

MINUTES OF THE ELECTION REVIEW PLANNING COMMISSION
COMMITTEE MEMBERS PARTICIPATED REMOTELY VIA ZOOM VIDEO
CONFERENCE
CITY STAFF PARTICIPATED FROM THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
June 24, 2020 @ 4:00 PM

Committee Members present electronically via Zoom:

Councilor Crystal Paradis, Chair
Councilor David A. Witham, Vice-Chair
Councilor Nancie Cameron
Councilor Matt Gerding
Councilor Martin P. Dumont, Sr.

Administration/Staff present:

Bob Belmore, City Manager
Brianna Bell  y, Code/Assessing Clerk
Kelly Gagne, Deputy City Clerk
Scott Smith, Director of Finance & Administration

Other:

The meeting called to order by Chair Paradis at 4:00 p.m.

Chair Paradis announced:

Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order # 12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically. This meeting will be held via Zoom online platform. The public is asked to submit comments via email to kgagne@somersworth.com or bbelmore@somersworth.com. Comments must be received by Wednesday, June 24, 2020 at 12 noon. The public can access the meeting and listen live by calling 1 (312) 626-6799 and then adding webinar I.D. # 859 8966 0549

Manager Belmore shared that the Attorney General's office recommended we note this announcement during COVID-19. He also stated that in the Council Chambers were Kelly Gagne, Deputy City Clerk, Scott Smith, himself, and Brianna Bell  y, a Development Services Clerk who was taking the minutes.

No comments were submitted.

Attendance was taken by roll call vote; all members were present and all Committee members had no one in the room with them.

Chair Paradis made a motion to approve last meetings minutes, seconded by Councilor Dumont. Motion passed by roll call vote 5-0.

UPDATE ON POLLING LOCATIONS/ WARD REQUIREMENTS

Manager Belmore updated that he had not heard back from the Secretary of State yet. He stated we must have one polling location in each City Ward. Manager Belmore found out that Dover is also considering moving a polling location, so he assured the committee they are not alone in these issues.

Councilor Witham expressed that using the schools make sense within wards, such as Idlehurst. Moving from Charpentier to Idlehurst would allow for better parking and better access. Acknowledged that the positives outweigh the negatives. Chair Paradis agreed.

Councilor Cameron suggested for Ward 1, to reach out to the Hall at Great Falls if there was a need to move voting out of the City Hall.

Manager Belmore noted that there were two egresses in the City Hall, and that changing the location wasn't needed. Chair Paradis agreed that there were no problems with the layout.

Councilor Gerding asked if it would be possible to create an additional polling location as an extra place for all of Wards to go vote at. Manager Belmore expressed we can only do what the state allows us to do.

Councilor Dumont stated that he agrees with Councilor Witham. He expressed that his concerns with making changes to polling locations is that we are going to lose and confuse some voters. He stated that attention is needed with the possibility of over filling or jamming ballot machines as well.

Councilor Witham noted that COVID-19 is the reason for this Commission. He brought the discussion back to the schools in each Ward and how they would be successful or unsuccessful with social distancing and accessible entrances. He noted that Ward 5 was the city's biggest challenge, because of the lack of the egress, followed by the museum.

SAU UPDATE

Manager Belmore stated that we must ask the superintendent about using the schools as polling locations. Manager Belmore explained that the superintendent would bring the question to the school board to vote on. If the schools allowed it, the teachers would be given a paraprofessional day.

Chair Paradis asked if the teachers would then be allowed to volunteer at the polls. Councilor Gerding shared that in the past, as a teacher, he received professional development hours for volunteering at the polls.

Councilor Witham spoke on the value in changing polling locations for both the primary and general election. He stated that by changing the polling location for the primary, voters would have the opportunity to get used to it, and it would be less impactful for the general election.

Chair Paradis asked if this is something that should be brought to the Council before bringing it to the School Board.

Councilor Witham suggested to request it to the entire City Council and to sponsor a Resolution, requesting the use of Somersworth schools as polling locations for the primary and general election.

Manager Belmore suggested that the use of schools should be a separate issue from professional development days when asking Council. The first Resolution should be to request for schools to be used as polling locations.

Chair Paradis, seconded by Councilor Dumont, motioned to ask the superintendent/School Board for use of schools in Ward 3, the middle or high school, and Ward 4, Idlehurst, as polling locations. Motion passed by roll call vote 5-0.

POLLING LOCATION CONCERNS

Chair Paradis stated that she couldn't find a ward map for polling function on the City's website, and thought we should move the link for the ward map, to the voter information page.

ELECTION WORKER RECRUITMENT

Manager Belmore shared that Kelly Gagne looked into Rochester and Dover's poll worker wages. Manager Belmore then discussed the prices of ordering pens, sending out mailers, and the stickers that are received from the State for free. Manager Belmore also stated that the election workers receive a flat rate per election day.

