

CITY OF CRANSTON  
BOARD OF CANVASSERS  
Final Canvass Meeting of March 12, 2024 – OFFICIAL MINUTES

The Cranston Board of Canvassers met on March 12, 2024, in a meeting advertised in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act on February 28, 2024. The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Kirk McDonough, at 4:31 p.m. It was held in the Canvassing Authority Office, Room 100, at Cranston City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: James Donahue, Quilcia Moronta, Kirk McDonough

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT: Nicholas Lima (Registrar / Director of Elections), David Igliazzi (Board Legal Counsel)

The chair declared a quorum present.

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER (NO VOTES TAKEN)
- II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS – 1-17-2024, 1-23-2024, AND 2-8-2024 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- IV. PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – CHAIRPERSON (NO VOTES TAKEN)
- V. PUBLIC COMMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- VI. OLD BUSINESS – NONE
- VII. NEW BUSINESS
  - A. THE BOARD MAY CANVASS THE PRELIMINARY LIST OF CRANSTON VOTERS, HEAR OBJECTIONS TO THE INCLUSION OR OMISSION OF ANY PERSON AS A REGISTERED VOTER, AND MAKE A FINAL CANVASS AND CORRECTION OF THE VOTER LIST FOR THE RHODE ISLAND PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY ELECTION THAT IS TO TAKE PLACE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2024 IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-10-5 ET. SEQ (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
  - B. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AN UPDATE FROM THE REGISTRAR AND DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION REGARDING OPERATIONAL PLANS FOR PREVIOUSLY APPROVED POLLING LOCATIONS; EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES; IN-PERSON EARLY AND EMERGENCY VOTING; MAIL BALLOT APPLICATION PROCESSING; POLLING PLACE SET-UP AND LOGISTICS; POLL WORKER PAY, RECRUITMENT, AND TRAINING; MAIL BALLOT DROP BOXES; AND ELECTION SECURITY (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
  - C. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AN UPDATE FROM THE REGISTRAR ON THE CANVASSING AUTHORITY'S FY25 BUDGET REQUEST AND VOTE TO SUPPORT THE REQUEST (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

- D. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AN UPDATE FROM LEGAL COUNSEL, AND IN ANY RESPECTS IN WHICH THE PROPOSED DATE OF JUNE 4, 2024 TO HOLD THE CRANSTON SCHOOL BOND SPECIAL REFERENDUM ELECTION MAY REQUIRE RATIFICATION, CONFIRMATION, VALIDATION, OR ENACTMENT, THE BOARD MAY TAKE ACTION TO THAT EFFECT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- E. THE BOARD MAY VOTE TO ISSUE ITS WARRANT FOR THE APRIL 2, 2024 RHODE ISLAND PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY ELECTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-15-17 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- F. THE BOARD MAY CERTIFY MAIL BALLOT APPLICATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-20-10 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- VIII. UPDATES FROM THE REGISTRAR (ALL ITEMS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY; NO VOTES TAKEN)
  - A. STATUS OF LEGISLATION PREVIOUSLY SUPPORTED BY THE BOARD INTRODUCED AND HEARD IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
  - B. REGISTRAR'S ATTENDANCE AT THE APRIL 15-19 FEDERAL ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION STANDARDS BOARD ANNUAL MEETING
  - C. ATTEMPTS TO REMEDY THE FISKEVILLE USPS NON-DELIVERY AREA AND ITS AFFECT ON OFFICIAL ELECTION MAIL
- IX. ADJOURNMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough asked for a vote to approve the agenda.

MOTION: By Mr. Donahue and seconded by Ms. Moronta to approve the agenda as posted.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Ms. Moronta, Mr. Donahue, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS – 1-17-2024, 1-23-2024, AND 2-8-2024 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough asked if there was any discussion.

POINT OF ORDER: By Mr. Donahue, who asked if the minutes would be taken as a group or individually.

Mr. McDonough said they could be taken as a group if there are no objections.

MOTION: By Mr. Donahue and seconded by Ms. Moronta to receive the minutes of 1-17-2024, 1-23-2024, and 2-8-2024.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Ms. Moronta, Mr. Donahue, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – CHAIRPERSON (NO VOTES TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough formally recognized Mr. Donahue as this will be his last meeting as a member of the Board. Mr. McDonough said that Mr. Donahue steered us through some very difficult times as Chair, and that his service on the Board will be missed.

Mr. Donahue thanked the members and Mr. Lima for working with him, and said he enjoyed his time on the Board and that it has been an honor to serve.

