

CITY OF CRANSTON
BOARD OF CANVASSERS
Regular Meeting of June 11, 2024 – OFFICIAL MINUTES

The Cranston Board of Canvassers met on June 11, 2024, in a meeting advertised in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act on May 31, 2024. The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Kirk McDonough, at 5:32 p.m. It was held in the Canvassing Authority Office, Room 100, at Cranston City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Quilcia Moronta, Kirk McDonough

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steven Piscopiello

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Rivelli (Board Alternate), Nicholas Lima (Registrar / Director of Elections)

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 – 5-14-2024, 6-4-2024, 6-5-2024 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- IV. PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – CHAIRPERSON (NO VOTES TAKEN)
- V. PUBLIC COMMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)
- VI. OLD BUSINESS – NO MATTERS ON THE TABLE
- VII. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF THE CONDUCT OF THE JUNE 4, 2024 CRANSTON SPECIAL REFERENDUM ELECTION (NO VOTES TAKEN)
 - B. PURSUANT TO R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-22-5.2, THE BOARD MAY CERTIFY THE LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS FOR THE JUNE 4, 2024 CRANSTON SPECIAL REFERENDUM ELECTION (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, HEARD, OR ACTED UPON IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
 - B. REVIEW OF SUMMER AND FALL ELECTION CALENDAR AND ANTICIPATED BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE
- IX. ADJOURNMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

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

MOTION: By Ms. Moronta and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to approve the agenda as posted.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 2-0 – Ms. Moronta and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS – 5-14-2024, 6-4-2024, 6-5-2024 (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough asked for a motion to approve the minutes of prior meetings.

MOTION: By Ms. Moronta and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to receive the minutes of May 14, 2024, June 4, 2024, and June 5, 2024.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 2-0 – Ms. Moronta and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – CHAIRPERSON (NO VOTES TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough wanted to thank the entire Canvassing Authority staff and poll workers for their hard work in successfully conducting the June 4, 2024 Cranston Special Referendum Election. He said the efforts of all are noted by this Board. He also wanted to congratulate his daughter on graduating high school today. The Board members offered their congratulations.

PUBLIC COMMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough noted there were no members of the public present.

OLD BUSINESS – NO MATTERS ON THE TABLE

No old business items were posted.

NEW BUSINESS

A. DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF THE CONDUCT OF THE JUNE 4, 2024 CRANSTON SPECIAL REFERENDUM ELECTION (NO VOTES TAKEN)

Mr. McDonough asked if there was any discussion. Ms. Moronta said she was disappointed in some of the supply problems from the state Board of Elections. She said issues like wrong seals and the ExpressVote paper supplied being the wrong size were concerning, even if they were addressed early in the day, because it caused a lot of extra work for our personnel and could have been problematic for any voters wanting to use the ExpressVote. She is worried that for the bigger elections this Fall, these kinds of errors would add up quickly and harm our ability to effectively administer the polling places.

Ms. Moronta said errors like we saw in supplies to the six polls cause confusion for poll workers and they should have been double checked before being supplied. Mr. Lima said our concerns were communicated to the BOE and SOS, and he noted the BOE has been short-staffed due to recent staff turnover that is expected to be improved by this

fall. Ms. Moronta said that all of the PollPads were not synching in the morning, which was also a problem as it could only be fixed when the BOE technician had time to manually visit every polling location to correct them. Mr. Lima said when issues like this happen, even if they're not directly our fault, our staff and poll workers feel the brunt of that and are the ones who have to do unexpected workarounds. Mr. Lima agreed that issues like this need to be minimized because they are only amplified when we will have 26 polls instead of just 6. Ms. Moronta said it's also a bad public perception, and the equipment should be better checked before being sent to us proactively.

Mr. Rivelli said something as simple as the ExpressVote headphones being missing at one location and being broken with the wires sticking out of them at another location were unacceptable with only six locations open. He had to drive to the state BOE himself to pick up a working pair of headphones.

Mr. McDonough said he was also concerned about the DS-200 USB compartment issue that was noted the morning of the election at one of the locations. Ms. Moronta agreed that even though it didn't affect the election and each discrepancy had a valid explanation, it's still a perception issue and can be eliminated by more care in packing the supplies and equipment.

Mr. McDonough said Cranston was the only Title 17 election on June 4 so there should be no excuse for sloppiness in the supplies we were provided.

B. PURSUANT TO R.I. GEN. LAWS § 17-22-5.2, THE BOARD MAY CERTIFY THE LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS FOR THE JUNE 4, 2024 CRANSTON SPECIAL REFERENDUM ELECTION (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

Mr. Lima presented the election certification to the Board and the final election results passing the school bond. He said there was one understanding military/overseas FPCA Category 3 mail ballot that prevented certification until after 4 p.m. today, which was also the recount request deadline. There were no deficient mail ballots in need of curing.

