

# Peoria County Board of Election Commissioners

4422 Brandywine Dr., STE 1 · Peoria, IL 61614

Phone: 309.324.2300 Website: [www.peoriaelections.gov](http://www.peoriaelections.gov)

## The April 2023 Monthly Meeting of the Peoria County Board of Election Commissioners was held at the Election Commission Office at 4422 Brandywine Dr. on Tuesday, April 11, 2023, at 2:00 PM.

PRESENT: James Manning, Chairman  
Valerie Timmes, Treasurer  
Jeanne Williamson, Secretary  
Ryan Brady, Commissioner  
Elizabeth Gannon, Executive Director  
Jess Joseph, Assistant Executive Director  
Jennie Cordis Boswell, Assistant State's Attorney

ABSENT: Matt Bartolo, Vice Chairman

GUESTS: Darlene Anstett, Tina M Kolesar, Jackie Petty, Theresa Johanson, Deanna Gabbert, Irene Pritzker, Jody Oltman, Scott Butzin

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

A Roll Call of the Commissioners was taken by Chairman Manning finding all Commissioners except Vice Chairman Bartolo present.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Brady moved to approve the minutes from the March 14, 2023, Monthly Meeting. Secretary Williamson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Public Comment**

#### **First Public Comment - Darlene Anstett**

Darlene Anstett started her comment introducing herself as an election judge. She noted that her first election was the November 2022 General Election. Ms. Anstett mentioned that she had never seen such a hardworking group of individuals such as those that work in the Election Commission office. She continued noting that being an election judge has been an eye-opening experience for her as she was not familiar with what went on behind the scenes.

She stated that as an election judge, the first item that you complete on the morning of election day is swearing to uphold the Constitution of this county, the state, and the duties of serving as an election judge. With that in mind, Ms. Anstett noted that she wanted to touch on the implementation and trial of the styluses for the poll pads. She commented that at her polling place, there were a lot of individuals that had absolute difficulty with signing their name on the poll pad. She further commented that many of these individuals were people that she would have expected to not struggle with using a stylus. Ms. Anstett also noted that she received many comments from voters stating that they did not like writing with the stylus. She also noted that she received many comments from voters stating that they felt like they could not do it. She further stated that she tried to accommodate the voters by letting them try signing with both sides of the stylus or their fingers. She also recommended that they try to keep the screen level and avoid resting their hands on the screen itself.

Ms. Anstett noted that in her opinion, the styluses did not work well. She commented that although the DMV uses electronic signatures, they do not have to verify signatures. She felt that a lot of time was wasted in the process of trying to sign on the poll pad and in the signature verification process. Ms. Anstett stated that she had to ask voters to re-sign multiple times to the point of some becoming frustrated. She eventually started using the paper applications to vote in those situations. However, at the end of the day, her and her fellow judges were confused on what to do with the paper applications to vote that had been signed.

She stated that when she called the Election Commission office, she was told that if a signature could not be verified, then the judge should ask for ID to verify that person. Herself and her fellow judges found this to be 'bonkers' at first, but she stated that she now understands that this is part of the process, regardless of if signatures are captured electronically or on paper.

She ended her comment advocating to go back to wet signing on the applications to vote as the process with the stylus did not go well from her perspective.

Chairman Manning thanked Ms. Anstett for her comment, her feedback, and her service as an election judge. He commented that the implementation of styluses was a trial run, and that the Commission would be soliciting feedback on how it appeared to go in this election. He asked Ms. Anstett where she served as an election judge. Ms. Anstett replied stating that she served at Imago Dei. She further added that when she called the Election Commission, she was told that all voters need to try with the stylus. Ms. Anstett noted that she took a bit off offense to that answer as she was told that this was a trial run. She commented that herself and her fellow judges tried their best to help voters with the stylus. Chairman Manning thanked Ms. Anstett again for her comment and her service as an election judge.

