

GOVERNMENT
OF
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

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FRIDAY

JULY 17, 2020

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The District of Columbia Board of Elections convened a Special Board meeting via Teleconference, pursuant to notice at 1:00 p.m. EDT, Michael Bennett, Chair, presiding.

BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEMBERS PRESENT:

MICHAEL BENNETT, Chair
MIKE GILL, Member

KARYN GREENFIELD, Member

BOARD OF ELECTIONS STAFF PRESENT:

ALICE P. MILLER, Executive Director

TERRI STROUD, General Counsel

CONTENTS

| Agenda Items | Page |
|---|------|
| I. Call to Order | 3 |
| II. Ascertainment of Quorum | 3 |
| III. Adoption of the Agenda. | 3 |
| IV. Board Matters | 4 |
| A. Administration of the November 3, 2020 General Election | |
| 1. Vote-by-Mail | |
| 2. Vote Centers | |
| V. Public Comment. | .14 |
| VI. Executive Session (non-public) to consult with an attorney to obtain legal advice and to preserve the attorney-client privilege between an attorney and a public body pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 2-575(b)4)(A) | |
| VII. Adjournment | .41 |

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (1:04 p.m.)

3 CHAIR BENNETT: I'm going to call the
4 meeting to order. And it is a Special Meeting of
5 the D.C. Board of Elections. This is July 17th,
6 1 p.m. We've had call-ins and so I'd like to
7 call the meeting to order.

8 Second, I want to ascertain a quorum.
9 My name is Michael Bennett. I'm chair of the
10 Board. Can I find out whether or not Board
11 Member Karyn Greenfield is present?

12 MEMBER GREENFIELD: I'm present.

13 CHAIR BENNETT: Karyn, thank you. Can
14 I find out whether or not Michael Gill, Board
15 Member, is present?

16 MEMBER GILL: This is Mike Gill. I'm
17 present.

18 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay. If indeed --
19 thank you, Mike. So we have a quorum. So I call
20 the meeting to order.

21 First thing I want to do is to adopt
22 the agenda for today. I think the agenda was

1 placed on the website.

2 Can I get a motion from Mr. Gill to
3 adopt the agenda for today?

4 MEMBER GILL: I move that we adopt
5 today's agenda.

6 CHAIR BENNETT: Can I get a second
7 from Ms. Greenfield.

8 MEMBER GREENFIELD: I second.

9 CHAIR BENNETT: It's been properly
10 moved and seconded and I vote to accept the
11 agenda, to adopt the agenda as well, so it's
12 unanimous. So the meeting is.

13 And where we are now is Board matters.
14 And so let me tell the -- explain why we're here
15 and why we're having this special meeting and how
16 we're going to go forward.

17 The Board received a number of
18 comments and a few emails regarding voting by
19 mail and also from the public regarding voting by
20 mail and also matters around vote centers. And
21 so we also have discussed that topic in all of
22 the public meetings that we have been a part of,

1 mostly ANCs, but the Republican Party, the
2 Democratic Party, and various aspects of those
3 parties and various wards have invited us to the
4 meetings. I think we have not missed any that
5 we've been invited to and we discussed those
6 matters.

7 And because these matters are so
8 significant to the public, we wanted to give in
9 this special meeting an opportunity for the
10 public to express their views and also for Board
11 Members to express their positions on these
12 matters so that we had addressed these or
13 addressed both these items on the record.

14 So with that, what I wanted to do was
15 to give at least ten people an opportunity to
16 comment on both the Board moving forward with the
17 vote by mail and also with the Board moving
18 forward with vote centers.

19 But first what I want to do was to
20 have the Executive Director, Ms. Alice Miller, at
21 a high level anyway, to present the current state
22 of the Board's plan on those two matters.

1 So Ms. Miller?

2 MS. MILLER: Yes. Thank you, Mr.
3 Chair. This is Alice Miller, Executive Director
4 for the Board of Elections. As the chair has
5 said, we have been involved with a number of
6 community meetings, a number of letters we've
7 received, and participated since even prior to
8 the June 2nd primary with members of the public
9 and their request on how we move forward for
10 November.

