

CITY OF CRANSTON
BOARD OF CANVASSERS
Meeting of March 12, 2026 – OFFICIAL MINUTES

The Cranston Board of Canvassers met on March 12, 2026, in a meeting advertised in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act on March 5, 2026. The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Kirk McDonough, at 5:36 p.m. It was held in Council Chambers, Third Floor, at Cranston City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Anthony Mastantuono, Quilcia Moronta, Kirk McDonough

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

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

The chair declared a quorum present.

AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order and Approval of the Agenda** (*votes may be taken*)
- II. **Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings** (*votes may be taken*)
- III. **Items for Discussion, Vote, and/or Other Action** (*votes may be taken on all items*)
 - A. The Board may take a position on 2026 elections legislation, specifically H-7233, H-7494, H-7979, and H-7782 and their Senate companion bills
 - B. The Board may discuss recent changes and updates in federal funding and security support and other changes to federal interactions with state and local elections infrastructure, and its impacts on 2026 election operations planning
 - C. The Board may review the 2026 Cranston “I Voted” sticker contest finalists submitted by the School Department, select one or more winners to utilize for the 2026 elections, and request the Cranston City Council recognize the students
- IV. **Updates from the Registrar / Director of Elections** (*no votes taken on any items*)
 - A. Summer 2026 PLEJ Conference
 - B. International Association of Government Officials Conference and CPL Program
 - C. United States Election Assistance Commission Standards Board and EAC Local Leadership Council Annual Meetings
 - D. CEAL (Coalition of Election Association Leaders) Conference and grant opening
 - E. Canvassing Authority office renovations project
 - F. UMN HHH CEA Program
- V. **Adjournment** (*vote may be taken*)

I. Call to Order and Approval of the Agenda (*votes may be taken*)

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

MOTION: By Mr. Mastantuono and seconded by Mr. Rivelli to approve the agenda as posted.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY – VOICE VOTE

II. Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings *(votes may be taken)*

Mr. McDonough asked for a motion to approve the minutes as officially posted. Mr. Lima apologized for getting the draft minutes to the Board for review later than normal, as he has changed the format to be more readable and accessible, and since the last meeting covered many important topics, he also wanted to make sure the minutes were as detailed as possible to reflect an accurate record of the discussions and the Board's actions for future reference.

MOTION: By Mr. Mastantuono and seconded by Ms. Moronta to approve the prior meeting minutes.

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

III. Items for Discussion, Vote, and/or Other Action *(votes may be taken on all items)*

A. The Board may take a position on 2026 elections legislation, specifically H-7233, H-7494, H-7979, and H-7782 and their Senate companion bills

Mr. Lima presented the bills to the Board and described what each bill does, including its positive impacts for our office and election integrity. He said his recommendation is that the Board support all four bills, and he asked if there were any questions. He noted H-7494 improves access for observers of mail ballot processing at the state Board of Elections, and also adds a driver's license or last four of a social security number field to mail ballot applications to help in confirming identity, both of which are already on voter registration forms. Mr. Lima said H-7979 is also a bill from the state BOE, which improves the security of mail ballots by restricting campaigns and candidates from handling the ballots of voters who aren't immediate household or family members.

He said H-7782, a third BOE bill, fixes an error in a law passed last year that only changed the recount request deadline to be 9 days for some candidates, while leaving others at 7 days. This is problematic because the deadline to request a recount in a close race is before the final overseas military ballots are processed by the BOE, which means the trailing candidate may have to request a recount before the results are known, and in 2024, this meant a trailing candidate requested a recount but then was in the lead before the recount was conducted. The bill would standardize all contests to 9 days to prevent this from happening again. The fourth bill would add automatic voter registration, the same we already have at the DMV, to applicants of hunting and fishing licenses. Mr. Lima said this is a good bill because people often forget to update their name, address, and party until it's too late, so if they can have that opportunity when they interact with other government agencies, it will allow our staff to receive those updates more often and keep the voter rolls more accurate.

Ms. Moronta asked if the Canvassing office would be sending applications with this PII already filled out, citing privacy concerns if someone else received and opened the mail. Mr. Lima said we would not, as it would be blank going out and the voter would have to fill it out themselves to confirm their identity. Ms. Moronta said that made sense and it alleviated her concern.

MOTION: By Mr. Mastantuono and seconded by Ms. Moronta to support all of the legislative proposals as listed on the agenda.

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

B. The Board may discuss recent changes and updates in federal funding and security support and other changes to federal interactions with state and local elections infrastructure, and its impacts on 2026 election operations planning

Mr. Lima updated the Board on the ongoing litigation involving over two dozen states and the Department of Justice, including Rhode Island, requesting full, unrestricted access to confidential data and the statewide voter rolls. He also noted that the Dept. of Homeland Security and CISA has effectively defunded and terminated all of the support they previously provided us for election security threat alerts, and all of the staff that previously worked at the federal level to help us defend against foreign and domestic threats against elections have been fired or reassigned in CISA, the FBI, and in DOJ. He said while these developments are concerning and unfortunate, new, non-profit groups and state consortiums are standing up to the extent they can, lacking federal expertise and intelligence resources, to try to fill some of the gaps on election security support.

