

FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
280 EAST BROAD STREET
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215
(614) 462-3100

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON

2/8/10

APPROVED ON

2/25/10

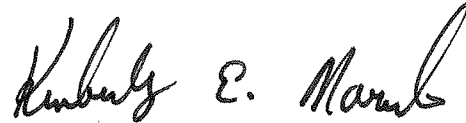
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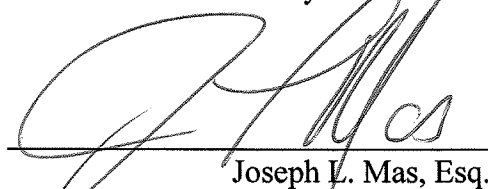
Douglas J. Preisse, Chairman



Michael F. Colley, Esq.

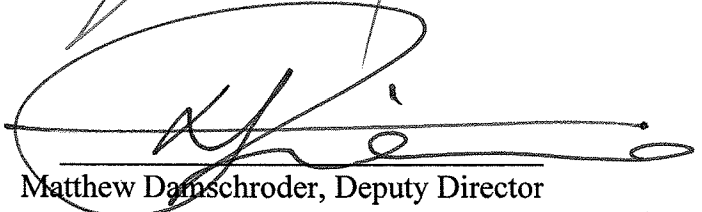


Kimberly E. Marinello



Joseph L. Mas, Esq.

ATTEST:



Matthew Damschroder, Deputy Director



1 ORIGINAL

2 MEETING: Special Meeting, Franklin County BOE

3 DATE OF DELIVERY:

4 Franklin County BOE
5 280 East Broad Street
6 Columbus, Ohio 43215
7 By Ms. Suzanne Brown

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Suzanne Brown

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1 ALSO PRESENT:

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Suzanne Brown - Secretary
Ben Piscitelli - PIO

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1 to receive any clear guidance on their
2 positioning as to whether they are up for
3 funding the mailing or if they want to not
4 have us do the mailing because of the costs
5 involved.

6 We have been given clear guidance
7 that they will look at supplemental
8 appropriations after the first quarter, which
9 would be too late in order for us to do this
10 mailing with any really good impact.

11 Do you want to add anything?

12 MR. DAMSCHRODER: No. Michael is
13 absolutely correct. In thinking about -- as
14 you may recall from the last meeting, there
15 was a list of the itemized costs if the Board
16 wanted to try to shave off some of the costs
17 of the mailing and submit a different
18 proposal to the Commissioners, I think the
19 one area that the Board could consider would
20 be the pre-paying the postage for the return
21 envelope for the application and the postage
22 for the returned voted ballot.

23 We did pay for both of those items
24 in the General of '08 and we paid the return

1 postage, I think, on the applications in the
2 Primary of '08, but I'd have to double check
3 that.

4 Cuyahoga, last year in the General
5 Election, paid the return freight for both
6 the application and the voted ballot, so this
7 is kind of a growing trend both in terms of
8 what we've done and what other counties who
9 are consistently doing this are doing.

10 But if the Board wanted to shave off
11 the return postage, I think it was 80,000 for
12 both the application and another 80,000 for
13 the voted ballots which would lower the cost
14 by about 160.

15 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: \$173,450.

16 MR. DAMSCHRODER: 173,000 to be
17 precise. So that's --

18 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: That was 173,000
19 --

20 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: 450 we could
21 shave off of the --

22 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: -- is shaving off
23 -- is the estimate on --

24 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: 718,000 is the

1 estimate in costs.

2 MS. MARINELLO: You probably don't
3 have any kind of figures on how that
4 effected, like, previously -- like, if we
5 don't do that, would that significantly drop
6 the re -- you know, probably would.

7 MR. MAS: Probably would. And I
8 think that I asked that question of Michael
9 before. Michael, I think you had an estimate
10 as to --

11 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: Well, we were
12 talking about how much participation would go
13 up. I think Kim's question is, if we don't
14 do the postage, how --

15 MS. MARINELLO: Right.

16 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: -- what does
17 the participation look like.

18 MR. MAS: I'm sorry, you're right.
19 I misunderstood that.

20 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: I don't know if
21 Matt has a better perception because our one
22 experience was we paid it all and --

23 MR. DAMSCHRODER: Yeah. I don't
24 think from what we've seen that there hasn't

1 been a significant -- like, the return of the
2 ballot is probably a good apples to apples
3 comparison from an election where we didn't
4 pay the return postage we had the same return
5 rate as a year where we did pay the postage.

