

MINUTES OF THE ELECTION REVIEW PLANNING COMMISSION
COMMITTEE MEMBERS PARTICIPATED REMOTELY VIA ZOOM VIDEO
CONFERENCE
CITY STAFF PARTICIPATED FROM THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
July 8, 2020 @ 4:00 PM

Committee Members present electronically via Zoom:

Councilor Crystal Paradis, Chair
Councilor Nancie Cameron
Councilor Matthew Gerding
Councilor Martin P. Dumont, Sr.

Administration/Staff present: Mayor Dana S. Hilliard
Bob Belmore, City Manager
Kelly Gagne, Deputy City Clerk
Scott Smith, Director of Finance & Administration

Other:

The meeting called to order by Chair Paradis at 4:02 pm.

Chair Paradis announced:

Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Commission is authorized to meet electronically.

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the Committee have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and although the meeting is open to the public, the public was encouraged not to attend. The public was encouraged to offer written comment by email, via USPS, or by drop-off at the City Hall Tax Collector drive-thru window.

Manager Belmore announced that **all votes** that are taken during this meeting shall be done by **roll call vote**.

Attendance was taken by roll call vote; members Paradis, Gerding, Dumont, and Cameron were present and had no one in the room with them, Councilor Witham was not in attendance.

Manager Belmore announced who was in the Council Chambers, which is noted above

APPROVE PAST MEETING MINUTES

Councilor Cameron, made a motion to approve last meetings minutes, seconded by Councilor Gerding. Motion passed by roll call vote 4-0.

USE OF SCHOOLS AS POLLING LOCATIONS

Mayor Hilliard stated that he recently had a conversation with Superintendent Gadowski, he stated that a formal Resolution was not needed to request the use of the Schools as polling locations. They will at least need a formal request to present to the School Board because the school calendar has already been adopted so there will need to be some adjustments made to the calendar to accommodate the request. The Mayor felt the Middle School would be a better option as it has a separate entrance and a way to be locked off and school would still be able to be held, if school is in session. There are currently two items listed on the Council agenda that will speak to the use of schools for Monday night. Then it will be presented to School Board Tuesday night.

Manager Belmore stated that he spoke to the Superintendent and he asked that he send him an email stating that this Commission had voted to request the use of Idlehurst Elementary School and Middle/High School; the Cafeteria in the High School, is what the Superintendent suggested to Belmore.

Chair Paradis asked for clarification of what schools the wards were in. Idlehurst Elementary School is in Ward 4, and the Middle/High School is in Ward 3.

UPDATES FROM SECRETARY OF STATE - ASSISTANCE AND POLLING PLACE FLEXIBILITY

Mayor Hilliard stated that he is on a call every Thursday with the other 13 other Mayors within New Hampshire with the Governor. Mayor Craig of Manchester asked the Governor on the Secretary of State's flexibility on moving polling locations out of the ward or combining them all into one. The Governor stated that it is not an option, the Secretary of State has no flexibility in allowing that to happen. He does not think that any legislation would change this at the moment. Mayor Hilliard stated that pretty much anything that we have requested until now, is a firm no. The Governor stated that his answer was that by us doing either of those ideas we would be making the risk greater of spreading the virus. The big push now is being able to process the absentee ballots days earlier rather than Election Day at 1:00pm, which we are still waiting for.

Councilor Gerding stated that with all the PPE provided he thinks that there will be new procedures in place. He asked if we need to do more outreach to Citizens because of the changes.

Chair Paradis suggested a posting on the doors lining out the changes of the Election.

Councilor Cameron stated that they are explicit about signage that they require and they may send us new ones too.

ELECTION WORKERS PAY/STIPEND

Manager Belmore stated that we are waiting on clear direction from the Commission as to how to move forward. At the last meeting according to the minutes there was discussion regarding a stipend. One Councilor mentioned \$50.00 (fifty dollars) and another Councilor mentioned

\$100.00 (one hundred dollars), the consensus was decided on an amount of \$75.00 (seventy five dollars).

Councilor Cameron, seconded by Councilor Gerding made a motion that the Election Review Planning Commission sponsor a Resolution to provide a \$75 (seventy five dollar) stipend for essential election workers at the 2020 September Primary Election and the 2020 November General Election due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Motion passed by roll call vote 3-1, Councilor Dumont voted no.

POLLING LOCATION/VOTING SAFETY CONCERNS

Chair Paradis brought up concerns in ward 5, regarding how small it is and only having one entrance and exit.

Manager Belmore stated that ward 5 has been looked at and the building currently has two doors but the second door is not feasible and does not allow for a good flow. He has asked City staff to look into installing a new specialty garage door that would have a regular door built into it to allow for a second entrance or exit.

Councilor Gerding appreciated the update from the Manager regarding the new door idea. His thoughts were more towards the safety with masks. If a voter comes to the polls and doesn't have a mask and we ask them to put it on and they refuse, we are not allowed to turn them away. He asked can we create an Ordinance that makes masks required in our City during the Election.

Mayor Hilliard responded that while he is a big fan of masks he would steer the Council away from trying to do that. He would highly encourage it for safety measures, but to think that we could stop someone for not wearing a mask we would immediately have some challenges on Election Day. With the concerns on what we already have going on that day, the last thing we want is to be identified on suppressing votes.

Councilor Gerding stated that he wondered about the safety of workers, that if someone came without a mask could we have an outdoor area for them to vote.

Mayor Hilliard stated access to booths need to be equalized for all voters. The last thing we want is for either side of the aisle to throw out a yellow flag and have our results called into question. At the end of the day it is going to be difficult you cannot treat them any different if they wear or do not wear a mask.

Chair Paradis agrees with what the Mayor is stating. The best thing we can do is educate them that they can vote absentee very easily and make sure they know that.

Councilor Cameron stated that as poll workers they are going to be subjecting themselves. Poll workers are protected with masks and if we take precaution on our side it will outweigh those that show up without masks.

MISC

Councilor Paradis asked the City Manager regarding a timeline of the absentee ballots. Manager Belmore stated that we get them from the State; we do not have a specific timeline right now.

Mayor Hilliard asked the Commission to steer away from any discussions regarding School staff working the polls.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Cameron, seconded by Councilor Gerding made a motion to adjourn at 4:50pm. Motion passed by roll call vote 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Gagne, Deputy City Clerk