

## BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Darryl Hicks, Chairman  
Addison Lester  
Aaron Wright

## FAYETTE COUNTY, GEORGIA

Floyd L. Jones, Elections Supervisor  
Leigh Combs, Elections Officer  
April Crosby, Elections Officer



140 Stonewall Avenue West  
Public Meeting Room  
Fayetteville, GA 30214

## Minutes

April 25, 2017  
5:00 p.m.

---

Welcome to the meeting of your Fayette County Board of Elections. Your participation is appreciated. All regularly scheduled Board meetings are open to the public and are generally held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month at 5:00 p.m.

### **Chairman to Call the Meeting to Order**

Chairman Hicks called the April 25, 2017 Board of Elections meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Wright moved to approve the Agenda. Mr. Lester seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

No one spoke during Public Comments.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

#### **1. Approval of the March 24, 2017 Board of Elections Meeting Minutes.**

Mr. Lester moved to approve the March 24, 2017 Board of Elections Meeting Minutes. Mr. Wright seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

### **PUBLIC HEARING:**

#### **2. Public Hearing of staff's recommendation to remove registered Fayette County voters from the Elector's List who are registered in the State of Georgia's Secretary of State Voter Registration System as deceased.**

No one spoke during Public Hearing on this item.

Mr. Lester moved to approve staff's recommendation to remove registered Fayette County voters from the Elector's List who are registered in the State of Georgia's Secretary of State Voter Registration System as deceased. Mr. Wright seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0. A copy of this request, identified as "Attachment 1," follows these minutes and is made an official part hereof.

#### **3. Public Hearing of staff's recommendation to remove registered Fayette County voters from the Elector's List who are registered in the State of Georgia's Secretary of State Voter Registration System as felons.**

No one spoke during Public Hearing on this item.

Chairman Hicks moved to approve registered Fayette County voters from the Elector's List who are registered in the State of Georgia's Secretary of State Voter Registration System as felons, as presented. Mr. Wright seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0. A copy of the request, identified as "Attachment 2," follows these minutes and is made an official part hereof.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA:**

There were no Consent Agenda items.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

There were no Old Business items.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **4. Consideration of staff's research pertaining to the question of consolidating precincts in Fayette County.**

Chairman Hicks provided opening comments pertaining to this item. He stated that Fayette County has 36 precincts that requires a certain number of staff. He stated the 36 precincts were enacted in 1998 and since that time there have been a number of changes to how voting takes place including the ability to vote early. He stated that the Board charged staff with coming up with information to determine if it is the time to reduce the precincts to potentially 19 precincts. He said everyone is consistently focused on understanding what is the voter count of those coming to vote, the distance of travel, and the associated costs. He said the questions under consideration involved the impact to the voter, the adequacy of the polling locations, and the issues of those having to vote in two separate locations for municipal and county elections.

Elections Supervisor Floyd Jones then gave a 25-minute PowerPoint presentation on staff's findings. The following items were addressed: dual voting for those having to vote in two separate locations for municipal and county elections, current distances to polling locations, current and estimated distances to polling places; a projection into how the proposed precincts would have looked had they been in place for the 2016 Presidential General Election, estimated financial savings that could be realized by consolidating precincts, legal authorization and requirements for consolidating precincts; and the "pros" and "cons" associated with consolidating precincts. At the beginning of his presentation, Mr. Jones stated that these findings were subject to change as the work continued.

Mr. Jones concluded that the biggest current hurdle was getting adequate mapping in order to even conduct precinct consolidation. He informed the Board that he had been informed it could take between two weeks to a month to get the needed map. He mentioned that if the decision was made to consolidate that there would be uncertainty about where voters would actually vote for approximately four of the precincts; even though there are some potential voting locations to be explored. He further stated that there is other state-mandated work that will be provided to the county within the coming days that will utilize significant staff time and will likely require part-time help if staff is to simultaneously continue with the consolidation effort. Finally, Mr. Jones pointed out that there is a compressed time-frame to make a decision on consolidating the precincts. He explained the timeframe and stated that the latest a decision could be made to consolidate would be on June 27, 2017. He then stated he would be willing to address questions.

Mr. Wright stated that it is important for the public to know the difference between a precinct and a district. He explained that consolidating precincts would not affect who a person could vote for or against since precincts answer the question of "where does a person vote." Mr. Wright noted that there were concerns with the actual polling places and he was aware that over the years the agreements with the polling places have not been maintained over time. He stated the agreements need to be reevaluated and it is a process that is included with the redrawing of the precincts.