6 And, frankly, it's one of those
7 things for us, we end up paying the postage
8 anyway because we always make an arrangement
9 with the post office that they won't return a
10 ballot to a voter for not having postage on
11 it or insufficient postage.

12 Now, granted, when we do that
13 arrangement we're paying a much, much smaller
14 amount, only several thousand dollars as
15 opposed to the full freight. But a savvy
16 voter would just drop their ballot in the
17 mail without a stamp anyway.

18 MS. MARINELLO: We could put an ad
19 in the paper or anything to let them know
20 that?

21 MR. DAMSCHRODER: That's not in the
22 instructions.

23 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Not something we
24 want to market, but that's understood.

1 MR. DAMSCHRODER: But I think to Mr.
2 Mas's -- the other question of whether or
3 not -- and perhaps this isn't your question,
4 and if not, I apologize but I'll go ahead and
5 say it anyway, but that -- I think a good
6 comparison about the impact of doing the
7 application mailing would be to compare
8 Franklin and Cuyahoga from 2007 in the
9 General Election where we had 50,000 absentee
10 ballots, Cuyahoga had over 200,000 absentee
11 ballots.

12 So doing a proactive absentee ballot
13 application definitely does increase absentee
14 ballot activity, and I would say in the
15 example from last year does play a role in
16 increasing overall turnout.

17 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: So walk me
18 through again the progression of estimates
19 from doing an absentee ballot application.
20 And our universe would be defined by active
21 voters which is looking back four years for
22 --

23 MR. DAMSCHRODER: Correct. Two
24 federal general cycles, which is the -- a

1 federal general cycle is two calendar years.
2 So that's the definition for when a person
3 becomes inactive and goes -- starts the track
4 towards cancellation.

5 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: So looking back
6 from where we sit here today, that would be
7 when?

8 MR. DAMSCHRODER: If you haven't
9 done anything since at least 2006.

10 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: So if you voted
11 in the Primary or General in 2006 we would
12 include you?

13 MR. DAMSCHRODER: Correct.

14 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: And the estimate
15 is, give or take, \$700,000 --

16 MR. DAMSCHRODER: About 650,000
17 people.

18 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: 650,000 people.
19 And if we did the full freight, as you say,
20 paying for the postage for the return of the
21 absentee application and the return of the
22 ballot, we're talking -- your estimate is
23 \$700,000?

24 MR. DAMSCHRODER: No. 183.

1 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: No. I'm talking
2 the whole cost.

3 MR. DAMSCHRODER: Oh, the whole
4 package. Yeah, 700 something.

5 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: And that number,
6 I know, has been discussed with -- roughly
7 that number and that number -- with the
8 Commissioners and the Administrator. And as
9 I understand it the Commissioners, one way or
10 another, have expressed support for the idea
11 of doing the mailing but that that cost was
12 high was what gave them pause.

13 So could we do things to shave away
14 the costs without digging into the universe
15 of recipients -- without digging into that so
16 as a way to disadvantage anybody, and the way
17 to do that would be looking at the postage.

18 MR. MAS: Mr. Chairman, it is
19 unclear to me that the County Commissioners
20 were concerned about the figure itself. I
21 think that their position was that they
22 didn't want to take a look at any new numbers
23 until the next quarter; am I correct?

24 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: That is

1 correct.

2 MR. MAS: Had they given us some
3 indication that it was a specific figure
4 issue, then perhaps we could continue with
5 that discussion. But the problem is that I
6 don't think that any relevant number, any
7 number that would satisfy even the minimum
8 requirements of the Director or the Deputy
9 Director would be something that, at least I
10 would feel comfortable in authorizing in the
11 absence of ratification on the part of the
12 County Commissioners or at least an
13 indication that it was going to be approved.

14 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Okay. Let me ask
15 for reaction, if I may, with respect to what
16 I -- the statement I made with -- I did have
17 that understanding that -- from various
18 sources, that the number itself was a concern
19 and the sentiment in support of the concept
20 was there, at least so articulated.

21 MR. DAMSCHRODER: Yeah. I mean, the
22 original -- to say that we've discussed it
23 with the Commissioners is a very broad term.
24 What I think the points of communication have

1 been in December of last year at our budget
2 hearing, Commissioners O'Grady and Brown were
3 present at the meeting as was the County
4 Administrator, and it was discussed that the
5 County Administrator was not at that time
6 recommending funding for this mailing for the
7 Primary Election.

