



Planning Elections and Engagement Panel

Monday, December 9, 2019

MINUTES

Attendees:

Contra Costa Democrats - Renee Zeimer
County District III Office – Dawn Morrow
County District IV Office – Colleen Isenberg
Democrats of Rossmoor – Carol Weed
Richmond NAACP – Willie Robinson
East County NAACP – Victoria Adams
League of Women Voters DV – Martha Goralka
League of Women Voters DV – Suzan Requa
Contra Costa Office of Education – Terry Koehne
Contra Costa Communications – Susan Shiu

Lift Up Contra Costa – Jess Jollett
CoCo For Warren – Nancy Pratt
Mayors Conference – Bob Taylor
City Clerks Association – Margaret Wimberly
LWV West Contra Costa – Madeline Kronenberg
Contra Costa Young Dems – Jonathan Bash
General Public – Diddo Clark
General Public – Scott Rafferty
General Public – Courtney O’Brien
General Public – Mark Friedman

Staff:

Acting Registrar of Voters – Debi Cooper
Assistant Registrar - Scott Konopasek
Administrative Assistant – Tyler Stull
Elections Services Manager – Sophie Lehman
Elections Services Manager – Sara Brady
Elections Processing Supervisor – Chuck Waters

Interim Elections Processing Supervisor – Jessica
Datangel
Elections Outreach Coordinator – Eren Mendez
Civic Engagement Specialist – Paul Burgarino
Civic Engagement Assistant – Karen Tedford

General questions/comments

Once introductions were completed, Scott Konopasek announced that Candidate Filing for the March 2020 election closed on Friday, so the “preseason is over” as far as the busy 2020 election year ahead. Diddo Clark asked about what happened to former Registrar Joe Canciamilla. Debi Cooper explained that Joe’s retirement came suddenly and the Board of Supervisors decided to appoint a replacement as they did in 2013 when Steve Weir retired. Applications are due by 5:00 pm on December 16th and will post on the County Website www.contracosta.ca.gov for public review on December 20th. Cooper added that the Board will decide on January 14th who to bring back for interviews in open session on January 21st. The Board plans to potentially select someone at that date and have them sworn into office on February 4th. After a couple of members expressed their opinions on the current state of office operations, Konopasek said that group members would be able to share their feelings with the Board about the appointment and applicants once they were made public and before the January meetings. He reiterated that there was strong leadership in place in the office and that Joe’s legacy includes empowering a strong management team.

Nancy Pratt asked what directions are being presented to No Party Preference voters about options for voting for president in the primary. Sara Brady explained some of the different methods the Elections Division is using to reach out to these voters, including a mailer (See Attached) that went out to about 125,000 Vote by Mail voters last week. The office sent this mailer out in an effort to resolve any potential issues well before the first batch of ballots is prepared for mailing.

Sophie Lehman discussed that the March election would be the first time where residents would have the opportunity to register and vote on the spot at all neighborhood polling places. She said that one benefit of the new law is that it will essentially eliminate the percentage of provisional ballots that haven't counted in the past because of registration status.

Scott Konopasek distributed a News Release (See Attached) the Elections Division planned to send out on December 10th urging voters to check their voter registration status well ahead of the March 3 Presidential Primary. Elections staff answered a question that the last day to register to vote for the March 3rd Election is February 17, 2020. Renee Zeimer said that engaging with residents at community events and encouraging them to check their registration status is a good icebreaker to start a conversation about switching to Vote by Mail or sharing other resources.

Scott Rafferty asked what was going to be done to prevent occurrences in 2016 related to No Party Preference voters being able to turn over their first ballot and not be able to vote again. Scott Konopasek said reality is that there will be many ballots floating around because each voter interaction through the VoteCal state database triggers a new ballot. Rafferty also asked a question about ballots automatically being reissued without voter affidavits. Konopasek add that 113 Contra Costa voters in June 2016 committed fraud through the action of double voting and it's something that we take personally.

