



UNION COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2023

The meeting of the Union County Board of Elections was called to order by Chair Mary Ellen Harris at 10:32am. The following were in attendance: Chair Mary Ellen Harris; Secretary / Commissioner of Registration Clara Harelik, Esq.; Commissioner James Foerst, Esq.; Commissioner Dennis Kobitz (via zoom); Commissioner Raymond Szpond (via zoom); Commissioner Debra Varnerin; and Administrator Nicole DiRado.

The Statement of Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act was read by Chair Harris.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- January 18, 2023 – Regular Meeting Minutes: A motion was made by Commissioner Harelik to adopt the aforementioned minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Foerst. All members present voted in the affirmative.
- January 18, 2023 – Executive Session Meeting Minutes: A motion was made by Commissioner Harelik to adopt the aforementioned minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Foerst. All members present voted in the affirmative.
- February 7, 2023 – Regular Meeting Minutes: A motion was made by Commissioner Harelik to adopt the aforementioned minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Foerst. All members present voted in the affirmative with Commissioner Varnerin abstaining.
- February 7, 2023 – Executive Session Meeting Minutes: A motion was made by Commissioner Harelik to adopt the aforementioned minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Foerst. All members present voted in the affirmative with Commissioner Varnerin abstaining.

PUBLIC COMMENT PORTION

Thomas Hannen, Cranford: Mr. Hannen questioned the changes being proposed to the election district map for the Township of Cranford, specifically, how the changes came about and what is the reasoning? If the number which triggers combining districts is 250, why are the districts being combined, especially with the population increase. Finally, the change will penalize the local Democratic Party with reducing the number of county committee votes.



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Commissioner Kobitz responded that redistricting is reviewed after the census has taken place. He started alphabetically with Berkeley Heights, where changes were proposed, Clark where no changes were needed, and then Cranford. The number used to combine districts is 250, but this number also includes mail-in ballots. When you remove the mail-in ballots from turnout, the turnout at the polling place is less. Districts which were contiguous to other lower performing districts were combined. Additionally, changes were made in New Providence and Springfield to add districts. Commissioner Kobitz also explained that combining districts saves money in equipment and supply transportation and poll worker pay.

Commissioner Foerst explained the changes proposed by Commissioner Kobitz included merging 6 districts and renaming 2. While the Board has been discussing the need for poll worker recruitment, he does not support consolidation of the Cranford map and recommends tabling the motion at this time. He would like to work with Commissioner Kobitz to set objective criteria by which redistricting is evaluated. He understands the need to balance shorter lines and the need of the voter v. desire to have fewer districts which reduce the demand on the budget and staff. Commissioner Foerst outlined underperforming districts in Roselle and Elizabeth, which would also meet these statutory criteria. He also suggests that rather than working on redistricting piecemeal, it should be done countywide with notice to municipal chairs and anyone whose county committee seat may be affected.

Commissioner Varnerin asked how these towns were chosen. Commissioner Foerst indicated that Commissioner Kobitz starting reviewing the towns in alphabetical order as well as requests; for example, he asked that Westfield be reviewed, Commissioner Harelik asked that Springfield be reviewed and the municipal clerk from New Providence asked for review. Commissioner Varnerin supports a committee and agrees there needs to be a more formal process.

Commissioner Harelik advised that before new, generic criteria are established, we have to ensure that changes do not adversely affect voters. She stated, if it is not broke, then don't fix it. Additionally, she will support tabling the motion regarding the Cranford map, solely because Commissioner Kobitz is not present to adequately address concerns of the public.

Commissioner Kobitz asked how the board can add more poll workers and expenses when there is no money in the budget. It was his thought that the reduction in districts in Cranford would pay for the increase in New Providence and Springfield. Commissioner Harelik indicated it should not be a budget issue, but a voter accessibility issue.



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RESOLUTIONS FOR ADOPTION

- Approving the election district map for the Township of Cranford.