8 And we expressed our interest in
9 doing the mailing because it has been the
10 practice of the Board to both include it in
11 all of our budget requests and to do the
12 mailing in even years since we've had
13 no-fault absentee which is since '06. So
14 it's not a long precedent but it is a
15 pattern.

16 Commissioner O'Grady in particular,
17 but also Commissioner Brown, expressed
18 interest in having the Board do the mailing
19 in May and at that time asked the County
20 Administrator to consider putting funding
21 into the County Commissioners' contingent
22 funding to do the mailing.

23 Two weeks ago -- a week ago last
24 Friday the Director and I sent a memo to the

1 Commissioners and to Don Brown outlining the
2 individual costs -- the total cost and the
3 breakdown costs for doing this mailing.

4 And then after the Board voted on it
5 last week to do the supplemental
6 appropriation request, we sent that memo -- a
7 formal memo, again, to the Commissioners, and
8 the Director got a response from the County
9 Administrator saying we won't consider it
10 until after April 1st.

11 Since that time I think there have
12 been other contacts with individual
13 commissioners that have not -- that the
14 Director and I have not been privy to,
15 including a conversation that I think our
16 Absentee Manager had with one of the
17 Commissioners last week at a function.

18 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: At a sidebar.

19 MR. DAMSCHRODER: Yeah. And it was
20 related to us as a part of that conversation
21 that Commissioner O'Grady was concerned about
22 the price tag but was overall supportive of
23 the project. And I think today is the first
24 reach-out that we've gotten from the 26th

1 floor. The County Administrator's secretary
2 called the Director to schedule a meeting for
3 this Thursday.

4 MR. MAS: Is this meeting -- Mr.
5 Chairman, is it possible that this meeting
6 then is premature in light of these recent
7 developments?

8 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: Yes and no. I
9 think both the Deputy Director and I think
10 the sooner we have the green light to go
11 forward the better so the mailing has an
12 impact. It is premature in the sense that we
13 still haven't heard definitively from the
14 26th floor their position.

15 So we can wait till Thursday but
16 time is of the essence in our view in terms
17 of pulling it off so there is an impact so
18 the mailing is there before voting ballots
19 have to be ready.

20 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: So put a little
21 more flesh on the bone, is there -- as to our
22 deadline for safely, effectively getting
23 absentee application out?

24 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: Ideally, it was

1 going to be before February 18th at four
2 o'clock, which will be the extent that I'll
3 be involved in the mailing, so I will defer
4 to Matt as to where he'll take it up from
5 there.

6 MR. DAMSCHRODER: I think as we
7 planned inside the office, we wanted the
8 mailing to go out early the week of the 22nd,
9 which is two weeks from today. The rationale
10 for that is that it's about 30 days before
11 the open of absentee. We know from our past
12 experience though -- the '06 General, the '08
13 Primary and General -- that when we do the
14 mailing we get a lot of applications back.

15 And so we need to have a period of
16 time where we can, A, key in all those
17 applications that's before the deadline for
18 mailings so that we're not trying to do both.
19 Because part of the way that we staff this
20 office is we use the same people to key the
21 applications as we do to handle the mail
22 going out and coming back in as opposed to
23 having more staff. So we want to be able to
24 complete the majority of the application task

1 before the mail goes out.

2 It's also important so that when we
3 can actually mail ballots on the first day
4 that we have a sense of how many requests we
5 have so we can order the right number of
6 ballots to print.

7 So with all of these different
8 timelines that trigger additional timelines,
9 we were really hoping to be able to place the
10 orders with the printing company for the
11 650,000 envelopes and applications today so
12 that we could get them by the middle of next
13 week, start the seven- to ten-day insertion
14 process so that we can get them out at the
15 latest the first week of March.

16 So if we delay to meet with the
17 County Administrator on Thursday, have this
18 Board reconvene next week depending on what
19 we hear from Don, which may or may not be
20 definitive --

21 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: And when's the
22 meeting Thursday?

23 MR. DAMSCHRODER: Four -- three in
24 the afternoon?

1 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: Three-thirty.

2 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: There was a dot,
3 dot, dot on yours when I interrupted you. If
4 we wait until Thursday --

5 MR. DAMSCHRODER: The longer we
6 wait, the further into March it ends up
7 being, the mailing, which means the closer to
8 the -- which that means the likelihood that a
9 ballot will then be delayed being mailed
10 potentially instead of the last week of March
11 to include the absentee to the first or
12 second week of April which gives the voter
13 less time to vote and return it to us,
14 because we work back from that fixed deadline
15 of election day.

