simple as YouTube.

Mr. McClain had a question for the attorney. If an ORA comes in does it matter where it comes from? No, was the answer. These, however, are not ORAs which we must take seriously.

Chairman Johnson said Spalding County has been in the national news several times, including this incident. People may very well be paying attention to what is going on here.

Mr. O'Brien felt it was important that residents of Spalding County know this happened. Chairman Johnson agreed and felt we owe it to the public to treat all complaints the same and look into them. We review each on its own merit and provide information. So much misinformation and misunderstanding of the elections process and responsibilities are apparent. This petition would have been much more effective if aimed at Attorney General Carr. We cannot prosecute anyone and have no control, but we can address some things that have been brought up. Again, we strive for greater transparency and feel we owe residents fair and equitable treatment, not just for a specific group.

### **New Business**

None

### **Report of Elections Supervisor –**

Kim Slaughter presented her report, noting that the State house map for reapportionment for House districts 74, 117 and 134 has been completed, with 117 being newly formed. This passed on 1-10-22; the school board lines coincide with County commissioner lines. City commissioners will address this week.

The voter registration audit team formed, and reports will be forthcoming. An in-depth look was even conducted for off years. Time is of the essence, and we will tackle this during this year. He contemplated this taking about two weeks or perhaps less. We are looking at our physical records and comparing them to our computer records. Several issues have been identified. We are fully up to date on the voter registration file.

NCOA cards have been mailed for physical address verification and confirmation.

She began interviews for the elections system coordinator position today. The Board will be kept informed.

Approximately 150 new registrations, address & name changes for December were completed. Ms. Slaughter apologized to the Board for not posting minutes to the website. This position has a great learning curve, with much information, and she has had COVID, also, along with the holidays. She will ensure posting is done going forward.

Chairman Johnson asked how the Office stands, as far as interviews and additional staff, and wondered if there would be enough help to operate the office or would more staffing levels be needed.

Ms. Slaughter noted that once these positions are filled, we will still need a part-time voter registration clerk; that job description is out now, and applications are being received. All positions require that the applicant be a Spalding County resident and registered voter. The Board may need to consider that with so many ORAs to complete, a possible part-time position to manage that aspect may be necessary. New storage space and filing system updates will help, but further clerical assistance may be indicated.

Dominion equipment due for repair could not be shipped until later into January because of Dominion's schedules. We will be shipping out soon, and she has confirmed they are covered under warranty.

**Board Member Comments**

- McClain – No comment.
- O'Brien – He thanked Attorney Windham.
- Jester – This Board is working hard with many issues on many levels. We are seeking to be transparent and thorough with Spalding County voters and residents.
- Newland – He thanked the Board and Staff for being so easy to work with. This year will be interesting.
- Johnson – No political hats should exist in elections and on this board. There is much work to be done, and he thanked all involved.

**Adjournment**

*Motion/second to adjourn by Mr. McClain/Mr. Jester at 6:59 p.m. carried 5-0.*

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Ben Johnson, Chairman

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Teresa A. Watson, Recording Secretary