

Minutes

Talbot County Board of Elections
Conference Room 1
Easton, MD 21601
February 19, 2025

Present:

Board

Susan MacKinnon	(D)
Denise Lovelady	(R)
Walter Black	(D)
Barbara H. Perry	(D)
Gugy Irving III	(R)

Staff

Tammy Stafford, Talbot County Election Director
Donna Hacker, Election Program Manager II

Board Attorney

Lyndsey Ryan

Public Attending

Members of the public were in attendance

A work session meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections was held February 19, 2025, in the Conference Room indicated above. Ms. MacKinnon called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and noted a quorum was present.

Work Session - Ms. MacKinnon opened the session by describing the current format as being in person public and board format.

Previously Board members were asked to look at other boards to observe other meeting formats. Ms. MacKinnon asked each member for input.

Ms. Perry observed a State Board of Elections Zoom meeting but felt that format would not work for her since she did not have a camera on her computer. Ms. Lovelady noted that in the State Board of Elections meetings, public comment is scheduled for presentation at the end of the meeting with a time limit. Ms. MacKinnon stated that the State Board required pre-scheduling and pre-approval of public comment as well as a time limit on each public comment. Ms. Stafford indicated that if this method was chosen that Board members who could not use Zoom from home could be accommodated in the Board of Elections office.

Ms. Lovelady asked Ms. Stafford if she had any cost for equipping the conference room to stream meetings like the County Council and the Board of Education. Ms. Stafford stated that it would have to be in the Board of Election's conference room and could be expensive to do like the County Council meetings. She has been advised by the County that the Board of Elections office will need to remain in our current location for two to three years

Ms. MacKinnon asked for clarification of terms. Ms. Ryan explained various meeting platforms. She explained that there are platforms where meetings can be live streamed, but individuals cannot participate beyond watching a meeting. There are platforms that permit virtual participation, such as Zoom.

She provided Town Hall Stream (townhallstream.com) as an example and said that many small towns use it and that it allows for watching at the time of a meeting or to view at a later date. Ms.

MacKinnon asked if there is a monthly fee which Ms. Ryan said there was and that the Board would need to purchase the equipment but that Town Hall Stream will set it up for our staff to then activate when used.

YouTube is streaming but requires a subscription which allows viewing on YouTube after.

Call in/log in systems like Zoom, WebX, Google meets are all similar to Zoom format where individuals can watch a meeting and participate if the Board invites them to.

Ms. Stafford said that with scheduled approved public comments, there needs to be a waiting room which is staffed so that the Board knows who is speaking at a given time.

Ms. Perry asked about the need for taking minutes with both streaming and Zoom. Ms. Stafford shared that when Anne Arundel County wanted the streaming to replace written minutes, they were advised that written minutes were needed as an official document.

Ms. Lovelady mentioned an app called WAVES that records the meeting and at the end provides written minutes that can then be edited if needed. Ms. MacKinnon asked if there was a type of guided format, similar to the Closed Meeting Minutes, that could be used for summarizing any Zoom or Streaming meeting. Would still need to summarize actions taken in minutes as an official document.

Ms. MacKinnon mentioned Montgomery County having staff in person meetings that seemed to have interaction that worked well. Ms. Stafford mentioned that if only two Board members needed to come to the office to use equipment, that could be done. She also said that the State Board of Elections has a staff member take minutes, like Ms. Hacker now does for our Canvass Board meetings and she could do so with any streaming or Zoom meetings we have.

Ms. Lovelady feels as a small county; we still need a format with the Board and public being in person like we have now.

Ms. MacKinnon said we need more information relating to equipment and costs. If we go with streaming, would need to use our Board conference space. Ms. Stafford is aware of need for upgrades and to address issues such as access (the outside steps), acoustics and the need to go through the office space to get to the restrooms.

Ms. Lovelady asked about pending legislation that would require streaming. Ms. Stafford said there is some but not sure if it is only for Canvassing or for all meetings. Ms. Ryan mentioned there is no requirement for public comment in the Open Meetings Act but is in our by-laws so if any change, would need to address in the by-laws.

Ms. Lovelady asked how is the meeting shown for public viewing for any streaming or Zoom. Ms. Ryan mentioned there is equipment called "Owl" that is placed in the center of the room and moves around to show who is speaking and so on. She mentioned to check out the Town of Denton meetings to see it. One thing is for any public participation, a person must pre-register and then they get a link to log in to the meeting.

Ms. Stafford said that WebX is more government oriented but that safeguards to protect the conduct of the meeting can be put in place for both WebX and Zoom. Ms. Lovelady asked what format does the State Board of Elections use and Ms. Stafford said they use Zoom and YouTube.

Ms. Lovelady feels we should follow the legislation to see what requirements could be coming but still maybe try out some formats to see what might work. Ms. Stafford agreed that we could adapt to accommodate any final legislation. The current bills being considered are SB337 and HB412 to provide enhanced meeting access.

Ms. Lovelady asked Ms. Stafford if the State Board of Elections has given any guidance on this. Ms. Stafford stated that they recommend their format of Zoom and YouTube. Ms. Lovelady thought the most cost effective might be to use Zoom, purchase the Owl and then find out about cloud storage.

Ms. MacKinnon asked Ms. Stafford to provide cost estimates on space needs, equipment, cloud storage etc. at our next work session meeting which we will determine during our regular Board meeting on March 19, 2025.

Ms. Stafford had one final comment to advise the Board of the upcoming Biennial MAEO Conference that will be from May 4 through May 9, 2025, at the Grand Hotel in Ocean City. Board members are required to attend on May 5. More details will be coming.

Confirmation of next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Elections will be on Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at 9:30 a.m.

Adjournment

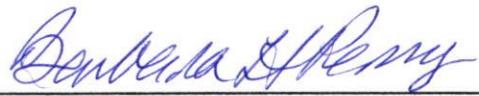
Ms. Perry moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Attested,

Respectfully submitted,



Susan MacKinnon, President



Barbara H. Perry, Secretary