### **Second Public Comment – Jackie Petty**

Ms. Jackie Petty started her comment noting that she was recently shocked when she observed a mail-in ballot return envelope and saw the corner stating an 87¢ stamp must be affixed to the envelope. She questioned what an 87¢ stamp looks like. She stated that her first impression of this requirement is that it looks like a barrier to voting. She commented that there was no charge to send mail-in ballots last year. She asked where voters that live in rural areas or areas that do not have grocery stores/drug stores obtain stamps.

Ms. Petty decided she would call the post office. She asked the young lady who answered the phone, "what does an 87¢ stamp looks like?" The young lady responded that she did not know and asked Ms. Petty to hold. Six minutes later, the young lady responded noting that it would take two stamps to send the ballot. Ms. Petty asked how much a regular stamp costs. The young lady responded stating a regular stamp costs 63¢. Ms. Petty stated to the Board that, in essence, it costs \$1.26 to mail a ballot in. She asserted to the Board that voters are paying to vote.

Ms. Petty then asked the young lady, “what happens if no stamps are put on that envelope or if just one stamp (63¢) is put on the envelope?” The young lady asked Ms. Petty to hold, and Ms. Petty heard the young lady holler at her superior, asking Ms. Petty’s question. Ms. Petty could hear the superior say that two stamps are required. The superior continued, stating that if no postage or not enough postage is included on the ballot, the ballot still gets mailed to the Election Commission, and the Election Commission pays for the missing postage. Ms. Petty stated to the Board that she believed this was an excellent solution. Ms. Petty ended her comment asking for the Board to reconsider paying the postage on all ballots.

Chairman Manning thanked Ms. Petty for her comment.

### **Third Public Comment– Scott Butzin**

Mr. Scott Butzin introduced himself as a poll watcher. He stated he is from Woodford County. He noted that as a poll watcher, he visited half a dozen polling places on Election Day. Mr. Butzin announced that he wanted to comment briefly on what he observed with the electronic signatures on the poll pad at the various sites he visited. He noted that for about half of the signatures that he observed, the voters were eventually able to create a reasonable facsimile of their signature electronically. He commented that the other half of the signatures that he saw, due to differing factors, required various degrees of squinting to try to make out the similarities between the signature created on the poll pad and the signature on file. Mr. Butzin further stated that many voters required multiple retries to create a good representation of their signature; some of these retries were of their own accord (i.e., the voter cleared it out and re-tried) and other retries were at the request of the election judge (i.e., the judge asked the voter to try again). Mr. Butzin commented that at one polling place, almost every voter tried signing two to three times.

On a separate, but related note, Mr. Butzin commented that election judges can either complete their initials for verifying the signature on the poll pad screen or they can bypass the electronic initials and wet initial on the application to vote ticket that prints out from the poll pad. He observed that in one polling place, the first judge would bypass the initials on the screen and approve the signature before the second judge really got a chance to examine it. Both judges would then sign on the application to vote ticket, but the second judge would be reviewing the signature on the ticket while the ballot was already printing.

Mr. Butzin concluded his comment by stating that the use of the stylus seemed like a step back for election security as signature verification is the primary method that voters are verified in Illinois. He noted that electronic signatures add another layer of complexity in the signature verification process. Additionally, the time it takes for each voter to be checked-in appeared to increase due to the amount of retries needed when signing. Mr. Butzin further commented that in this election, time was not an issue, but he anticipated that this could be problematic in larger elections. He also noted that while he did not recommend proceeding with electronic signatures, if the Commission did proceed with them, then he would recommend disabling the bypass feature that allows election judges to initial on the application to vote ticket instead of the poll pad screen. He commented that this would ensure that both judges approved the signature prior to the ballot printing.

Chairman Manning thanked Mr. Butzin for his comment.

