

Commissioners

MARISEL A. HERNANDEZ, *Chair*
WILLIAM J. KRESSE, *Commissioner/Secretary*
JUNE A. BROWN, *Commissioner*

CHARLES HOLIDAY, JR., *Executive Director*



Board of Election Commissioners for the City of Chicago
Minutes of the
Regular Board Meeting
July 11, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
69 West Washington Street, 8th Floor, Chicago, Illinois 60602

Board Members:

Marisel A. Hernandez, Chairwoman
William J. Kresse, Commissioner/Secretary
June A. Brown, Commissioner

Staff:

Charles Holiday, Jr., Executive Director
Sandra Aspera, Assistant Executive Director
Adam Lasker, General Counsel
Max Bever, Director of Public Information
Matthew Lin, Manager – Information Technologies
Abigail King, Law Clerk
Lance Gough, Consultant
Trish Sheehy

Guests:

Danielle Matzdorf, Arrow Messenger
Helene Gabelnick, League of Women Voters Chicago

- I. Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:04 A.M.
- II. Roll Call: All members were present.
- III. Consideration of Agenda: The agenda was accepted as presented.
- IV. Approval of Minutes:
 - A. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of May 9, 2023: Commissioner Brown moved to approve the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of May 9, 2023. Commissioner Kresse seconded the motion. The motion passed by 3:0 vote of the Board.

V. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Charles Holiday reported:

He attended the 2023 Annual Conference of the International Association of Government Officials (I-GO) in Fort Worth, Texas where Mr. Holiday took part in discussions on these topics: what it's like to be a public official in the spotlight; how to stay safe on the job; celebrating our rock star employees and how not to let them get away; facing crisis in a post-pandemic and its impact in our work environment and mental health; and discussions on Fair Vote and Rank Choice Voting (RCV).

During the I-Go Conference, Mr. Holiday also attended these CPL (Certificate in Public Leadership) classes: Understanding the Municipal Budgets; and Internal Engagement: Effective Leadership Strategies to Build Trust and Improve Communication. At the end of these classes, Mr. Holiday

received his certification in the Public Leadership Program based on various leadership courses that he had taken.

Tomorrow, Mr. Holiday will be participating in a round table discussion of mail ballot envelope designs sponsored by the National Vote at Home Institute.

We received three responses to our RFP (Request for Proposal) for new e-poll books. For the next few weeks, we will have each of the three firms come in and demonstrate their products.

We are also moving forward with our RFP for the Board's website. Director of Public Relations Max Bever will give more details.

We are in the process of preparing our 2024 Budget. The Chair asked when the budget is due. Mr. Holiday stated that the City hasn't given us a date yet. We're waiting for them to give us our scheduled date.

Commissioner Kresse asked, that in regard to the demonstrations of poll books, if Mr. Holiday would keep the Board members apprised as to when the vendors are coming in for demonstrations. Mr. Holiday said that he will.

The Chair asked about the preparations for the 2024 Primary. Mr. Holiday said right now the Warehouse staff is cleaning things up there.

A. Assistant Executive Director's Report

Assistant Executive Director Sandra Aspera reported:

Ms. Aspera had been on vacation, and is now working on preparations for the upcoming elections.

Ms. Aspera met with the Board's Dominion representative last week. We will be having bi-weekly meetings starting at the end of the month.

Human Resources (HR) has hired Summer Interns to assist the various departments. This will help the interns get familiar with the election process.

The Warehouse has started removing the equipment from the Early Voting carriers and inventorying it. Seals are being recorded and both the seals and equipment are being removed from the Election Day carriers.

As the Executive Director reported, the e-poll book procurement process is moving along.

B. Public Information Director's Report

Director of Public Information Max Bever reported:

As Director Holiday mentioned, we look forward to presenting the Board with a selected vendor from our Website Development RFP (Request for Proposal) by the next Board meeting. The responses were originally due on June 16th. We received 10 responses from some very qualified vendors and reviewed all of those. However, during the process we discovered the budget that was initially included in the RFP did not allow for flexibility, and would not cover all the functional requirements that were included in the RFP. So, as a solution, we reissued with a due date of this Friday. We invited all of the vendors who did initially respond to respond back again, removing the budget and allowing them to submit a full pricing proposal. We believe this will give us the best flexibility for this project moving forward and allow us to work with the vendor in ways that will not tie our hands. We look forward to having the new website scheduled to go live by the end of this year, right ahead of the Vote by Mail application due date on December 20th. So, we will present that selected vendor as well as an agreement to the Board at the next Board meeting. Responses are due on Friday. We will review everything early next week and

make a selection. We look forward to entering into a year-long contract with the selected vendor and have the new website live by the end of the year and continue building upon it as we head into the 2024 elections.