Mr. Lester asked if a polling place cannot be located in a precinct does state law allow for a polling place to be located outside of a precinct. Mr. Jones stated that was the information provided by reapportionment and later discovered by state law was that city voters could cross precincts into other precincts to vote, but he said there was a concern of swamping other polling locations already in use with more voters. Mr. Lester asked if there is a possibility of GIS support in the next few weeks. Mr. Jones replied it was possible but he did not want to make a promise on that matter.

Chairman Hicks summarized the issues and the concerns pertaining polling locations, safety concerns at the schools, a challenge around combo-voting where some vote in the city and outside the city, and some concerns from churches whether or not they want to be polling locations. He stated that there was a concern with the technical aspect and the need for GIS support and the upcoming 2020 Census that may change the precincts anyway. He reiterated that there is a compressed timing issue related to the November elections as well as matters coming from the State needing to mirror driver's services information. Chairman Hicks stated that is where the matter lays and that the Board needs to bring all of these factors into consideration. Chairman Hicks noted there is a cost savings but it could create a voter inconvenience to the point that saving money is not the sole issue.

Mr. Jones replied there is a law that reads any precinct that has over 2,000 voters and is open one hour past the close of the polls, then the county is compelled to machine it, staff it, or create a new poll. He added that the consolidated precincts would all have over 2,000 registered voters. Chairman Hicks stated that he appreciated that comment since there was one precinct that is over 5,000 registered voters.

Mr. Wright asked why this is a consideration in the first place. He asked if status quo works as it should and if it costs the wanted amount. He said the issue concerned efficiencies. He stated that each Board member visits each precinct and talks to each poll worker on Election Day. He stated that the poll workers all feel they have additional capacity to give. He stated that it is rare for a line to exist at 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. - even during the past presidential election. He suggested that the costs associated with 36 precincts would allow for ways to reduce costs while bringing efficiency. He added that 36 precincts brings its own logistical challenges with 36 poll managers who need to be trained. He mentioned that poll workers are awesome who work hard, but they are getting up in age so they are leaving. He stated that it is easier to fill poll workers for 19 precincts as opposed to 36 precincts. Mr. Wright added that each precinct requires an agreement for each precinct location meaning there are 36 agreements that need to be maintained. He said the Board and staff was looking into ways to be good stewards of the county's resources in order to do a better job. Mr. Jones replied there would be immediate efficiencies but there are open ended questions that cannot be answered since the consolidation is untested.

Mr. Lester pointed out that none of the staff was with the county in 1998 when the precincts were drawn. He asked, given the compressed timeframe, if a six-week turnaround was realistic. Mr. Jones replied that while no one was on staff in 1998, staff had gained some experience in 2016 through the redistricting process. He stated that the six-week estimate was the recommendation provided by staff who worked on redistricting in 2016.

Chairman Hicks opened the floor for public comment:

**Commissioner Steve Brown:** Fayette County Commissioner Steve Brown stated that the number of registered voters does not mean there will be a rush of people coming to the precinct at one time since the polling places are open for twelve hours - spreading out the numbers of voters. He further asked the Board to consider expanding early voting hours since one of the problems with early voting is it is only during business hours. He asked for a couple of nights where there is late-night voting. He stated it was critically missing from early voting since there are people who work outside of the county and are unable to make it back to the county to take advantage of early voting.

Mr. Wright agreed with Mr. Brown's point regarding the number of voters at a polling place but he thought the big challenge is finding the correct locations. Mr. Jones agreed with the points raised by Mr. Wright and Mr. Brown, and he pointed out that experience has shown that people vote in the early morning, during lunch, and after 5:00 p.m. in their effort to get to the polling place from Atlanta. He conceded there may be no issues with consolidating as it pertains to this matter, but then again there could be given the increased number of voters assigned to polling locations.

**Bob Ross:** Mr. Ross asked if this proposal is an all or none proposal or if there is a middle-ground where low-hanging fruit can be addressed. Mr. Jones answered that he was open to any options. He agreed that there was low-hanging fruit and he gave an example of Kenwood with less than 900 voters assigned to it. Mr. Jones suggested that perhaps Kenwood could be consolidated with another precinct.

**Terry Williamson:** Mr. Williamson asked for the early voting to be expanded. He stated he was concerned that there are elements in the county that are hesitant about supporting voting locations when that is one of the fundamental values of being an American. He asked if the school board had weighed into the matter about using school locations. Chairman Hicks replied that he believed the concern was from individual schools and the school board.