### **Fourth Public Comment – Jodi Oltman**

Ms. Jodi Oltman started her comment noting that she also wanted to touch on the implementation and trial of the stylus. She stated that she served as a poll watcher on election day and arrived at 5:30 am. The first voter arrived at 6 am, but the poll pads were not working. The election judges and the field support staff member spent 15 to 20 mins trying to fix the poll pad. Ms. Oltman noted that the

first voter was patiently waiting when the second voter arrived. She commented that the second voter was dressed in work clothes and waited for about 15 mins before noting that he had to leave. Ms. Oltman commented that she was hoping that someone would offer to let him sign on the paper application to vote. However, the field support staff member asked if the voter would be able to come back to vote after work. Ms. Oltman noted that she spoke up and mentioned to the judges that the voter could sign on the paper pad, but the judges did not offer this still. Luckily, about a minute later, the poll pad did start working according to Ms. Oltman, so both voters were able to vote. Ms. Oltman commented that she found it very concerning that the judges would rather turn a voter away than have them sign on the paper application.

Ms. Oltman commented on her experience at her own polling place next. She stated that she took a break from poll watching to go vote at her own polling place. When she arrived, she stated to the judges that she did not want to sign electronically and requested to sign a paper application to vote. The election judge told her that they could not do that, and Ms. Oltman pushed back saying that she thought she could. The judges then let her sign on the paper application to vote.

Ms. Oltman noted that her friend's husband also had a similar experience in which he asked to sign on paper and was told by an election judge that he could not. He similarly pushed back, until another election judge stepped in and stated that he could sign on paper.

Ms. Oltman found it very concerning that capturing electronic signatures was supposed to be a trial or test run, but it seemed to be kept a secret that voters could sign on paper. She stated that it seems like every year there are more and more changes that are making elections less secure. She recognized that often these changes are at the state level, but that this change in particular was implemented in Peoria. She ended her comment asking the Board to take into consideration these concerns and criticisms, and she requested that the styluses not be utilized in future elections.

Chairman Manning asked Ms. Oltman where she served as a poll watcher. Ms. Oltman responded stating that she poll watched at Westminster Presbyterian Church. Chairman Manning followed up asking what her normal polling place was. Ms. Oltman replied commenting that her polling place was Woodland Baptist Church. Chairman Manning thanked Ms. Oltman for her comment and the feedback.

#### **Fifth Public Comment – Theresa Johanson**

Ms. Theresa Johanson started her comment noting that she stands up for election integrity, whether the issue involves Democrats or Republicans. She stated that she is an advocate for fairness. She continued noting that she asks questions when there is a reason for concern, and she commented that the testing of styluses is concerning. Ms. Johanson stated that she asked how the trial of the styluses would be measured. She expected that the election judges and field support staff members would be surveyed. She commented that she has not received an answer back on this question.

Ms. Johanson also noted that she asked Executive Director Gannon what the benefits of using the stylus include. She noted that Executive Director Gannon stated that it allows us to capture another signature for every vote. Ms. Johanson stated that she disagreed with this being a benefit. She expanded that voters did not know that they had a choice to sign on paper. She continued noting that most voters sign at Walmart and scribble on the pad, so it seems logical that they would do the same when voting in her eyes.

Ms. Johanson stated that she served as a poll watcher and spoke with other poll watchers about their experiences. She then described comments about various polling places that she had heard about or seen herself.

She noted that at Chillicothe Public Library, there was a judge who appeared to be approving signatures based off knowing the individuals voting.

She continued, stating that at Rome Baptist Church, there was confusion with the seals. However, Ms. Johanson did not go into detail on what the confusion was about.

She then noted that at Alpha Park Public Library, they would not allow voters to sign on the paper applications to vote.

She commented that at Westminster Presbyterian Church, as Ms. Oltman mentioned, a voter was almost turned away when the equipment was not working.

She mentioned that at Imago Dei, the judges were great and called the Commission when they had questions that they could not answer.

Ms. Johanson stated that at Ignite Church Peoria, a report came back that a poll watcher couldn't see how the judges were approving the signatures as they did not look similar in that poll watcher's opinion.