PUBLIC COMMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

No one from the public was present or appeared to speak.

OLD BUSINESS – NONE

There was no old business posted.

NEW BUSINESS

A. THE BOARD MAY CANVASS THE PRELIMINARY LIST OF CRANSTON VOTERS, HEAR OBJECTIONS TO THE INCLUSION OR OMISSION OF ANY PERSON AS A REGISTERED VOTER, AND MAKE A FINAL CANVASS AND CORRECTION OF THE VOTER LIST FOR THE RHODE ISLAND PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY ELECTION THAT IS TO TAKE PLACE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2024 IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-10-5 ET. SEQ (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Lima said the office has received no written objections regarding any issues with the Preliminary List as posted. There are currently 60,075 eligible voters in Cranston on the list for this primary. Mr. Lima provided party registration and active/inactive breakdowns.

Mr. Lima said the Board will sign the Final Canvass list after its vote of approval.

Mr. Donahue asked how the registration numbers compare to the last PPP. Mr. Lima said the numbers are very similar, if not slightly higher. Cranston was just over 60,000 registered voters in 2020 as well, so statistically, it's almost identical.

MOTION: By Mr. Donahue and seconded by Ms. Moronta to approve the Final Canvass for the April 2, 2024 Presidential Preference Primary Election.  
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Ms. Moronta, Mr. Donahue, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

B. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AN UPDATE FROM THE REGISTRAR AND DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION REGARDING OPERATIONAL PLANS FOR PREVIOUSLY APPROVED POLLING LOCATIONS; EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES; IN-PERSON EARLY AND EMERGENCY VOTING; MAIL BALLOT APPLICATION PROCESSING; POLLING PLACE SET-UP AND LOGISTICS; POLL WORKER PAY, RECRUITMENT,

**AND TRAINING; MAIL BALLOT DROP BOXES; AND ELECTION SECURITY (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)**

Mr. Lima reviewed the plan for early voting, and said he and Ms. Bucci will help open the site tomorrow morning. There will be a minimum crew of four early voting part-time staff members on duty at the Pastore Youth Center. A high turnout is not expected. The volume of mail ballot applications has been low, as has the call volume to the office. Signage is up at both City Hall and the early voting site, and the mail ballot drop box will be opened tomorrow at 8 a.m. Mr. Lima said the office will be opening at 8 a.m. instead of 8:30 while early voting is going on.

Poll worker training classes will also be held over the next two weeks, and Mr. Lima encouraged the Board to attend classes for both the supervisors and the moderators and clerks. The emergency mail ballot process also begins tomorrow morning, which is why there are voting booths in the City Hall hallway. Voting equipment will be delivered to the polls on the Friday before the primary, and Mr. Lima will escort the delivery trucks and take custody of the equipment and verify the correct quantity of equipment is delivered to the right polling places. He said Building Maintenance, Parks and Rec., and the School Dept. will be assisting with polling place set-ups on Monday, April 1.

The mailer is going out to 30,000 households later this week. Mr. Lima will put up signage at all polling places that are not being used, with both a lawn sign near the road and a laminated sign taped to the front door directing voters to their correct combined polling location.

There were no questions from the Board.

**C. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AN UPDATE FROM THE REGISTRAR ON THE CANVASSING AUTHORITY'S FY25 BUDGET REQUEST AND VOTE TO SUPPORT THE REQUEST (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)**

Mr. Lima asked if the Board if there were any questions on the FY25 budget request.

Mr. Donahue asked if there was any feedback from the administration on the submitted request. Mr. Lima said he has not heard anything since he submitted the budget and no meeting has been scheduled by the Finance Dept. to discuss it. Mr. Donahue asked when the budget will be presented by the Mayor to the Council, and Mr. Lima said it would likely be on the April 1 deadline.

Mr. McDonough asked whether the Board should take a vote on the budget request because Mr. Lima has operational control, and he wondered if the Board taking a position on the budget as a whole could cause the Board to have to file financial disclosures with the Ethics Commission. Mr. Iglizzi said he can research that question and get back to the Board. His recommendation to the Board is to take no action today just to be safe so the Board can get clarity in the meantime, particularly since the budget request is going before the Council either way.