**Ogechi Oparah:** Ms. Oparah stated that great information had been provided. She asked if there was data about the frequency throughout the day of when people come to vote since that would color how the hours are thought about. Mr. Jones replied that he had asked that very question and found there was no known data. He stated that the overall concept pointed to the morning, afternoon, and evening as times when most people show up to vote. Ms. Oparah suggested that it would likely be helpful for that data to be compiled as this matter comes up closer to the 2020 census data. Ms. Oparah also asked for ways to make it easier for voters to vote and express their democratic rights- such as mailing everyone a ballot. She stated that applying for a ballot is tedious and if it is possible to consider mailing everyone their ballots. She stated that the Board of Elections mails precinct cards to the registered voters. She asked if the cost savings would be used to campaign about the change.

**Tyrone Jones:** Fayette County Republican Party President Tyrone Jones asked how the precincts were constructed. Elections Supervisor Floyd Jones described the various considerations in place in making the proposed precincts. President Jones then asked who chairs the whole process and who makes the decision. Chairman Hicks replied that the Board of Elections would make the decision based on staff information. Chairman Hicks thought that if the Board was to move forward with consolidation then there would need to be community input with its stakeholders. President Jones asked if the stakeholders have been identified. Chairman Hicks replied that the Board had not even gotten to the point of stating they want to consolidate precincts, but there was an idea who they were. He said there would be the input of the parties and the key group of people. Mr. Lester added that the Board recognized there has to be an education campaign. He stated some have already spoken to some of their groups, but the education campaign cannot be done solely by the Board of Elections and Mr. Jones.

**Greg Clifton:** Mr. Clifton stated he was an experienced poll manager back in his days in Gwinnett County and prior to the 2000 election. He stated those days were very long, but given the early voting element he thought there is the potential to turn back from the 36 precincts. He said his concern was, primarily, with handicapped accessibility with the new facilities. He said most people do not know where to vote so that should not be a concern going forward. He stated that there was cost saving benefits, but on the other hand if there is redistricting in 2020, the work that is done may be undone or redone resulting in additional cost. He asked if there would be enough savings realized. Mr. Jones replied that the Board of Education is considering a county-wide Education SPLOST so the November election could be larger than anticipated. He referred back to the 2016 county-wide elections stating the county could have saved about \$20,000 for each of its four elections, but he added that if all precincts are consolidated to 19 precincts, then the county would incur an immediate cost of approximately \$40,000 in order to mail precinct cards to each affected voter. Mr. Clifton stated that it would be convenient to vote in one place instead of two, but he could remedy that problem by voting early.

**Charles Bennett:** Mr. Bennett stated a number of his concerns had been addressed. He stated he was a poll watcher at the first county-wide district voting for Commissioner Rousseau's election. He said he spent 13 ½ hours at Precinct 29 and only 96 people showed up to vote. He stated of those who voted about ten percent who were assigned to the precinct could not vote because of the way the precinct was designed. He said it is very difficult since the city voters have to vote in the city. He asked if the ballots could be created in such a way that voters could get their ballots regardless whether or not they are voting in a city.

**Leonard Presberg:** Fayette County Board of Education Member Leonard Presberg stated that irrespective of whatever plan is adopted, it should be remembered that the goal is to maximize voter access to the polls. He understood operations efficiency and the difficulties involved in drawing maps based on other maps, but the goal should be on maximizing opportunities whether that means expanding early voting or providing precincts. He stated that as a School Board Member it is the District's position that

voting in schools is disruptive, that parents do complain about security concerns, and that from an operational perspective the school personnel would prefer that schools not be used as voting precincts. Mr. Presburg stated that he provided his personal feelings at the March 24, 2017 School Board Meeting; namely, that voting at the schools should be allowed for voting precincts, that inconveniences among teachers and students a few times a year in order to participate in the civic process of voting is a good thing. He reiterated, however, that it is the District's position that elections not be allowed in the schools.

**Carol Buleski:** Ms. Buleski, from the Rareover Precinct, said she was mildly concerned with the 2020 Census and she asked if there are any "best practices" in order to gauge or semi-accurately gauge what the results are. Mr. Jones replied that the U.S. Census Bureau has information that provides predictions and that even the voter registration records could provide some input into where people are moving to and from. Mr. Wright added that the proposed map has voter registration data baked into it. He suspected that Ms. Buleski was concerned of any upcoming major changes and he did not believe there would be major changes after the 2020 Census. (*Note: the speaker's last name may be incorrect.*)

Mr. Wright stated there were some comments on expanding early voting. He said the Board may be open to having the discussion at some point, but that was not the topic at hand. He added that the cost savings would trickle in over time as each election occurs, so it is not a bucket of money that would be dumped in the office. He added that the census takes place every tenth year, so if there was a redo it would likely have to be done around 2021 or 2023. He stated that the savings from each individual election from now until then is under consideration. Mr. Jones added that the compressed time frame results in making changes now or holding off from the effort until after the 2020 Census takes place.

