

MINUTES
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STANDING COMMITTEE – FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
RE: ELECTION IMPROVEMENTS/TRANSPARENCY
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER – 3RD FLOOR MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM
1115 TRUXTUN AVE. 3rd FLOOR
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301

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Monday, September 16, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY SUPERVISOR COUCH AT 3:03P.M.

2. ROLL CALL:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: SUPERVISOR DAVID COUCH AND SUPERVISOR LETICIA PEREZ

COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT: NANCY ANDERSON AND ELSA MARTINEZ (COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE) KENDRA GRAHAM AND KATHLEEN RIVERA (OFFICE OF COUNTY COUNSEL)

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

This portion of the meeting is reserved for persons desiring to address Committee Members on any matter not on this agenda, but under the jurisdiction of the Committee. Committee Members may respond briefly to statements made or questions posed. They may ask a question for clarification, make a referral to staff for factual information or request staff to report back to the Committee at a later meeting. Also, the Committee may take action to direct staff to place a matter of business on a future agenda. **SPEAKERS ARE LIMITED TO TWO MINUTES. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME BEFORE MAKING YOUR PRESENTATION –**

NONE

4. INTRODUCTIONS (Fiscal Impact: None) – DISCUSS

SUPERVISOR DAVID COUCH REQUESTED THAT THOSE PRESENT INTRODUCE THEMSELVES. PRESENT WERE:

DENNIS MCLEAN
CHARLES SHINN
NATALIE FEINBERG
KYLE HOLMES

JENNIFER FEIGE
JEANINE ADAMS
KATHLEEN WEINSTEIN
MEL WEINSTEIN

(PAUL LINFESTY ARRIVED AFTER INTRODUCTIONS)

5. PRESENTATION BY COUNTY COUNSEL ON PUBLIC MEETING PROCEDURES (Fiscal Impact: None) – HEAR PRESENTATION

ASSISTANT COUNTY COUNSEL KENDRA GRAHAM PROVIDED A VERBAL PRESENTATION REGARDING THE APPLICABILITY OF THE BROWN ACT TO THIS COMMITTEE INCLUDING THE REQUIREMENTS OF A QUORUM AND POSTING OF NOTICES FOR REGULAR AND SPECIAL MEETINGS, 72 HOURS AND 24 HOURS RESPECTIVELY. IN ADDITION, IT WAS CLARIFIED THAT RULES THAT APPLY TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SUCH AS COMMITTEE ONLY BEING ABLE TO TAKE ACTIONS ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA, PROHIBITION OF SERIAL MEETINGS, DIRECTLY OR THROUGH INTERMEDIARY AND ORDERLY CONDUCT WOULD APPLY.

6. DISCUSSION ON PURPOSE OF COMMITTEE – ELECTION IMPROVEMENTS/ TRANSPARENCY (Fiscal Impact: None) – DISCUSS

SUPERVISOR COUCH BEGAN THE DISCUSSION EXPLAINING THAT THE GOAL OF THE COMMITTEE WILL BE TO DEVELOP THREE LISTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS. THE FIRST LIST WOULD BE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ELECTED AUDITOR-CONTROLLER-REGISTRAR OF VOTERS, AIMEE ESPINOZA, FOR ITEMS THAT CAN BE LOCALLY REVIEWED SUCH AS MAIL BALLOT AND VOTE COUNTING PROCESS. THE SECOND LIST WOULD BE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR STATE LAWS OR MANDATES THAT NEED TO BE REVIEWED. THE FINAL LIST WOULD BE FOR THE FEDERAL LEVEL AGENCIES THAT AFFECT LOCAL ELECTIONS.