D. THE BOARD MAY HEAR AN UPDATE FROM LEGAL COUNSEL, AND IN ANY RESPECTS IN WHICH THE PROPOSED DATE OF JUNE 4, 2024 TO HOLD THE CRANSTON SCHOOL BOND SPECIAL REFERENDUM ELECTION MAY REQUIRE RATIFICATION, CONFIRMATION, VALIDATION, OR ENACTMENT, THE BOARD MAY TAKE ACTION TO THAT EFFECT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Igliazzi said that Mr. Lima has been on top of this issue for several months now. Mr. Igliazzi explained the referendum approval process that has been working through the General Assembly, which also requires City Council approval to set a specific date. The election date must be held before the end of June due to changes in the state reimbursement rates that the city will miss out on if the bond question were to appear on the November ballot.

Mr. Igliazzi said the bond act is pending passage in the House and has already cleared the Senate. He said Mr. Lima has been waiting to see when the City Council will set the date, so that the Board can proceed confidently in planning the election and meet its legal deadlines, which are approaching if the election is to be held June 4 as proposed. Mr. Lima said that last night a Special City Council meeting was scheduled to undertake this action. He noted that the Secretary of State will not print ballots until the Board of Elections approves the calendar for this election, and the state BOE will not take that action until a legislative body formally sets the election date.

Mr. Lima noted that our deadline to certify the final ballot question language to the Secretary of State is April 15, which is quickly approaching. Mr. Igliazzi said that given the fact that both the General Assembly and City Council are proceeding with their approvals, no action is required by the Board today. Mr. Lima agreed, and noted that the Board would only need to take action if either legislative body delegated its authority to set the date to our Board, which has not occurred and is not anticipated.

Mr. McDonough asked what the current status of the bond act is in the House. Mr. Lima said there have been some political considerations in the House regarding actions that were taken by the City Plan Commission, which the Commission has a meeting scheduled to reconsider. Mr. Igliazzi noted the bond act is worded such that the Council can vote to set the Special Election date even before the General Assembly has passed the act, which allows the city to proceed with planning given the accelerated timeline.

Mr. Donahue asked whether the Planning Commission's vote was relative to the capital budget, and Mr. Lima said it was related to projects that would be funded by the bond. Mr. Lima said the General Assembly could decide to act on the bond regardless of what the Planning Commission decides to do. Mr. Donahue asked how long the city has to issue bond funds contingent upon voter approval. Mr. Igliazzi noted it is a multi-year authorization.

E. THE BOARD MAY VOTE TO ISSUE ITS WARRANT FOR THE APRIL 2, 2024 RHODE ISLAND PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY ELECTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-15-17 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Lima noted he has never brought the approval of the warrant before the Board before, as in the past he has just posted it on behalf of the Board. However, because

the law says the Board “shall issue its warrant,” Mr. Lima felt that going forward it should be something the Board formally votes on. He explained the nature of the warrant and where and how it is posted and advertised.

MOTION: By Mr. Donahue and seconded by Ms. Moronta to issue the election warrant for the April 2, 2024 Presidential Preference Primary Election in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-15-17.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Ms. Moronta, Mr. Donahue, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

#### F. THE BOARD MAY CERTIFY MAIL BALLOT APPLICATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-20-10 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Ms. Moronta asked a question about some of the Category 3 applications and why not all of them have a back-up. Mr. Lima said they are FPCA applications through UOCAVA which do not use the standard mail ballot application that other types do, and further explained the FPCA and FWAP process for military and overseas voters.

MOTION: By Mr. Donahue and seconded by Ms. Moronta to certify all mail ballot applications received by the deadline for the April 2, 2024 Presidential Preference Primary Election R.I. Gen. Laws § 17-20-10.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Ms. Moronta, Mr. Donahue, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

Mr. Lima noted he will have the Board take another vote on the day of the primary to formally certify all emergency mail ballot applications that come in before the 4 p.m. deadline on April 1.

#### UPDATES FROM THE REGISTRAR (ALL ITEMS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY; NO VOTES TAKEN)

##### A. STATUS OF LEGISLATION PREVIOUSLY SUPPORTED BY THE BOARD INTRODUCED AND HEARD IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Mr. Lima said most of the main bills that the Board has supported have had their hearings in the House and Senate, particularly the bills introduced on behalf of the RI Town and City Clerks' Association. Mr. Lima said he has prepared an alternative Sub-A version of the write-in legislation if it is needed, following questions on the procedures in the House State Government and Elections Committee meeting, in order to allay concerns raised by some representatives at that hearing regarding the write-in candidate declaration component.

He noted that everything is in the hopper at this point, and that there will be a couple more hearings in late March or early April, but so far there has been good feedback on several of the bills.