Chairman Hicks stated that the 19 precincts were under consideration but that it is a starting point. Mr. Lester added that the Reapportionment Office has made the recommendation of 19 precincts. He stated that Mr. Jones and Mrs. Combs actually asked the Reapportionment Office to forget its earlier recommendation and to look to provide a new recommendation, and that new recommendation remained at 19 precincts.

Chairman Hicks stated that a decision would not be made and that the staff needs to continue to explore and refine the information. He stated that the critical decision is the GIS information in order to help determine the impact on voters. Mr. Jones replied that he hoped there would be a map available in the coming weeks and that the next meeting will be a follow up to determine if the matter proceeds. A copy of the request and referenced PowerPoint presentation, identified as "Attachment 3," follows these minutes and is made an official part hereof.

## **SUPERVISOR'S REPORT:**

**GEOA Conference in Savannah:** Mr. Jones announced that the Board and staff will attend the Georgia Election Officials Association (GEOA) Conference from Sunday, May 7 through Wednesday, May 10. He stated that itineraries for travel will be provided within the next week.

**Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) Election:** Elections Supervisor Floyd Jones stated that it had been mentioned several times in the meeting, but there is a potential dual election to be held for the Education SPLOST. He stated that if there is no consolidation of precincts there would be approximately 15,500 voters who would have to vote in two different locations for both early election and Election Day.

**Staffing for the November Election:** Elections Supervisor Floyd Jones stated that staff recommended opening the Fayetteville Public Meeting Room for three weeks for the upcoming November elections and further recommended opening the Tyrone and Peachtree City locations for two weeks. He stated the recommendation was based on lower voter turnout and would result in cost savings.

**Voting Machine Security:** Elections Supervisor Floyd Jones stated that this matter was based on an email received from Commissioner Brown. He stated he was at home when he learned of election machines being stolen from Cobb County. He stated that an email received from Commissioner Brown the next day asking about voting machine security. Mr. Jones explained the historic practices and spoke about the changes being made to secure the machines.

**GEMS Server Room Renovation:** Elections Supervisor Floyd Jones reported that the GEMS Server Room is being renovated and for the machines to be secured.

**ATTORNEY'S REPORTS:**

There was no Attorney's Report.

**BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS:**

**Addison Lester:** Mr. Lester commented to Commissioner Brown's recommendation about early voting. He stated that over time people have interpreted early voting to only visit an early polling place. He said many people forget about the ability to get a ballot 45 days in advance. He stated that there needs to be a campaign to educate people about how to access a ballot without going to early voting locations.

**Aaron Wright:** Mr. Wright stated if you look at what has happened in the Elections Department over the course of the last year, there have been a lot of really good changes. He said he was exceedingly grateful to work with Chairman Hicks, Mr. Lester, Dennis Davenport, and the staff. He said there was a lot of really positive changes in terms of efficiencies, security, and overall thinking outside of the box in ways to improve what is going on up there. He said he was very pleased with Mr. Jones' work and that he is the captain of the ship. He said was proud of Leigh Combs, April Crosby, Karen Hunter and Beverly Westmoreland for their work. He specifically thanked Mrs. Crosby for working with him in generating a report for a citizen. He stated that everyone is invited to come to the office at any time to see the renovation and the changes going on. He added that the Board of Education will make a decision on when they want to hold the Education SPLOST election, and he encouraged everyone to go to the Board and make their opinions heard.

**Chairman Darryl Hicks:** Chairman Hicks echoed his appreciation for staff and he thanked the citizens for coming to the meeting. He said any time these decisions are made it is important for the people's voices to be heard. He said there is not one person who is not paying attention to what is being said, particularly as it relates to consolidating precincts. Chairman Hicks closed saying he and the Board appreciated hearing from the public.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

There was no Executive Session.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Wright moved to adjourn the April 25, 2017 Board of Elections Meeting. Mr. Lester seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

The April 25, 2017 Board of Elections Meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

---

Floyd L. Jones, Elections Supervisor

---

Darryl Hicks, Chairman

The foregoing minutes were duly approved at an official meeting of the Board of Elections of Fayette County, Georgia, held on the 23rd day of May 2017. Referenced attachments are available upon request in the Board of Elections' Office.

---

Floyd L. Jones, Elections Supervisor