Some good news with our work with our historical election records that were being restored: that project is done. Over 600 old, historical records dating back to the 1880s, poll books and other records, have been freeze-dried and treated for mold and other damage. We look forward to working with the Chicago Public Libraries, specifically at the Harold Washington Library, for future storage. We will work with the Board over the next coming months for a custody agreement for those documents. We will be doing a combined Communications Plan around this work once it's delivered, as well as highlighting the importance of these documents and the history contained within. There will be more information in the coming months but thankfully, that project ended a bit early and will be in the custody of the Chicago Public Library sometime after Labor Day.

The Chair asked Mr. Bever about efforts for community engagement. Mr. Bever stated that he was just speaking with some people, but is looking for early Fall of doing a voter engagement event – holding it at the Supersite. It's been just over a decade since we've had the last one. Mr. Bever would like to put together a program, invite community organizations, get more feedback, and do something similar to what was done in 2012. The Chair cautioned that we need to be careful about running into the preparations for the Primary. Mr. Bever agrees and thinks that once we just settle on a date, probably either early or mid-September, we'll work backwards from there.

Commissioner Brown said with the City and different organizations having events, are we there? Mr. Bever said, very much so. Our Community Services team is hard at work. They are making their own opportunities. Mr. Bever knows that Kimi Mehta, one of the Board's Community Services Representatives, has attended several theatrical events with an information table. We have been attending Summer events including the Dragon Board Race. Jane Lau, another Community Services Representative, was there with our Voter Registration table. Mr. Bever stated that he will be leading a session with the Center for Tech and Civic Life this Thursday. Mr. Bever stated that we've got additional events through the rest of the Summer. Wherever we can we set up a table, make sure we've got our voter registration forms, and let people know that the next election really isn't that far away. Mr. Holiday added that we will have a voter registration table and someone from Community Services at the Bud Billiken Parade.

The Chair asked Mr. Bever if the reissue of the website development RFP is because we are not getting what we expected or would we need to compromise. Mr. Bever stated he thinks that he and the others on the website committee learned some lessons on how much things cost in 2023 and what the voters of Chicago deserve for an updated website. The initial budget that was included was \$150,000, which we now realize was an considering all the functional requirements that were included in the RFP. Unfortunately, the RFP was written such that it did not allow for any flexibility. So, as a solution we removed that budget requirement entirely. We will judge all the RFP and pricing proposals accordingly.

Commissioner Kresse asked of it is envisioned that the website will be in various languages. Mr. Bever said absolutely. Part of the functional requirements is that we would have automatic translations on top of the ability to update those pages with our language team and our contractors. So, we move beyond just having the seven languages on our website and have the ability to have hundreds. Commissioner Brown asked about ADA requirements. Mr. Bever said that he thinks that the single most important

functional requirement of our RFP for website development was having it fully accessible and up to WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) standards.

VI. Old Business

- A. Infrastructure Projects and Changes in Election Administration: Discussed earlier in the meeting.
- B. Electronic Poll Books: Discussed earlier in the meeting.
- C. Voting Equipment: Ms. Aspera said that Dominion is in Springfield getting upgrades certified by the State of Illinois so that we can move forward on updating our equipment.
- D. Legislation: General Counsel Adam Lasker stated that the legislature is not in session. The next session currently scheduled is the Veto Session to begin on October 24th, however, they may have a Special Session before then. The Chair mentioned that she assumes that we will be prepared to express our opinion on whatever's coming up in the Veto Session.

VII. New Business

- A. Approval of telecommunications agreement with MCI Communications Services, LLC d/b/a Verizon Business Services

Mr. Lasker said he could speak briefly to this item and that the Board's IT Manager is present to answer any technical questions the Board may have about this agreement.