Mr. Lima also noted that legislation under consideration by Congress, if passed with immediate effect, would cost the city millions of dollars in the need for additional staff and system improvements to handle the federal changes Congress is considering to voter registration and election eligibility requirements, particularly in-person, documentary proof of citizenship, which nearly half of Cranston voters do not currently have easy access to attain. While some bills have passed the House, they appear to be stalled in the Senate, although they still merit close monitoring in case the city has to hire more staff to adjust to the unfunded federal mandates that Congress is considering. If the laws pass, and are not held up in court, we will not have a choice, as they also include criminal penalties for local election officials who fail to follow the law, so we will have to adhere to our responsibility to follow the law as written, even if it has a detrimental impact on voter eligibility, causes chaos in the election, and is unaffordable for the city, realistically. Mr. Lima noted our oaths to the law require the law to be followed, regardless of whether or not we agree with its merits or practicality. That said, many election officials at the local and state level around the country have, in a bi-partisan manner, been raising concerns about these unfunded mandates that have no included implementation period.

Discussion ensued. Board members expressed their concerns about the staff potentially having to figure out how to implement some of the most significant changes to federal election law in decades without any funding or reasonable timeline.

C. The Board may review the 2026 Cranston “I Voted” sticker contest finalists submitted by the School Department, select one or more winners to utilize for the 2026 elections, and request the Cranston City Council recognize the students

Mr. Lima presented the 10 finalists from Cranston Public Schools, which were submitted to us by the School Department under the contest rules. He noted that the finalists generally met the criteria for the contest, such as not having any political messaging or commercial advertising, not being created by AI, using the words “I Voted,” and representing the City of Cranston in some way as part of the design.

Mr. Lima presented the designs to the Board, who reviewed them. Board members felt that several of the designs merited selection. Mr. Lima said we would print fewer of each design selected, to save on resources, if more than one was selected, and distribute them accordingly. Each Board member noted the creativity of the artwork designed by the students. Mr. Lima noted the designs are presented anonymously, without names or which school they come from, in order to ensure each design receives a fair review by the Board.

After much discussion, the Board settled on four designs to print.

MOTION: By Mr. McDonough and seconded by Mr. Mastantuono to approve anonymized sticker design numbers 4, 6, 8, and 9, and to request the City Council and School Committee consider recognizing the students for their contributions.
PASSED ROLL CALL VOTE – 3-0 – Mr. Mastantuono, Ms. Moronta, and Mr. McDonough voting aye.

IV. Updates from the Registrar / Director of Elections (no votes taken on any items)

A. Summer 2026 PLEJ Conference

Mr. Lima said he has been invited by PLEJ to attend the three-day conference in Atlanta this July, which he will be able to attend at no cost to the city. PLEJ has been a valuable resource since the office joined three years ago, offering free trainings and resources, and connecting us with several new groups that provide assistance to local election offices.

B. International Association of Government Officials Conference and CPL Program

Mr. Lima said he continues to be an IGO member, and attends the conference in his official capacity but at his own personal expense since the office does not have a budget for travel or conference attendance. The 2026 IGO meeting will take place immediately after PLEJ in Virginia, which Mr. Lima will attend. While there, he will also continue to take two classes towards his Certificate in Public Leadership, a program provided by PLEJ, which he is likewise paying out of pocket for. He noted this will be class 7 and 8 of the 10-class program, so he is close to attaining the certification from Pepperdine University. Mr. Lima said IGO remains one of the best professional development opportunities for election officials in the country.

C. United States Election Assistance Commission Standards Board and EAC Local Leadership Council Annual Meetings

Mr. Lima said the Annual Meetings of the EAC LLC and Standards Board will take place in April in Chicago. He will attend the meetings, with all costs paid for by the federal government, as the Secretary of State's designated Standards Board local election official representative for the State of Rhode Island, and as the LLC designated representative by the RI Town and City Clerks' Association. Mr. Lima said he continues to serve as chair for the Northeast Region, which comprises 10 states including all of New England. The two Annual Meetings are being held back-to-back. He said the Standards Board is a Federal Advisory Committee created by Congress when it created the U.S. Election Assistance Commission as part of the Help America Vote Act, which is designed to ensure state and local election officials have a say in the EAC's work to certify voting systems and improve elections administration nationally.

D. CEAL (Coalition of Election Association Leaders) Conference and grant opening

Mr. Lima said that he and several other Rhode Island local election officials will also be attending the CEAL conference in Chicago following the EAC meetings. CEAL is paying for travel expenses, so like the other travel, there is no cost to the city. The conference will focus on local election official associations in the 50 states, and how we can improve the professionalism, capabilities, and training of local election officials, who are supported in large part by our state associations.

E. Canvassing Authority office renovations project

Mr. Lima said the \$50,000 grant to improve the security of the Canvassing Authority office space is nearly complete, with the state providing full reimbursement to the city soon and the last of our bills from the vendors expected to come in shortly. The only remaining item in the project, now that all of the work is done, will be to ask the city building maintenance division to, when staff is available, repaint the office, which hasn't been done in over 20 years and is peeling in many areas. Repainting will also better cover the new conduits and wiring that were added as part of the security project.

F. UMN HHH CEA Program

Mr. Lima told the Board he is making good progress towards his post-baccalaureate certificate in the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School Certificate in Election Administration program. He said he is paying approximately \$15,000 out of pocket to earn the certificate, which involves six full, graduate-level academic courses he is taking online through UMN, alongside MPA and other CEA students. After completing three courses last Fall, he expects to complete the remaining three this semester, including focuses on election law and election security, which is good timing since he would not have the free time on nights or weekends to work on the courses once we are running an election. The courses are taught by some of the country's most experienced state and local election officials and experts, and involve rigorous academic coursework diving deeply into topical election administration policy issues that he said he is already finding helpful in his daily work.

VI. Adjournment *(vote may be taken)*

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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