SUPERVISOR LETICIA PEREZ INDICATED THAT SHE HOPED TO EXPLORE AREAS THAT ARE PROBLEMATIC AND CRITICAL FOR THE TRUST OF THE SYSTEM, THE SYSTEM OF DEMOCRACY SINCE ELECTIONS ARE COMPLEX AND WE NEED CLARITY. SHE WOULD LIKE TO LOOK AT KERN COUNTY AND FIX KERN COUNTY CHALLENGES. SHE INDICATED THAT WE ARE LUCKY TO HAVE CONCERNED CITIZENS AND STAFF WITH EXPERIENCE RUNNING ELECTIONS BUT THAT THERE ARE AREAS THAT COULD BE IMPROVED TO FIND CIVILITY AND FIX THE PROBLEMS. SHE INDICATED THAT WE SHOULD START WITH A LIST OF PROBLEMS.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION BEGAN WITH NATALIE FEINBERG INDICATING THAT THERE ARE SHORT TERM GOALS SUCH AS VOTER ROLE MAINTENANCE TO FIX REGISTRATIONS THAT ARE NOT ACCURATE SUCH AS THE ELDERLY, NON-CITIZENS BEING IN THE ROLL AND, THAT THE ELECTIONS DIVISION SHOULD ENGAGE HOMELAND SECURITY TO REVIEW RECORDS. IT WAS ALSO DISCUSSED A TOUR OF THE ELECTIONS OFFICE SHOULD BE CONDUCTED TO ENSURE OBSERVATION STATIONS' ACCESSIBILITY. DISCUSSION CONTINUED WITH A REQUEST THAT ACCOUNTING BE DONE OF BALLOTS

AT ALL POINTS OF COLLECTION INDICATING THAT TO TRUST THE PROCESS THEY NEED TO KNOW THE COUNT.

SUPERVISOR DAVID COUCH NOTED THAT ELECTION DIVISION STAFF WAS NOT PRESENT.

NATALIE FEINBERG INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD LIKE THE SCHEDULE OF DROP BOX COLLECTIONS. ADDITIONALLY, DISCUSSION OCCURRED REGARDING DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY NATALIE FEINBERG REGARDING LAWS AND LAWSUITS OF CONCERN, THE LACK OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS HOMELAND SECURITY REPORT, AND A DOCUMENT FROM AMERICA FIRST LEGAL REGARDING TOOLS FOR VERIFYING CITIZENSHIP STATUS OF INDIVIDUALS REGISTERED TO VOTE.

SUPERVISOR LETICIA PEREZ INQUIRED ABOUT WHAT METHODOLOGY WOULD BE USED TO REMOVE NON-CITIZENS. SUPERVISOR DAVID COUCH ASKED THE AUDIENCE WHAT CAN THE COMMITTEE DO, AND ASKED COUNTY COUNSEL TO RESEARCH IF LOCAL OFFICIALS CAN ASK INDIVIDUALS IF THEY ARE CITIZENS FOR ELECTION PURPOSES.

KATHLEEN WEINSTEIN INDICATED THAT THE MECHANISM TO CHECK FOR CITIZENSHIP IS AT THE SECRETARY OF STATE LEVEL AND THAT SHE HAS BEEN A POLL WORKER FOR MANY YEARS, AND HAS SEEN IMPROVEMENTS, ESPECIALLY WITH THE POLLBOOKS, SINCE THEY ARE EASIER TO USE THAN PAPER AND THEY HAVE CROSS REFERENCES.

SUPERVISOR DAVID COUCH INQUIRED IF POLL WORKERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO ASK FOR IDENTIFICATION AND THAT IT SHOULD BE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO REQUEST IDENTIFICATION.

PAUL LINFESTY INDICATED THAT HE DOES NOT REMEMBER EVER SHOWING IDENTIFICATION AND THAT HE STARTED GETTING HIS BALLOT VIA MAIL EVEN THOUGH HE NEVER REQUESTED IT AND REALIZED THAT HIS SITE WAS CONSOLIDATED EVEN THOUGH HE HAD VOTED AT THE SAME LOCATION SINCE THE 1990s.

JEANINE ADAMS REMINDED THAT REMOTE COMMUNITIES DO NOT HAVE A CHOICE BUT TO VOTE BY MAIL AND THAT THEY HAVE P.O. BOXES AND NOT STREET ADDRESSES FOR MAIL PURPOSES.