16 Now, one thing that -- a potential
17 gamble that the Board could take is given the
18 Commissioners' interest in doing the mailing
19 for the fall that they've already budgeted
20 the funds, not to our budget but to their
21 contingency budget, we could go ahead and
22 pull the trigger on printing the envelopes,
23 the outbound and return envelopes.

24 And if the Commissioners decide not

1 to give us the funding, we would have that
2 stock available for use this fall. Then
3 we're still in the quandary of what do we do
4 with the applications. But because it's a
5 primary election, the party affiliation -- we
6 could use the same applications in the fall,
7 they just fill in bubbles and it would be
8 essentially meaningless since it's not a
9 party ballot. So there's options there to
10 wait and keep going.

11 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: And what kind of
12 indication do we get from the assistant to
13 the County Administrator's call today that
14 there was an agenda, specific agenda?

15 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: Just wanted to
16 talk about the absentee ballot.

17 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: So they mentioned
18 -- what time did that call come in?

19 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: That was about
20 15 minutes before four o'clock.

21 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Well, I ask that
22 because it may have been triggered. So if
23 you -- and did I understand you to say that
24 dropping postage on the two return pieces

1 would take about \$173,000 out of it?

2 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: 173,450.

3 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Which gets our
4 number down to about --

5 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: 544,545.

6 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: So we've saved
7 the County Commissioners a lot of money? How
8 does that sound?

9 MR. MAS: And spend a lot of money
10 as well. Mr. Chairman, I don't know if it
11 would be of any benefit as a possibility of
12 reconvening on Thursday after they've had an
13 opportunity to meet with the Administrator.

14 I mean, I'm willing to do anything
15 so long as we have as much information as
16 possible before any decision is made. It's a
17 lot of money, particularly at this historical
18 time.

19 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: What price are we
20 putting on democracy? Don't write that down.

21 MR. MAS: I think that that is a
22 valid statement that we should repeat often
23 and loudly, and I don't have the answer to
24 that. But I suppose it's priceless like the

1 Master Card.

2 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: You got a better
3 quote than I did, Joe. Yeah. We're having
4 fun with it, but you're right and we all
5 would agree with that. We at this table in
6 recent months talked about the continuing
7 trends, the obvious interest, growing
8 interest, sustained interest in the voters of
9 availing themselves of what we now call
10 no-fault absentee voting -- the convenience,
11 certainly the ability for those that are less
12 able to get around to use it as well.

13 Let me ask for a few more words of
14 reassurance that if we delay a decision three
15 days we can still get'r done if we get to
16 that point. Rather than, I suspect, deadlock
17 on the issue here today, we can deadlock or
18 find maybe another path Thursday or Friday.

19 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: I recommend
20 Friday because they don't know how long
21 Thursday's meeting will go.

22 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Well, the four of
23 us speaking are willing to meet into the wee
24 hours of the night to insure --

1 MS. MARINELLO: That's true.

2 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: We won't be
3 able to move any faster --

4 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: I see, sure.

5 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: -- Thursday as
6 Friday. It really would get pushed till
7 probably Tuesday after President's Day,
8 although we're committed to working through
9 the weekend to make sure we get everything
10 lined up, obviously.

11 MR. MAS: That would be an overtime
12 problem.

13 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: Well, we -- not
14 our problem.

15 MR. DAMSCHRODER: We don't get
16 overtime anymore.

17 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: That's a
18 different Commissioners' sidebar.

19 MR. DAMSCHRODER: I mean, I think we
20 can definitely do that, but I think the clear
21 understanding for all interested parties,
22 including the public, is that the delay will
23 result in the mail not getting out as soon as
24 we would have normally preferred.

1 I think if we wait until Friday to
2 pull the trigger, assuming that we do pull
3 the trigger on Friday, it's unlikely that
4 we'll get anything in the mail until the end
5 of the first week of March at the earliest,
6 which puts us essentially at a week delay
7 from where -- if we were to pull the trigger
8 now.

9 MS. MARINELLO: Can you go ahead and
10 order the envelopes like you were --

11 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Does that save us
12 any time?

13 MR. DAMSCHRODER: I think it
14 potentially helps. It's a three-part
15 mailing, two envelopes and the application.
16 Doing two of the three parts probably helps
17 us to some degree, but we couldn't process
18 the mailing if we didn't have the
19 applications.

20 So I think from a printing
21 standpoint the vendor, not surprisingly,
22 would prefer to have the order for all three
23 than part. But like I said, if we end up not
24 -- if we print the envelopes and then end up

1 not doing the mailing, we'll have the
2 envelopes for the fall. I mean, there is a
3 market for envelopes.