A motion was made by Commissioner Foerst to table the adoption of changes to the election district map for the Township of Cranford. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Varnerin. Chair Harris and Commissioners Foerst, Harelik and Varnerin voted in the affirmative. Commissioner Szpond voted in the negative. Commissioner Kobitz was not present.

- Approving the Union County Early Voting Sites for 2023 (Primary Election: June 2 through June 4 and General Election: October 28 – November 5)
 - Cranford: Union County College, Room N4, 1022 Springfield Avenue (Parking in Lot 1)
 - Elizabeth: Sampson Center, 800 Anna Street
 - New Providence: DeCorso Community Center, 15 E. 4th Street
 - Plainfield: Union County College, Church Street, between 2nd & 3rd Streets
 - Rahway: Rahway Recreation Center, 275 E. Milton Avenue, Room 112
 - Roselle: Amalfe Community Center, 1268 Shaffer Avenue
 - Union: Union Township Senior Center, 652 Rahway Avenue

A motion was made by Commissioner Harelik to approve the Union County Early Voting sites for 2023. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Varnerin. All members present voted in the affirmative, with Commissioner Kobitz absent.

- Approving the locations of the Union County Secure Ballot Drop Boxes for the year 2023.

A motion was made by Commissioner Varnerin to approve the locations of the Union County Secure Ballot Drop Boxes for the year 2023. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Foerst. All Commissioners present voted in the affirmative.

- Approving the election district map for the Borough of New Providence.

A motion was made by Commissioner Foerst to adopt the election district map for the Borough of New Providence. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Harelik. All members present voted in the affirmative.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Daniel's Law: Ms. DiRado advised the Board that the Election Board is in compliance with Daniel's Law. We are up to date and process all requests daily, as they come in. Before we respond to any requests for voter lists, we ensure the Daniel's Law requests are processed. Daniel's law redacts the voter's address, but not the voter's name or election district.
- Commissioner Harelik presented Chair Harris with a plaque on the occasion of her retirement after 25 years of service to the Union County Board of Elections. Commissioner Harelik stated that her wealth of knowledge and friendship will be missed.



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ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Foerst to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Varnerin. All members present voted in the affirmative. Commissioner Kobitz was absent.

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Secure Ballot Drop Boxes		
Town	Box Location	Box Address
Berkeley Heights	Snyder Avenue Park	240 Snyder Avenue
Clark	Clark Recreation Center	430 Westfield Avenue
Cranford	Cranford Community Center	220 Walnut Avenue
Cranford	Union County College, Richel Commons Courtyard	1033 Springfield Avenue
Elizabeth	Union County Administration Building Complex	Corner of Elizabethtown Plaza and Rahway Ave
Elizabeth	Union County Board of Elections	271 No. Broad Street
Fanwood	Fanwood Historic Train Station & Museum	230 North avenue
Garwood	Garwood Public Library	411 3rd Avenue
Hillside	Hillside Senior Center	265 Hollywood Avenue
Kenilworth	Kenilworth Recreation Building	575 Boulevard
Linden	Raymond Wood Bauer Promenade	400 North Wood Avenue
Mountainside	Mountainside Library	1 Constitution Plaza
New Providence	New Providence Library	377 Elkwood Avenue
Plainfield	Plainfield City Hall	515 Watchung Avenue
Rahway	Rahway Recreation Center	275 E. Milton Avenue
Roselle	Roselle Borough Hall Annex	108 W. Third Avenue
Roselle Park	Union County Emergency Services Building	535 Laurel Avenue
Scotch Plains	Scotch Plains Library	1927 Bartle Avenue
Springfield	Chisholm Community Center	100 South Springfield Avenue
Summit	Chestnut Street Parking Lot (Adjacent to Fire Department)	406 Broad Street; Corner of Morris Avenue and Broad Street
Union	Union Township Municipal Building	1976 Morris Avenue (Rear Entrance)
Union	Kean University, Wilkins Theater	1000 Morris Avenue
Westfield	Fraser Building	300 North Avenue East
Winfield	Winfield Mutual Housing Office	Wavecrest Avenue