This is a 3-year contract to replace the previous contract that expired. These services are related to the transmission of our election results from the various Receiving Stations. It would be a term of 36 months. There's a one-time payment of \$1,634.31 followed by a monthly charge of \$13,956.49. Commissioner Kresse clarified, this is for the services of transmitting unofficial vote tallies on election night using cellular phone telephony - and not using the internet - and these tallies are not the official numbers. These unofficial numbers are accumulated on election night so that the public – at least for most races will know the outcome by the time they go to bed. The Chair added "possibly". Mr. Lasker said that yes, this is a very important distinction that this a transmission of the preliminary results just so we can get as much out to the public as quickly as we can. The official results remain untouched, and are on our equipment which are brought back to our offices; that is how the official tallies are done. Commissioner Kresse added that all vote tallies are backed up with paper ballots, as well. Mr. Lasker agreed, absolutely.

Commissioner Kresse moved to authorize the Board's Executive Director to execute a 36-month agreement with MCI Communications Services LLC (d/b/a Verizon Business Services) for telecommunications services at a cost not to exceed \$504,067.95 over the full term of the three-year contract. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion passed by 3:0 vote of the Board.

VIII. Legal Report:

General Counsel Adam Lasker reported:

Our Law Clerk, Abby King, has done the first draft of our election calendar and pamphlet for next year. Trish Sheehy and Mr. Lasker will go over it with a fine-tooth comb to make sure all the dates and numbers are accurate. We hope to have that to present to the Board at the second Board meeting in July. However, it probably will not yet have the signature requirement data that we receive from the State Board of Elections and from the County Clerk's office. The last Mr. Lasker heard, the State Board of Elections is planning for a mid- or late-August release of their numbers so we'll have "TBD" (to be determined) in those columns, and we'll revise our election calendar and pamphlet as soon as we receive those numbers.

Mr. Lasker has also been having meetings with the County Clerk's office in conjunction with the attorneys from the Legislative Reference Bureau in Springfield, Legislative Counsel. This is about the implementation of judicial subcircuit boundaries. In 2022 there was legislation passed to expand the number of judicial subcircuits in Cook County from 15 to 20. There's an issue as to when those subcircuits are to be implemented. While Illinois law seems to indicate that these new subcircuits come into effect in December 2024 (i.e., after the November 2024 election) the Legislative Counsel is indicating that the Legislature's intent was to fill those new subcircuits in November 2024. This is clearly not what the statute states. We asked for an amendment to the statute, however, as the next legislative session doesn't start until October 24th (which is more than halfway through the circulation period for those offices) a legislative change really is not feasible. So, the County Clerk's office and Mr. Lasker agree that we must wait and see what the State Board of Elections does. The Election Code does place the duty on the State Board of Elections to certify which State and Judicial offices will be up for election. So, that decision rest in their hands.

Commissioner Kresse asked Mr. Lasker about the elected Chicago Public School Board, and whether we are still waiting on action from Springfield despite some of its seats being up for election in November of next year. Mr. Lasker said that the legislation that was passed a few years ago, in 2022, does say that in November of 2024 we shall elect ten of those seats. In the most recent legislative session, the legislature - for the second time - extended their deadline to create districts. Their new self-imposed deadline is April 1, 2024. Which is cutting it pretty close for us. Our team is standing by, ready to go on it, but we've been waiting for a while now. So, the legislation does still impose upon the legislature the deadline of April 1st to draw all of the districts, and that we will fill 10 of them in the election in November. Mr. Lasker noted that there is no primary for these school board seats, just an election in November. As for filing petitions, these would be included in the regular filing period for the Independent and Nonpartisan candidates, i.e., to file in the Summer of 2024 for the November ballot. However, there has been some talk that there might be a special filing period because of the delay in the districts. That hasn't happened yet, so we're going to move forward with the *status quo*. If we have to revise our calendar, we will.

IX. Financial Report: none

X. Public Comment:

Helene Gabelnick, League of Women Voters of Chicago (LWVC), Voter Services Chair spoke as follows during Public Comment:

Ms. Gabelnick had a brief report to inform the Board about something that the League has done.

[Ms. Gabelnick read a statement, a copy of which she submitted to the Board.]

Ms. Gabelnick reported that at the annual meeting on June 24, 2023, the members of the League of Women Voters of Chicago voted to support the use of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for nonpartisan Municipal Elections in the City of Chicago.

Discussion ensued. In response to a question from the Chair, Ms. Gabelnick stated that the League is not taking a position on RCV for anything other than the Chicago Municipal elections. Ms. Gabelnick noted that a position on statewide elections would have to come from the League of Women Voters of Illinois.

XI. Executive Session: none

- XII. Adjournment: Commissioner Brown moved to adjourn. Commissioner Kresse seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote of the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 10:28 a.m.

Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William J. Kresse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Commissioner William J. Kresse
Secretary