11 On a high level, we had a meeting June
12 17th, a town hall meeting with members of the
13 public to process out the matters associated with
14 the June 2nd. June 24th, we met with individuals
15 from the -- with our poll workers, with site
16 coordinators constructing both the primary and
17 special election. On June 29th, we had a meeting
18 with the ANCs, a discussion again about the June
19 2nd and moving forward with the November general
20 election. On July 8th, we met with the DC
21 Democratic State Committee. And on July 13th, we
22 met with ANC3 and 4D. And we had a meeting on

1 July 14th with the GOP.

2 By and large, with the exception of
3 one of those meetings and I will just say with
4 the exception of the meeting that we held on June
5 14th, in addition to others that we've had, the
6 push has been for members of the public to -- for
7 the Board to do a vote by mail election for the
8 November general election in light of the health
9 emergency that continues to exist and the thought
10 is that it will exist going forward at least
11 through the November election.

12 So with that in mind and with all
13 things considered, even considering the way we
14 conducted the June 2nd election, that is, having
15 folks request a mail ballot and the challenges
16 associated with that, we began to move forward
17 and understanding and knowing that we would not
18 be able to of our own by ourselves mail out a
19 half million ballots which is what we did for the
20 June election, that is, we manually put those
21 packets together and mailed everyone a ballot.

22 With the November election, it would

1 just be virtually impossible, so we've had the
2 time in front of us to try to contract with the
3 mail house and we are in the process, nothing has
4 been final, but we're in the process of trying to
5 do that to assist with coordinating, organizing,
6 and getting ballots out for the November
7 election.

8 With that in mind, part of the
9 requirement for the mail house is to have an
10 intelligent mail barcode tracking both inbound
11 and outbound so once that contract is awarded,
12 the vendor would be responsible for ensuring that
13 voters could track their ballots once they leave
14 the mail house and as they -- once they leave and
15 as they arrive back to the Board's office through
16 the mail. So that would eliminate the challenge
17 that was associated with the June 2nd election
18 where voters could not track because it would be
19 limited to our technology, but in fact, through
20 the U.S. Postal system and the mail house which
21 has the capacity to do the mail barcode tracking.

22 And as I said, nothing has been final

1 yet, but that's the process we're pursuing to do
2 the all-mail ballot so that everybody would
3 receive a ballot for the November 2nd election,
4 general election, and that's tied to the comments
5 that we've received and letters that we've
6 received. As I said, this has happened since and
7 even before the June election. So that is the
8 direction in which we would like to go for the
9 November election.

10 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay. What we'd like
11 to do now is since we've got 12 or 13 persons on
12 the line and so in order to be efficient and
13 effective, what I'd like to do is to give each
14 person 2 minutes to speak and I'll not hold you
15 to that directly, but the real request is to make
16 it succinct.

17 And if you are able to press #3 that
18 raises your hand and -- I'm sorry, *3, and Randy
19 will unmute you so you have an opportunity to
20 speak.

21 So Randy, please go for it.

22 Okay, if you could identify yourself

1 and start, that would be great.

2 MS. MALPASS: Can you hear me?

3 CHAIR BENNETT: Yes, we can. Thank
4 you.

5 MS. MALPASS: Okay, great. Hi,
6 Chairman Bennett. This is Adele Malpass. We
7 spoke last week and thank you for taking our
8 conference call and we had such a great call and
9 I should thank all the other Board Members who
10 participated and took up their time to talk about
11 the general election plans that is 109 days away.

12 So one thing that did come out on the
13 call is how much that you're trying to find 40
14 polling locations, as well as finding enough
15 people to work during the pandemic to actually
16 man the polling booths -- polling locations with
17 so many of the poll workers being elderly who
18 probably shouldn't be at the polling locations
19 during COVID.

20 And so that in itself seems like a
21 huge undertaking, finding 40 polling locations
22 plus the workers to man the polling locations.

1 And then on top of that to do a whole new vote by
2 mail systems seems very ambitious that could
3 probably be disastrous. And so many states that
4 have gone to vote by mail have done it gradually,
5 really over many, many election cycles. And this
6 feels like a going from zero to a hundred all at
7 once and kind of setting up a situation that
8 sounds like it has unlikely probability to go
9 smoothly. This aggressive of a format sounds
10 like it will not go well.

11 So one question with the voting by
12 mail is how -- what right now when people request
13 a ballot, they know that they're going to vote by
14 mail. But this forcing people to vote by mail
15 who may want to vote in person and like to vote
16 in person. And they enjoy going to polls and
17 seeing their neighbors and there is a very social
18 component about voting in person. And one thing
19 we saw from the June 2nd primary is that when
20 even people were mailed the application, 93,000
21 people requested, but really you know, much, much
22 a larger amount wanted to go to the polls in

1 person and vote.

