

CITY OF CRANSTON
BOARD OF CANVASSERS
Election Meeting of June 2, 2020 – APPROVED MINUTES

The Cranston Board of Canvassers met on June 2, 2020, in a meeting advertised in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act on May 29, 2020. The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Randall Jackvony, at 6:38 a.m. It began and ended in the Canvassing Department Office, Room 100 at Cranston City Hall, with the election having been conducted at two polling places in the city.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Randall Jackvony, Gary Vierra, Alice Petrone (For Mr. Joslyn)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Fred Joslyn

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT: Nicholas Lima (Registrar/Director of Elections), Theresa Bucci (Canvassing Aide), Maria Madonna (Data Entry and Maintenance Specialist), Emerson Brito (Elections Assistant), Thomas Rotella (Elections Specialist)

The chair declared a quorum present.

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. THE CRANSTON BOARD OF CANVASSERS WILL CONVENE TO CONDUCT THE JUNE 2, 2020 RHODE ISLAND PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY ELECTION IN THE CITY OF CRANSTON, AND WILL REMAIN IN SESSION THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE DAY UNTIL THE CLOSE OF BOARD BUSINESS PERTAINING TO THE ELECTION. POLLING LOCATIONS WILL BE OPEN FROM 7 A.M. TO 8 P.M. AT ALL PRECINCTS ACROSS THE CITY.
- III. ADJOURNMENT

II. CONDUCT OF THE JUNE 2, 2020 RHODE ISLAND PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY ELECTION IN THE CITY OF CRANSTON

The June 2, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary Election (PPP) was conducted in unprecedented circumstances in the State of Rhode Island due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus global pandemic. Originally scheduled on April 28, 2020, it was moved to June 2 by executive order of the Governor at the request of local boards of canvassers through the state Board of Elections and by the BOE itself.

Because of the pandemic, the PPP marked the first predominantly mail ballot election in the state's history. Mail ballot applications were sent by the Secretary of State to all registered voters statewide, and the office staff of the Cranston Board of Canvassers in April and May processed a record 12,000 applications. Assistance was provided by the city administration with staff from Public Works, Tax Assessor, Planning, and Economic Development. At times, 10 staff members were working on the mail ballot application processing project in order to meet deadlines and get ballots out to voters in May. The

office staff sent thank you notes to the outside-department staff who helped tremendously in this successful effort. It was an unprecedented endeavor.

Due to a delay on the state's end in getting ballots to voters, some voters received their ballots too late to mail them back and guarantee their receipt by the BOE on the night of June 2. As a result, the BOE made a last-minute decision to deploy secure ballot drop boxes at all city and town halls and all polling locations, including the Board of Canvassers office at Cranston City Hall. The BOE also had a 24-hour drop box at their office, 2000 Plainfield Pike in Cranston, which was utilized by thousands of voters.

With most voters casting ballots by mail, voter turnout was extremely light on June 2. Cranston opened two polling locations as "vote centers," in which any voter in the city could choose to appear and cast a ballot. Mr. Lima thanked the Western Hills Middle School and the Cranston School Department, as well as the Scottish Rite Masonic Lodge, for providing their facilities in the midst of a serious pandemic and economic and social shutdown of the state. Their large interiors were used to space out supervisor check-in stations, voting machines, and privacy booths for social distancing.

Roughly 1,500 voters used these locations on June 2, with two-thirds voting at Western Hills. More than 7,500 people voted by mail, for a total turnout of around 15.5%. The in-person voting locations were well-staffed by a group of dedicated poll workers, including extra line control and greeter poll workers to assist in managing the flow of voters and social distancing. Due to the light turnout, no lines formed and voters were able to be checked in almost immediately upon arrival throughout the day.

The Board of Canvassers members provided direct supervision of both polling places all day, and the four moderators working at the locations performed flawlessly. Mr. Jackvony, Ms. Petrone, and Mr. Vierra each travelled between the two locations throughout the day and answered questions from poll workers and voters, providing assistance as needed. Mr. Lima and Mr. Rotella, who is an experienced poll worker hired by the Board to provide additional supervision of the polls, also traveled between the locations all day and reported no serious incidents or problems.

Voters and all poll workers wore face masks, and had gloves, hand sanitizer, face shields, and cleaning agents available. Staff from Building Maintenance were present at both locations throughout the day, and aided in the set up and break down of the polls and cleaned tables and privacy booths constantly. Building Maintenance constructed 13 five-foot plexiglass screens for use at the polls to protect poll workers at the supervisor, clerk, and disaffiliation tables, and extra tables were purchased by Mr. Lima. Mr. Lima likewise installed a wide array of extra voting signage and cones at each location.

Of note, the June 2 primary also coincided with national civil unrest, and an at-times violent protest occurred in the City of Providence the night before. Due to emerging threats issued against the City of Cranston for a repeat of that activity in Garden City and elsewhere, in the afternoon an executive order was issued by the Mayor for a city-wide curfew to be in effect after 8 p.m. Garden City and other commercial areas were shut down and protected by a large contingent of police forces from multiple agencies and the RI National Guard. Helicopters were observed patrolling the city.

Due to imminent threats against city infrastructure, City Hall was evacuated in the late afternoon. It shall be noted for the record that despite the shutdown of the building, Ms. Madonna and Ms. Bucci refused to leave, and continued to staff the Canvassing Office election day operations center until 10 p.m. The city administration remained, as well. Rumors spread throughout the day, many of which turned out to be unsubstantiated, however the ever-present threats combined with the difficulties of conducting the election in a pandemic made the afternoon and evening a stressful affair for all involved. Voters continued to come to the polling locations up until they closed at 8 p.m.

Due to concerns regarding the safety of staff and security of voted ballots, Mr. Lima asked the city administration to provide a police escort of staff and ballots from the two polling locations back to City Hall when polls closed after 8 p.m. The ballots were transported by Mr. Jackvony, Ms. Petrone, and Mr. Vierra in a convoy from the locations and brought back to City Hall to be stored in the Canvassing Department vault.

Mr. Lima noted the extraordinary actions of the Canvassing Department staff and poll workers in the conduct of the June 2 PPP. At no time before had an election been conducted under such circumstances. Mr. Lima noted for the record that all poll workers remained at their posts until the locations were secured and shut down after voting concluded at 8 p.m. and no one asked to be dismissed early despite COVID-19, a curfew, and the uncertain situation facing the city. Fortunately, violence did not materialize, or was dissuaded due to the heavy presence of law enforcement that evening and all night. The staff sent all poll workers a thank you letter for their service.

The next morning, Mr. Lima and a police escort transported the ballots and returns to the state Board of Elections to be used in the first ever Rhode Island risk-limiting audit, which was a success, and confirmed the outcome of the primary.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: By Mr. Jackvony and seconded by Mr. Vierra and Ms. Petrone to adjourn.
PASSED UNANIMOUSLY – VOICE VOTE

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

APPROVED by the Cranston Board of Canvassers: August 18, 2020