

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

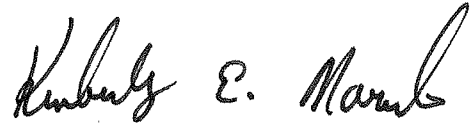
BY:



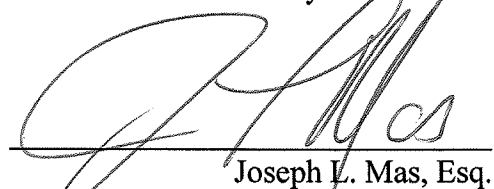
Douglas J. Preisse, Chairman



Michael F. Colley, Esq.

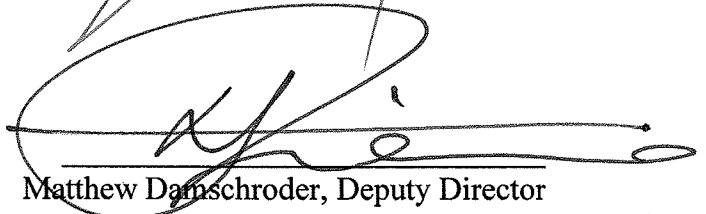


Kimberly E. Marinello



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

8

9

\_\_\_\_\_  
Suzanne Brown

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24



1 ALSO PRESENT:

2

3

Suzanne Brown - Secretary  
Ben Piscitelli - PIO

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

1 - - - - -

2 P R O C E E D I N G S

3 - - - - -

4 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: We'll begin the  
5 meeting with a call to order. Mr. Colley?

6 MR. COLLEY: Here.

7 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: Chairman  
8 Preisse?

9 CHAIRMAN PREISSE: Here.

10 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: Mr. Mas?

11 MR. MAS: Here.

12 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: Ms. Marinello?

13 MS. MARINELLO: Here.

14 DIRECTOR STINZIANO: This is the  
15 Special Meeting of the Franklin County Board  
16 of Elections for Monday, February 8, 2010.  
17 The item dealing with procurement is the  
18 absentee ballot application mailing and  
19 giving the Board on the supplemental  
20 appropriation request.

21 At the last meeting you had approved  
22 a motion for the Deputy Director and I to  
23 seek the supplemental appropriations for the  
24 mailing from the Commissioners. We have yet

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