Mr. Lima noted the certification has triplicate original copies to be signed by the Board. One copy will be hand-delivered to the Secretary of State, one transmitted to the City Clerk, and one retained as a permanent record in our vault. Emailed copies will be sent to other city officials, School Dept. officials, and bond counsel after this meeting. Mr. Lima asked Mr. Piscopiello to sign the certificate earlier today since he could not attend tonight's meeting, in anticipation of the remainder of the Board's action to certify.

Mr. Lima said that because of the June 30 state deadline for the higher reimbursement program, the City Council is acting quickly on the loan order related to this referendum, with a Special Finance Committee meeting scheduled for this Thursday to consider it and forward to the full Council meeting on June 24. The Board's action today will be our last legal action required related to this process and complete the election. Mr. Lima noted the bond act becomes effective immediately upon certification.

MOTION: By Ms. Moronta and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to certify the official results of the June 4, 2024 Cranston Special Referendum Election.

PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 2-0 – Ms. Moronta and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

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

A. STATUS OF LEGISLATION PREVIOUSLY SUPPORTED BY THE BOARD INTRODUCED, HEARD, OR ACTED UPON IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Mr. Lima said he has good news and bad news. The bad news is the write-in bill, precinct cap bill, and newspaper ad reform bills are once again not passing the Senate. Mr. Lima has not received a reason or explanation as to why, or what specific issues the Senate has with the bills that could be addressed to be considered in the future. He said we can try again next year as the House has previously voted several times to support all three bills.

The good news is several important election bills are passing or have already passed both chambers. This includes the automatic disaffiliation bill for unaffiliated voters, the 3-day mail ballot application transmission and sign with an X legislation, and the 35-day mail ballot drop box bill which will help us with the voter registration deadline. The nomination paper fraudulent signature reporting process bill has also passed. The Board previously supported all of these bills.

Mr. Lima said there should be little issue with implementing these technical changes for the upcoming elections. He said that candidate declaration is in two weeks, and we already have packets prepared for pick-up including maps and campaign finance information for all public office candidates.

The Board members expressed their disappointment that the write-in bill again was not considered in the Senate. Ms. Moronta asked why it has not passed, and Mr. Lima said he has not been provided an explanation. He said no Senators have expressed concerns to him about the bill, and it previously passed the House three times. He said the BOE, League of Cities and Towns, and RI Town and City Clerks' Association all backed the bill this year, although apparently that widespread support wasn't enough.

Ms. Moronta asked if there's another way to tabulate the write-ins because this bill didn't pass. Mr. Lima said unfortunately, because they are hand-written, the only way to tabulate them is for the Board to review each write-in for every office from all 26 polling locations and early voting and add them up by hand, as a determination has to be made on the intent of each write-in publicly even if it has no effect on the outcome or is for a fictional character, blank, or illegible. Mr. Lima said we made the best case we could, met individually with members of both chambers, provided verbal and written testimony, and rallied support from other public interest groups, however in the end none of that seemed to matter.

Ms. Moronta was concerned we will have thousands of write-ins to hand-tabulate this November which means the Board will need to take several days off from the day jobs following Election Day to go through them all.

Mr. McDonough said he would seriously like to invite the House and Senate members from Cranston as well as legislative leadership to observe the write-in tabulation process this November and sit with us so they can better understand what we do and why it doesn't work in current law. Ms. Moronta agreed, and noted all write-in votes cast are recorded, so there's no need for us to add them up by hand if it doesn't effect the result. Mr. Lima said he can provide Mr. McDonough the emails for the representatives and senators.

B. REVIEW OF SUMMER AND FALL ELECTION CALENDAR AND ANTICIPATED BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Mr. Lima said he will email the known Board meetings for the rest of the year to the membership. Mr. Rivelli asked what is going on with the second alternate seat that has been vacant since December, as not having it filled makes it more difficult to attain a quorum for the upcoming meetings. Mr. Lima said he is continuing to ask the administration, party chair, and Council to make filling the seat a priority, and he asks about it on a weekly basis. However, he has not been told of any names they plan to put up for appointment to fill the vacancy thus far. Mr. Lima said it is imperative that we have a full Board of Canvassers in place to run the two biggest elections we ever run, which is a mayoral primary and a presidential election.

ADJOURNMENT (VOTES MAY BE TAKEN)

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

APPROVED by the Cranston Board of Canvassers: July 9, 2024