

Benton County Election Commission
Minutes
January 22, 2010

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Present: E. J. Miller, Chairman
Timothy Hutchinson, Secretary
Bill Williams, Member
Helen Peltier, Coordinator
Kathy Mahmens, Staff
Barbara McCoy, Democratic Party
Bill & Gwen Millager, Democratic Party
Christine Southard, County Clerk's Office
Tabatha Hunter, Reporter

TENA O'BRIEN
CO. & PROBATE CLERK
BENTON COUNTY, ARK

Chairman E. J. Miller called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

The media was notified.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

E. J. Miller was sworn in at the Court House yesterday, January 21, 2010, as Commissioner and Chairman of the Benton County Election Commissioners.

Bill Williams will be sworn in today as a Benton County Election Commissioner.

Tim Hutchinson was nominated by Bill Williams for secretary of the Benton County Election Commission. Nomination was seconded by EJ Miller. Vote was passed unanimously.

Bill Williams gave a project report update:

- 1) Mark White from E S & S will be in Bentonville next month to give a demonstration for poll books. Demonstration will tentatively take place in the Election Commission office. He will also be negotiating final details for purchase of DREs. Peltier & Mahmens will make a list of small items needed for DREs.
- 2) Williams will continue working with the BOD printer.
- 3) Williams met with County Attorney George Spence discussing general and administrative expense billing. Key points from discussion were:
 - a) No entities for which elections are conducted should be exempt from G&A billing.
 - b) The formula for calculating the billing should be simple, sensible and easily understood.
 - c) There should be some mechanism for variance from the calculated billing for small entities such as rural fire departments which simply haven't the funds to pay a full share.

Suggested by Spence that Williams meets with Richard McComas for further discussions. Williams and Spence will meet again next week.

- 4) Williams continuing Public Outreach to inform public of activities related to voter registration & elections in Benton County. The commission will:
 - a) Create a web site and establish a telephone number by which voters can ask questions.
 - b) Create written materials for mailing and handout in meetings.

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- c) Record and distribute a series of broadcast public service announcement.
- d) Make program appearances at civic clubs, churches and schools.

Peltier would like input for poll worker requirements and to put announcements in the Democratic and Republican Party newsletters for poll worker recruitment. Hutchison will e-mail Republican Party contact info to Peltier.

Discussion ensued on the importance of sheriffs to choose poll workers, the need for sheriffs in Rogers, and the new laws concerning poll watchers.

Miller submitted a project list made from a previous meeting with areas people are assigned to. Assigned people should fill in a start date, and completion date and Miller wants projects completed.

Discussion ensued on the need to hand count paper ballots from early voting but not release results until after the polls close.

Hutchinson will bring person into Election Commission for FOIA training.

Miller met with County Clerk, Tena O'Brien yesterday with the subject of consolidating polling sites. Miller led the discussion with the following proposed consolidations:

- 1) Gateway #72 and Garfield #71
- 2) Maysville #1 and Sulphur Springs #2 and Gravette #3.
- 3) Bethel Heights #48 and Bethel Heights #82.
- 4) St Mary's Catholic Church #11 and #12, #13, & #14.

Miller gave the following data concerning numbers of registered voters in certain precincts as of January 21, 2010:

- Maysville Precinct #1 – 308
- Sulphur Springs #2 – 430
- Gravette # 3 – 1,617
- Cornerstone Baptist Church (Cherokee City) #4 – 154
- Decatur #5 – 844
- St Mary's Catholic Church #11 – 1,270
 - #12 - 278
 - #13 - 204
 - #14 - 537
- Bethel Heights #48 – 2,094
- Bethel Heights #82 – 108
- Garfield #71 – 959
- Gateway #72 - 290

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Williams offered to place new voting location signs at precincts during election times.

Peltier suggested calling 'consolidation' of precincts, 'polling location reassignment'. Wording will be reviewed later. Sheriffs have related to Peltier the need for more workers in larger precincts to overcome long lines of voters. Peltier can see the logic in consolidating Gateway & Garfield, and Cherokee City & Decatur. Peltier is against consolidating Sulphur Springs with Gravette as not a matter of workers, but as a matter of

a good sized community (more than 500 registered voters) that merits a polling location. She also expressed concern about the size of the Gravette polling location if two other precincts are combined with it.

Williams suggests that county clerks look at the distance voters would have to travel as a reason to vote absentee. Williams stated that it is fiscally irresponsible to keep small precincts opened. A set of parameters have to be applied to everybody. He suggested at looking into putting an early voting station in Gravette. This will give Sulphur Springs voters two weeks to vote. Williams suggested that Miller write up a document on rules for consolidating precincts and present it at the next meeting.

Southard stated the only advantage for consolidating is the cost of poll workers. There was no drop in voters after previous precincts had been closed.

Miller stated the criteria for consolidating precincts is less than 500 voters. He would like to see more early voting stations established.

Hutchinson stated he did not have a problem with consolidating Gateway & Garfield, Cherokee City & Decatur, & Maysville & Gravette, but would like to see Sulphur Springs left alone. He will recuse from voting on Sulphur Springs due to family relationship with a poll worker there. He wondered if workers will be comfortable with doubled voters in Gravette. Hutchinson stated he felt the commission was acting too fast at consolidating precincts.

Precinct boundaries will not be changed until after census is taken.

Chairman Miller tabled the discussion for the next meeting.

Peltier reported that the 2009 budget will remain open until March due to incorrect billing from ES&S. Also 3 or 4 purchases need to go in the 2009 budget instead of 2010. Shelving needs to go in the 2010 budget. Discussion on the 2009 budget will be moved to the next meeting.

Southard stated she thought Bella Vista had paid for their election.

Chairman Miller will schedule commission meetings in 2010 for every other Friday until May 21st, at 10 AM.

Williams called for a special meeting next Friday, January 29th, to discuss first cut for G&A. Policy for G&A need to be in place before the April Bentonville School election. Further discussion for precinct consolidation will also be on the agenda.

Peltier stated there needs to be a purchasing and expense approval policy in place. She presented a policy to the commissioners: Peltier can make purchases under \$1,000 with only her signature, and anything over \$1,000 would take signatures from both the coordinator and the chairman.

Williams stated he had spoken with Susan Inman, who was coordinator for Pulaski Co and also Secretary of the State Coordinator, to speak with us on her expertise.

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CLERK OF PROBATE
BENTON COUNTY, ARK

An estimate was submitted by Bob Mahmens and Ernie Hudgens for the building of shelves in the Election Commission office for the IVOs, communication packs and bags. Also a turn key job for clean-up and moving and organizing equipment. Williams voted to accept the bid, seconded by Hutchinson. This expense was unanimously approved.

Peltier asked which account should be used for shelves. Hutchinson replied it needed to be placed under building improvement expense.

Peltier stated there was a time crunch with poll worker training and precinct consolidation because of the April school election. Peltier will contact Gary Compton for a written resolution for the April 13th Bentonville Special School election.

A special Commission meeting was scheduled January 29th at 9 AM. The only thing on the agenda will be G & A and precinct consolidation.

Meeting was adjourned 11:53 AM.



Respectfully submitted, Timothy Hutchinson, Secretary

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CO. & PROBATE CLERK
BENTON COUNTY, ARK

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Prepared by Kathy Mahmens, Benton County Election Commission staff