Chair Paradis expressed that she believed election workers should receive hazard pay, for being around and exposing themselves to thousands of residents during the pandemic. Chair Paradis also suggested offering full and half-day shifts for election workers.

Councilor Dumont asked if and when poll workers would be tested for COVID-19 and if temperatures need to be taken. He also asked about accommodations for the handicap. He

emphasized that people working the polls do not need to be ward residents, but must be residents of Somersworth.

Manager Belmore expressed staff concerns and thoughts, which included that there are elected positions, which could be problematic for split shifts. In regards to increasing the pay, staff suggested to increase it based on comparison, and not just raise the pay for one election, and go back to a lower pay for the next series of elections.

Chair Paradis was in favor of a COVID-19 stipend, which she believes would be easier to track and possibly be refunded through the State's relief program.

Councilor Cameron agreed that shifts would be difficult, due to the classes that are taken by the poll workers. She also believes workers do it because they enjoy it, not based on the pay.

Councilor Gerding stated that Somersworth was already having difficult hiring before COVID-19, so he was for permanently raising the poll workers wages.

Chair Paradis asked what are we doing for cleaning the polling booths? Who is getting these tasks? Chair Paradis suggested that these tasks take less training and could be done in shifts.

Manager Belmore noted that staff haven't figured out the logistics on measurements, social distancing, and the cleaning of the poll booths just yet. He stated it was a priority and he will get back in touch to discuss these issues. Chair Paradis suggested offering small shifts for these rolls that would include cleaning the polls.

Councilor Gerding suggested a future agenda item as safety concerns. He questioned whether we will need to take temperatures. Councilor Gerding noted that we can't turn people away and say no you cannot vote due to temperature. He questioned whether an outdoor or alternative polling location would be necessary. Chair Paradis added that it is necessary to look into how far ahead of time poll workers need to get tested.

Councilor Witham suggests a one-time hazard pay stipend. He added its important to look into whether we do not have election workers because of the pay or if it comes down to the availability of people to work the polls. Councilor Witham suggested \$50 and Chair Paradis suggested \$100 and stated perhaps \$75 would be a fair stipend.

Councilor Dumont stated that he does not believe the pay itself matters that much to the poll workers. He believes they enjoy donating their time. Councilor Dumont also believes it would be difficult to get a stipend as a reimbursable expense from the state for COVID-19.

Scott Smith stated that what they're doing for elections, as part of the CARES reimbursement program through the State, we have to provide the State with our anticipated incremental costs, which would be over what we typically pay for. The State will take that information into

consideration and determine what reimbursement the City would get. That reimbursement is not guaranteed.

Chair Paradis suggested cleaning as a reimbursable expense, and Councilor Witham suggested adding a door to the Ward 5 polling location as another expense.

ABSENTEE VOTING

Councilor Gerding shared that he believed it is important to send at least one mailer before the September and November elections.

Chair Paradis asked if it was possible to mail the request forms and the application to register to vote.

Manager Belmore said it was a possibility, and that they would have to find room in the budget for it.

Councilor Gerding suggested a mailer at least 45 days prior to the primary, which would be July 20th. Councilor Gerding suggested making the decision by the next meeting. Chair Paradis agreed that they should send out mailers from the City.

Councilor Gerding made a motion to send out mailers

Motion failed for lack of a second.

Councilor Dumont stated that he was not comfortable with having the City pay for the mailers, and that the media is good at educating voters. He also stated that he believes a lot of these things are eliminated by them being able to vote and register the same day. He expressed that he believes absentee ballots have restrictions and that the State should be educating voters on this.

Councilor Gerding asked how much mailers typically cost, and if this could be a reimbursable expense from the State.

City Manager Belmore stated it might be around \$2,000, and that many things are being asked for, but the City could try to get reimbursed. He noted there is no guarantee to what the State would do so.

Councilor Witham shared that their desire to promote absentee ballots is to keep numbers down at polls, which would make their request related to COVID-19. Councilor Witham suggested doing a mailing once, not twice, and by November they might have indication whether its covered by the State or not. Councilor Witham stated that if he had an extra \$70, he would rather spend it on the workers than a mailer, even if it's not reimbursable.

Councilor Cameron suggested putting the new polling locations on channel 22, or putting it on the website. She also stated that if there is a mailer, it should be for indicating new polling locations.

Councilor Gerding stated he is still in favor of the idea of an absentee ballot mailer.

MISCELLANEOUS

None

NEXT ACTION ITEMS

Councilor Paradis summarized the questions from the meeting:

- A Resolution for requesting use of schools
- A request to the superintendent for professional development credits for teachers
- Signage at old polling locations if they have moved

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Paradis, seconded by Councilor Cameron made a motion to adjourn at 5:03 pm. Motion passed by roll call vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Brianna Belley, Code/Assessing Clerk