Mr. McDonough noted there is a new statewide Board of Canvassers' Chairpersons working group trying to get started up, and that Mr. Lima's written testimony on bills is considered the standard by the other local boards. He said that Mr. Lima deserves credit for being a leader of the other cities and towns on advocating for elections legislation improvements and that his work has made a real difference in legislative hearings.

#### B. REGISTRAR'S ATTENDANCE AT THE APRIL 15-19 FEDERAL ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION STANDARDS BOARD ANNUAL MEETING

Mr. Lima said he will be attending the EAC's Standards Board Annual Meeting in Kansas City at no cost to the city, with his travel expenses paid for by the federal government. He said there is a state and a local member of the Standards Board from every state and U.S. territory, and that he is the designated local member for Rhode Island. The Standards Board evaluates protocols used for the designs of voting machines, tabulators, and accessible ballot marking devices to ensure compliance with federal law and best practices, via promulgation of the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines. Mr. Lima said the mix of state and local representation on the Standards Board allows for good conversations on election policy needs from a diverse group of stakeholders.

#### C. ATTEMPTS TO REMEDY THE FISKEVILLE USPS NON-DELIVERY AREA AND ITS AFFECT ON OFFICIAL ELECTION MAIL

Mr. Lima said this matter is scheduled for a Council vote to adopt a resolution he wrote to encourage the USPS to allow Fiskeville residents to get normal mail delivery. The bi-partisan resolution is co-sponsored by Councilman Ferri, Councilman Campopiano, and Council President Marino.

Mr. Lima said the office has for many years inquired as to why Fiskeville residents cannot get regular mail delivery at their street addresses, which causes a wide range of quality of life issues including difficulty receiving mail ballots, Official Election Mail, and voter registration acknowledgement letters. This has resulted in the disenfranchisement of voters. Mr. Lima noted he has elevated these concerns to every level of the Postal Service without resolution.

Due to the insufficient response and lack of justification for these residents to not receive normal mail delivery, two years ago Mr. Lima formally requested USPS establish delivery in Fiskeville, after several residents reached out to him. USPS denied this request, and a subsequent appeal. Mr. Lima then worked with U.S. Senator Jack Reed's office to further appeal the request, however, USPS denied the appeal again, and failed to address or even acknowledge any of the quality of life or voter registration and voting concerns that were raised.

Mr. Lima determined that the only path forward was to exert political pressure on USPS to reevaluate its policies pertaining to Fiskeville, which is what the resolution is designed to do. It asks the entire congressional delegation as well as the RI Secretary of State to support the city's effort to establish normal mail delivery for Fiskeville.

Mr. Moronta asked why the Postal Service can't just provide mail to residents. Mr. Lima said USPS will not tell him directly why mail service was set up this way as a "P.O. Box only" area, and that they have cited conflicting reasons and misapplied regulatory rationale, claiming it is a rural area when it is in fact a suburban community. Mr. Lima noted that in much of Fiskeville, USPS delivers to addresses directly across the street on the Scituate side of Main St., but not on the Cranston side, without explanation.

He also noted that the Fiskeville Post Office only seems to exist because Fiskeville residents do not receive mail at their houses, while the Hope Post Office is only a half-mile up the road. He questioned, operationally and financially, why USPS would prefer to operate two post offices in close proximity to each other rather than just establish or extend existing delivery routes to cover the few dozen residences on Main St. in Fiskeville and its associated side streets. Mr. Lima said he has received no answer to this inquiry at any level. Mr. Lima also said no one at USPS can explain why mail delivery was set up in this way in the first place, and he reasoned that it has only persisted because no one within USPS has realized the need to modernize it. Mr. Lima noted that USPS has argued residents are too close to the Fiskeville office to receive mail, yet residents around all other post offices in the city, including the Hope Post Office, do receive mail delivery so this rule is seemingly only applied to Fiskeville. USPS also delivers mail to Hope residents of Scituate on Main St. who live closer to the Fiskeville Post Office than the Cranston residents do, which has caused some Cranston Fiskeville residents to place their mail boxes across the street in Scituate.

Ms. Moronta said the residents are taxpayers and should be entitled to these services. Mr. Iglizzi said that is the hill Mr. Lima is attempting to climb with the Council resolution. Mr. Lima noted that if the hill is Mt. Everest, given his interactions with USPS thus far, he may still be at Base Camp One.

#### ADJOURNMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

MOTION: By Ms. Moronta and seconded by Mr. Donahue to adjourn.  
PASSED UNANIMOUSLY – VOICE VOTE

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas J. Lima  
Registrar / Director of Elections  
Cranston Board of Canvassers

APPROVED by the Cranston Board of Canvassers: May 14, 2024