She also noted that at the Church of Jesus Christ LDS, there was an election judge that would tell the voters their address, instead of asking for it. Ms. Johanson noted that this is not the correct procedure for checking-in a voter. Ms. Johanson stated that she pointed this out to the election judge. However, once Ms. Johanson stated that once she left, the election judge went back to checking-in voters the incorrect way. She commented that the other pollwatcher at that location informed her of this. Ms. Johanson questioned why the other three judges did not correct the judge making the error.

Ms. Johanson continued on to the next polling place, stating that at Northwest United Methodist Church, there were reports of both the judges and the voters disliking the stylus and signing electronically. She stated that this was another location where it appeared like the judges were approving signatures based off knowing the voter in real life.

She then touched on El Vista Baptist Church, commenting that the judges had a late start due to the poll pads not working. Ms. Johanson commented that the judges resorted back to the paper applications due to this issue. She commented that the field support staff member at this location agreed that the test of the stylus did not appear to be going well.

She continued on to the next polling place, noting that at Northwoods Community Church, it appeared that the first judge would approve the signature without the second judge seeing it as they would bypass the electronic initials and sign on the tickets. Ms. Johanson noted that this was the issue that Mr. Butzin touched on earlier. Voters also had to attempt to sign two to three times at this location.

Ms. Johanson then touched on her experience voting. She stated that she ended up voting at the Election Commission office. She expected to see the poll pads and imagined herself struggling with signing with the stylus. She exclaimed that she was surprised to see that the poll pads were not being used at the Election Commission Office, despite the styluses being trialed in this election. She recognized that the office uses a different system to be able to let individuals from all over the county vote at one site, but she found it surprising nonetheless that the styluses were not being trialed at the office.

Ms. Johanson ended her comment noting that once things get officially launched, it is difficult to go back. She felt that the field support staff members were hushed when discussing their thoughts on

the stylus while she was around. Ms. Johanson asked the Board to consider whether they really want garbage going into the system for signatures and to consider how that would affect election security.

Chairman Manning thanked Ms. Johanson for her comment.

## **Approval of Expenditures**

Executive Director Gannon explained the bills (see attached) to the Board. Commissioner Brady moved to approve the bills. Treasurer Timmes seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

## **Report of the Executive Director**

### **2023 Election Cycle**

Executive Director Gannon provided an update on the 2023 Consolidated General Election. She started this update noting that the election is not complete yet. Executive Director Gannon noted that the Commission has until next Tuesday (04/18/23) to count any vote by mail ballots that arrive that are postmarked by election day.

Executive Director Gannon noted that the Commission had processed all ballots that had arrived by end of day Monday (04/03). All ballots that arrived on Tuesday (04/04), Wednesday (04/05), Thursday (04/06), or Monday (04/10) have had their signatures verified but have not been tabulated as the election judges are still working on opening the ballots. She commented that there were roughly 630 ballots to be opened.

Executive Director Gannon also stated that the provisional votes still need to be processed. She commented that there were 74 provisional ballots cast and that herself and Assistant Executive Director Joseph were still working on determining which provisional ballots should count and which should not. She noted that voters that were provisional due to being at the wrong polling place are counted. She also stated that voters who were provisional due to being issued a vote by mail ballot will likely have their votes count, assuming they did not send in their vote by mail ballot to be counted or attempt to send it in after.

Executive Director Gannon noted that overall turnout will likely be at a little over 16%. She stated that over 8,200 individuals went to vote on election day. She commented that in this election, vote by mail ballots surpassed votes cast on election day by roughly 40 votes. Executive Director Gannon stated that she found this surprising as this has not been seen since the 2020 election. She stated that COVID-19 was the primary impetus for propelling vote by mail in that election. She noted that in this election, permanent vote by mail appears to be the reason for the larger amount of vote by mail ballots cast. Executive Director Gannon commented that she expects vote by mail numbers to continue to rise in future elections. She also noted that the Commission had about 2,800 voters that voted early, resulting in roughly 2.8% of the turnout stemming from early voting.

