Board of Registrars

DRAFT - Minutes July 12, 2021 - DRAFT

The meeting of the Board of Registrars was called to order at 10:07 AM.

Attendees:

Jane Fry

Michael Bouchard

Paul Fitzgerald (via Zoom)

Marvin Caldwell (arrive 10:20)

Members of the public

John Sopka

Minutes:

Mike gave an overview of the “Boards of Registrars and Elections Commissions” document published by the Secretary of State’s Office. The outline for the overview is included at the end of these minutes.

It was agreed that the Board would conduct a voter registration session at the Groton-Dunstable Regional High School during the upcoming school year. Mike will arrange a date. Historically, January has seemed to work best in the past.

A discussion was led by Mike describing the process of certifying nomination and petition papers, and the role of registrars. Three Registrars’ signatures are need to certify each paper submitted to the Clerk’s Office. Often, this is a time sensitive activity. Historically, the Registrars have authorized use of a facsimile signature stamp by the Clerk’s Office to certify this paperwork. As it has been a while since such authorization was affirmed, Michael Bouchard asked the Board to vote authorization. A motion was made by Michael Bouchard for the Board of registrars to affirm and authorize the Town Clerk’s Office to use facsimile stamps for the Registrar’s signatures to certify nomination and petition papers. The motion was seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Paul made a motion that the Town Clerk shall download the log files from each of the Dominion voting machine’s Compact Flash cards used in the May 25, 2021 election for review by the members of the Board of Registrars.. Paul explained that he thought it was a reasonable idea for the Board to view the console logs to affirm that the ImageCast Precinct (ICP) voting tabulators, manufactured by Dominion Voting Systems, performed accurately, as best could be determined. The motion was seconded. The Board agreed to download and view the console file logs by a unanimous vote.

Marvin Caldwell was administered the oath of office as a Registrar.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was seconded and voted unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:07 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Bouchard

**OVERVIEW - BOARD OF REGISTRARS**

* Responsibilities
  + Registering voters
  + Making local listings of resident
  + Certifying nomination papers and petitions
  + Processing absent voter applications
  + Administer election recounts
* Structure of the Board
  + 4 members; appointed by the Select Board
  + 3 year terms; staggered
  + Town Clerk is an “ex officio” member of the Board
  + Nominations for the other three members are solicited from the Republican and Democratic Town Committees
  + Membership is evenly split amongst Republican and Democrats
    - When the Clerk is Unenrolled, the remaining membership is 2-1 one party or the other
    - When the Clerk is enrolled in a party, the remaining membership is 1 additional of the Clerk’s party and 2 of the other party.
* Membership Qualifications
  + Must be a registered voter of the town
  + Must hold no other office in the town either by election or appointment by the town, state or federal government
  + Must subscribe to an oath to faithfully perform the duties of a registrar
  + “Should not” serve as an election worker (must recuse if a recount)
  + Cannot serve as a chairman, treasurer or other principal officer of any political committee
* Functions of the Board
  + Voter registration: “at voter registration sessions, receive affidavits of registrants”. Voter’s name is added to the annual register.
    - Registration occurs in person, by mail, online.
    - Pre-registration available to persons 16-18 years old.
    - Every election and town meeting has a voter registration deadline for new voters – usually 20 days prior; 8:00 PM.
    - Practice has been to hold an annual registration session at GDRHS.
    - Clerk: Records registrations is the Voter Registration Information System (VRIS). VRIS is the main tool used to record voters and residents. Hardcopy voter registration records also kept.
    - VRIS is statewide. A new registrant in Groton is flagged for deletion in the previously registered Massachusetts community.
    - VRIS does not cross state lines.
    - Note: “Inactive” Voters
  + Certification of Signatures
    - Time sensitive
    - Certify signatures on state and local nomination papers and petitions
    - Issue party enrollment certificates and certificates of voter registration
    - Investigate objections and challenges to local nomination papers
    - Certify absent voter applications
    - Clerk:
      * performs these functions
      * Three registrars must sign each paper to complete the certification
      * Facsimile stamp of registrars may be used by persons designated to certify on behalf of the Board (i.e. Clerk’s Office personnel)
    - Review of non-certified signatures at the request of candidate
  + Absent Voter
    - Absentee voting available to voters who are unable to vote at the polls on election day due to:
      * Absence from the town
      * disability (including COVID – expired June 30, 2021)
      * religious belief
      * Specially Qualified Voter
    - Registrars examine absent voter applications to certify that signatures on applications appear to be genuine and that the application is for a qualified voter (residence, voter status, meets requirements)
    - (Very) time sensitive
    - Investigate Specially Qualified Voters
    - Send absentee ballot applications to certified permanently disabled voters (renewed annually)
    - Absentee voting is usually done by mail, but can be done in person:
      * Over the counter absentee voting by appointment
      * May designate certain health care facilities for supervised absentee voting at dates/times certain and conduct supervised absentee voting.
      * Voters admitted to a healthcare facility after noon on the fifth (seventh) day before the election may be allowed a “hand-carried” absentee ballot delivery by either a registrar or person of their choice.
  + Early Vote by Mail (temporary; may be extended)
    - Similar process to absentee voting
    - No “reason” needed
* Election Officers
  + Town Clerk submits names for appointment as election officers.
* Objections and Challenges
  + Objections and challenges to certificates of nomination, nomination papers, or withdrawal for local offices or objections to petitions for local ballot questions shall be filed with the town clerk and transmitted to the Board of Registrars.
  + The Board renders a decision on any matter referred to it.
* Recounts
  + Preside over recounts.
  + Administrative work done by Town Clerk.
  + Registrars make decisions on contested ballots during a recount.