4 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Well, it seems to
5 me a safe bet to authorize the -- going
6 forward with the printing of those materials
7 which could be used in the spring or the fall
8 if it speeds --

9 MR. DAMSCHRODER: And I should add
10 this. I apologize, it just dawned on me. We
11 also can't pull the trigger on the return
12 envelopes until we know whether we're paying
13 the postage or not because we need to print
14 the BRM information. So I apologize.

15 MS. MARINELLO: So I guess we better
16 wait till Friday then.

17 MR. DAMSCHRODER: So if we're going
18 to pull the trigger, we should pull the
19 trigger now. If we're going to wait, we
20 should wait to do the whole thing.

21 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: And I would
22 agree with that synopsis of our positions.

23 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Well, if there
24 isn't clarity in moving forward on part is

1 what you're saying, let's wait to move
2 forward on the whole thing. Less than
3 ideally, but still doable as of, we hope,
4 Thursday afternoon or Friday.

5 MR. DAMSCHRODER: To me, it's
6 personally surprising that the Commissioners
7 have delayed on this given their stated
8 enthusiasm at their budget meeting to do it,
9 which I think gives me more pause that we
10 don't want to get too far out there and get
11 screwed because I'll get yelled at.

12 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: The state of
13 their enthusiasm meaning their high
14 enthusiasm?

15 MR. DAMSCHRODER: Yes. I mean, it
16 was exuberance.

17 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: It's an
18 activity that I think Franklin County
19 Commissioners are getting more and more
20 receptive to the more and more we ask for it.
21 But it's something they have not committed,
22 like we've seen in Cuyahoga, yet to do
23 outright so we don't have to have these
24 discussions every time there's an election

1 for a special that pops up or circumstances
2 -- I mean, circumstances change that when we
3 have this meeting they weren't sure if there
4 was going to be a statewide ballot issue that
5 was going directly impact Franklin County.

6 Now we have that, so that's why the
7 dialogue is back, and I think we'll continue
8 to push to hopefully have it addressed up
9 front so we have clear guidance and can plan.
10 And we'd have the mailing out already if
11 those were the circumstances.

12 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Well, I'd like to
13 see it go forward. Obviously, we need to
14 remain sensitive to the state of finances in
15 the county as well as the will of the County
16 Commissioners.

17 Why don't we give ourselves and them
18 another few days to figure out if we can find
19 the path going forward that will maximize the
20 opportunity for the voters to take advantage
21 of absentee balloting this year in the
22 Primary as well as the General.

23 And then it sounds like we've
24 discussed this fully enough to perhaps move

1 on, unless there are other comments or
2 questions, to the next order of business.

3 MR. DAMSCHRODER: I think this is
4 the order of business.

5 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: The next would
6 be entertaining a motion to adjourn.

7 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: I thought there
8 were -- are these --

9 MR. MAS: They're the same thing.

10 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Oh, they're
11 related.

12 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: All of these
13 are authorizations to open the purchase order
14 that support the different activities --

15 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Oh, yeah, right.
16 Okay. I see that. I thought just the --

17 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: -- of the
18 mailing.

19 MS. MARINELLO: Mr. Chairman, I move
20 that we adjourn.

21 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Now, wait a
22 minute. I don't feel like we -- I think we
23 might want to go to Executive Session and
24 talk about each other. (Laughter.) All

1 right. This is one of the shortest meetings.

2 MR. DAMSCHRODER: I think it may be.

3 Is there a second to the motion?

4 MR. COLLEY: Second.

5 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: All in favor?

6 (All say aye.)

7 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: This meeting is

8 adjourned.

9 - - - - -

10 Thereupon, the meeting was
11 concluded at 4:36 o'clock p.m.

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CERTIFICATE

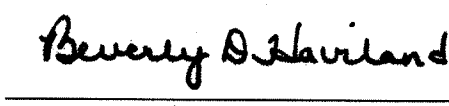
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The undersigned do hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings were digitally recorded, electronically transmitted, and transcribed via audible playback, and that the foregoing transcript of such proceedings is a full, true and correct transcript of the proceedings as so recorded.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal of office at Columbus, Ohio, on this 19th day of February, 2010.



MICHELLE K. SALINAS
Certified Digital Reporter
Notary Public - State of Ohio
My commission expires July 17, 2013



BEVERLY D. HAVILAND
Certified Digital Transcriber