Executive Director Gannon then commented on the initial results from Election Day. She stated that there were a few close races that the Commission was watching, including District 150 School Board, Illini Bluffs School Board, Pleasant Hill School Board, Limestone Walters School Board, Bellevue Trustee, Kingston Mines Trustee, and West Peoria Alderman 1. She noted that she will have a much better idea on those races once the 630 ballots are opened and tabulated tomorrow (04/12).

Executive Director Gannon concluded her report stating that she is currently concentrating on certifying and wrapping up this election. She stated she will eventually provide feedback and

recommendations on the stylus, but that she would like to collect data on it first. She asked the board for a couple months to be able to solicit feedback appropriately.

Secretary Williamson asked if Executive Director Gannon would be checking with election judges for feedback on the stylus. Executive Director Gannon confirmed that she would be reaching out to election judges to receive feedback.

Chairman Manning thanked Executive Director Gannon for providing her thoughts and asked if there were any questions for Executive Director Gannon. He reiterated that the Commission would be obtaining feedback on the styluses prior to official implementation of the styluses. Chairman Manning stated that the styluses appeared to be working well at the few locations that he visited on election day, but he recognized that the jury is still out on whether they should be implemented further.

Chairman Manning once again thanked all the members of the public and judges that provided feedback at the meeting.

### **Report of the Attorney**

No Report

### **New Business**

The next Board meeting will be on Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 2pm at the Election Commission Office.

Secretary Williamson asked Executive Director Gannon to confirm the date for canvassing the results for the 2023 Consolidated General Election. Executive Director Gannon noted that canvassing will occur on Wednesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>. She further stated that the Commissioners may arrive at the office anytime between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm to sign the canvassed results.

### **Adjournment**

Secretary Williamson moved to adjourn. Commissioner Brady seconded. Motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 2:34 pm.

## Monthly Expense Summary

<b>Monthly Expenses</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Calpine Energy Solutions	Energy Charges	\$275.03
Ameren	Gas & Electric	\$505.29
Ludy's Cleaning	Office Cleaning	\$316.67
Digital Copy Systems	Copier Lease	\$111.00
Illinois American Water	Water for Brandywine	\$116.49
GFL	Garbage Service	\$34.76
Stratus	Phone Service	\$293.03
Verizon 1420	Wireless Phones	\$36.01
Ziad A. Musaitif	May Rent	\$3,566.06
Ziad A. Musaitif	May CAM	\$200.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,454.34</b>
<b>Election Related Expenses</b>		
Polling Places	Payment for Using Facility as a Polling Place	1,595.00
Election Judges	Early Voting, VBM Processing, Election Day	56,000.00
Field Support Staff	Set up, Election Day, Mileage	4,297.19
Employee Mileage	Mileage for Zach, Debbie, and David	337.92
Runbeck	Election Envelopes (Secrecy, Carrier, Reply) + Inserts	30,016.81
Verizon 5507	Mifis + Polling Place Cellphones	\$2,673.68
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$94,920.60</b>
<b>Misc</b>		
*Warehouse Direct	Paper Plates, Aluminum Foil, Multi-Surface Cleaner	\$30.03
ULINE	Red Seals for Dropboxes	\$57.59
FedEx	Shipping Charge	\$15.14
Limestone Independent News	Public Notice for Public Question	\$38.50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$141.26</b>
<b>Pcard</b>		
Lowe's	40lbs Ice Melt x 2	\$24.96
Lowe's	Copying Keys	\$7.96
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$32.92</b>
<b>Payroll</b>		
Staff	3/24/2023	\$11,511.95
Staff	4/7/2023	\$11,473.03
Overtime	3/24/2023	\$447.42
Overtime	4/7/2023	\$2,461.76
Part-Time	3/24/2023	\$525.42
Part-Time	4/7/2023	\$634.88
Commissioners	3/24/2023	\$615.40
Commissioners	4/7/2023	\$615.40
Medical Benefits	3/24/2023	\$3,760.47
Medical Benefits	4/7/2023	\$3,818.22
* Awaiting Invoice		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$35,863.95</b>
	<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$136,413.07</b>