Suzan Requa asked a clarification question about the No Party Preference, why the parties with closed primaries weren't specifically named. Sara Brady explained that the layout is designed for the voter to read one side and read that they have a few choices from those listed on the other side. Requa said the message needed to be clearer, so as to avoid the appearance of bias. Brady said the office continues to modify how it plans to deliver subsequent messages on ballot requests and the feedback is helpful.

Nancy Pratt asked a question about homeless voters being able to participate in elections through the Same Day Registration process. Staff explained that those voters without a residence can fill out a description of the area in which they live for it to be counted.

Jess Jollett asked about what were the Elections Office's plans for doing outreach and voter registration to those in county jails awaiting trial or serving sentences. Scott Konopasek said that the office received a Public Records Act request over the weekend from the state American Civil Liberties Union asking similar questions and that the office is working on a response. Konopasek added the current practice includes working with a liaison from the Sheriff's Office, who asks inmates if they want to register. Our office issues them ballots, which are delivered and returned by the liaison. Our office also continues to meet with groups who work with inmate enfranchisement on how they can help facilitate their right to vote.

November 2019 Special Election

Sara Brady gave a brief update on how things went for the November 2019 Special Election. The election was a chance to try out some new equipment and procedures, and have full-time staff in the field doing some Election Day work. Bob Taylor commented about the successful implementation and popularity of the 24/7 ballot drop off box in Brentwood. Paul Bugarino shared that the 24/7 boxes were well-used, as more voters in El Cerrito used the outside box, than the one inside City Hall. He added that six additional boxes were installed around the county in November with three more planned, for a total of 12 for the March 2020 election. The goal of the 24/7 boxes is to give Vote by Mail voters another safe and convenient way to drop off the ballot envelopes that fits their busy lifestyle.

Polling Place Considerations

Eren Mendez discussed how the Elections Office has completed its comprehensive look and methodology for polling place location. One thing that the office has been particularly looking at is limiting the use of school campuses, as they have become problematic due to increased resistance. Through this process, the Elections Division has gone down by 100 locations for a grand total of 167 polling places for the March election. These locations will have more equipment, parking and resources available for voters, while being much more accessible for all voters. Responding to a question from Willie Robinson, Mendez noted that there are some areas of Contra Costa County where the number of polling place locations will stay relatively similar, and that routes of travels and other factors played a large role in the decision-making process. Jonathan Bash asked if the Elections Division had any plans to use Community Colleges considering the recently-passed legislation for counties that use Vote Centers to locate them on college campuses. Staff said the office continues to explore ways to bring resources to local community colleges.

My Ballot, My Way Campaign

Paul Bugarino announced that since the beginning of the campaign in the early part of the year, the percentage of Vote by Mail voters in the county has increased from about 68 percent to near 72 percent, with a net increase of about 40,000. He added that the commercials created in-house are now airing on niche television stations throughout the Bay Area. Victoria Adams asked if there was some specific information about the ages and geography of Vote by Mail voters in the county. Suzan Requa added that the League of Women Voters and others would be promoting Vote by Mail sign-ups at the Women's March on January 18th. Their theme is "Voting is our Super Power."

March 3, 2020 Ballot

Scott Konopasek and Sophie Lehman mentioned that the ballot would be three cards for the Primary Election and will once again be the size of standard sheet of paper with just one fold. As far as the number of presidential candidates that will appear on the ballot, that decision must be made by the Secretary of State's office by December 26th. Currently the Democratic Party has the highest number of candidates; 21.

Future Agenda Items

No specific requests.

Next Meeting Date/Location

Monday, April 6, 2020. 6:30 to 8:00 pm, at the Clerk-Recorder-Elections Department, 555 Escobar St.,
Martinez

Attachments:

No Party Preference mailer sent out week of December 4th.

News Release sent out on December 10.

Fact Sheet emailed to PEEP group on December 12.