NATALIE FEINBERG INDICATED THAT MAINTENANCE OF THE VOTER ROLL HAPPENS IN THE ELECTIONS OFFICE AND THAT IT SHOULD HAPPEN ON REGULAR BASIS SINCE SOME INDIVIDUALS LACK FULL NAME, LACK PHYSICAL ADDRESS AND USE P.O. BOXES, AND LACK BIRTHDAYS. CHARLES SHINN INDICATED THAT THERE ARE MANY INCORRECT BIRTHDAYS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN CORRECTED.

SUPERVISOR PEREZ DISCUSSED THE IDEAS SUGGESTED SO FAR:
VOTER IDENTIFICATION
LIST COMPARISON WITH HOMELAND SECURITY
FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE FOR MAINTENANCE OF ROLL.

KATHLEEN WEINSTEIN ASKED HOW DOES SHE, AS A POLL WORKER, ASK FOR IDENTIFICATION. THEY ALREADY GET THE INFORMATION FROM THE VOTER. THEY MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS COUNTED CORRECTLY AT THE END OF THE DAY AND THAT THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT MACHINE COUNTED PROPERLY.

DISCUSSION CONTINUED ABOUT MAINTENANCE OF ROLL. SUPERVISOR PEREZ INDICATED THAT THERE ARE TWO AREAS THAT NEED TO BE REVIEWED: MAINTENANCE OF VOTER LIST, AND WHAT THE PROCESS OF INTEGRITY ON BOXES SHOULD BE TO BALANCE TENSION AND GOVERNMENT NEEDS. DISCUSSION OCCURRED ON WHAT TRIGGERS SOMEONE TO CHECK WITH HOMELAND SECURITY FOR CITIZENSHIP STATUS. NATALIE FEINBERG INDICATED THAT THE ENTIRE VOTER ROLL LIST SHOULD BE REVIEWED BY HOMELAND SECURITY AND THAT FIRST LEGAL DOCUMENT DETAILS THE PATH TO ENGAGE WITH HOMELAND SECURITY AND WHAT THE PROCESS SHOULD BE. SUPERVISOR LETICA PEREZ ASKED FOR RESEARCH THAT THERE IS A PROCESS. SUPERVISOR DAVID COUCH INQUIRED REGARDING OTHER STATES. IT WAS STATED THAT OREGON AND FLORIDA HAVE A PROCESS. COUNTY COUNSEL WAS ASKED TO RESEARCH THE PROCESS.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION CONTINUED REGARDING THE BALLOT COUNTING PROCESS AND HOW KERN COUNTY IS USUALLY LAST TO REPORT COUNT.

CHARLES SHINN INDICATED THAT THERE ARE ELECTION RECORDS CONCERNS SINCE THE ELECTION ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION IDENTIFIED 57 DEFICIENCIES AND THAT ELECTIONS IS NOT REPORTING REQUIRED INFORMATION. NATALIE FEINBERG INDICATED THE EAVS REPORT IS OWED.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION OCCURRED REGARDING THE POST OFFICE'S SLOW PROCESS AND WHEN THE VOTE BY MAIL BALLOTS SHOULD BE COUNTED. IT WAS NOTED THAT FLORIDA CHANGED ITS COUNT PROCESS. SUPERVISOR PEREZ INDICATED THAT THERE ARE DROP BOX COMPLAINTS AND THAT THERE IS NO INFORMATION TO DETERMINE IF THE DROP BOXES ARE WORKING OR NOT WORKING. IT WAS ALSO NOTED THAT THE BOX AT THE HALLOWAY GONZALEZ LIBRARY IS LOCATED IN AN AREA THAT IS NOT ILLUMINATED. SUPERVISOR DAVID COUCH INDICATED THAT THE CAMERAS ARE A WASTE OF RESOURCES IF THEY ARE NOT GOING TO STREAM 24 HOURS A DAY.

7. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING:

DISCUSSED HOW OFTEN THE COMMITTEE MEETINGS SHOULD TAKE PLACE. IT WAS AGREED THAT THE MEETINGS WOULD BE THE THIRD MONDAY OF EACH MONTH AT 3:30 P.M. UNTIL CHANGED BY THE COMMITTEE. NEXT MEETING WILL BE SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 21, 2024, AT 3:30 P.M.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 4:23 P.M.
2 AYES (PEREZ, COUCH)

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(Government Code Section 54954.2)**

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