2 So will a person be expected to bring
3 the ballot with them and how will you prevent
4 someone from voting by mail and then say, oh, I'd
5 really like to go to my polling location today,
6 too? How does this work?

7 CHAIR BENNETT: Yes, thank you for
8 that. It will take a while to answer every
9 question and I appreciate that and so we will
10 respond to that, but --

11 MS. MILLER: I can respond briefly.

12 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay.

13 MS. MILLER: So you do not have to
14 vote by mail if you receive a mail ballot.
15 Anyone could certainly go to the vote center and
16 vote. And we do have processes in place to
17 prevent double voting, so if you received a mail
18 ballot and you did not vote that -- in fact, you
19 showed up to vote in person, you would vote a
20 provisional ballot, so to speak, and the first
21 ballot that we get, we have a way of
22 understanding how that happens, would be counted.

1 So someone mails their ballot back and
2 then voted at the vote center, both would not be
3 counted. We have done this over many years and
4 know how to protect against that. Whenever we
5 send mail ballots, individuals request mail
6 ballots in the past, it has happened that they
7 may show up and vote and we do have provisions in
8 place to protect against double voting.

9 MS. MALPASS: But this is more -- this
10 is different than provisional balloting. This is
11 a situation where you might have, you know,
12 thousands in this category and you'll have -- and
13 you'll be in a position where you won't count
14 people's votes.

15 Like what if someone learns something
16 between voting by mail and then voting in person
17 and they want the second one to count?

18 You're going to be deciding which vote
19 to not count.

20 CHAIR BENNETT: No, it doesn't quite
21 work that way. For one, let me say, like we're
22 not going to -- well, we appreciate the position

1 and we have it in writing as well, and I'd like
2 to move unless somebody else has an opportunity
3 to make their position clear, but you have, and
4 we certainly appreciate that. And it will be
5 taken into consideration as we move forward. And
6 a more detailed response can certainly be
7 provided.

8 MS. MALPASS: Great. Thank you.

9 CHAIR BENNETT: All right, thank you.
10 We have the next person, Randy? Is there someone
11 else who would like to make a comment?

12 MR. EISENMAN: Yes, I'm on here.

13 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay, great. Can you
14 identify yourself, please?

15 MR. EISENMAN: Yes. My name is Ross
16 Eisenman. I've worked with Alice and the team on
17 many elections, and I'd really like to just state
18 -- I have a question and then I'd just like to
19 state something for the record if I could.

20 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay, can you also
21 give us your address, your name and address?

22 MR. EISENMAN: Sure, sure. First name

1 is Ross, R-O-S-S. Last name is E-I-S-E-N-M-A-N.
2 And I live at 5816 Nevada Avenue, N.W., not too
3 far from you, Michael.

4 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay.

5 MR. EISENMAN: So I've got a couple of
6 things. One, I would just like to state for the
7 record, particularly in light of the comment that
8 was made previously, like I changed my mind and I
9 want to vote for someone else. And I've stated
10 this for the record to the D.C. Council as well.
11 I think all of us as citizens have a
12 responsibility to be responsible. And I think
13 what we see a little bit is that we are in a very
14 difficult time and all of us need to kind of work
15 together. So if you voted, I think you just --
16 and the example we just heard, you have to be a
17 responsible citizen and decide. Am I going to
18 mail this in, is that going to be my final vote,
19 or am I going to wait and then cast the ballot at
20 a voting center?

21 Same thing with regard to early
22 voting. It's really important for people not to

1 wait until the end, so as responsible citizens we
2 work with the system knowing the burdens that the
3 system is working under given the pandemic. And
4 I just wanted to state that for the record.

5 My question is kind of -- I've been
6 thinking about this a lot. Unfortunately, I did
7 not work the June primary because I was concerned
8 about the pandemic and it was a gut-wrenching
9 decision. I was wondering for the upcoming
10 election, is there any way that perhaps poll
11 workers can be designated as essential personnel
12 and therefore perhaps have some priority access
13 to COVID testing?

14 CHAIR BENNETT: That's a good
15 question. We can certainly ask -- we hadn't
16 thought about that, but we certainly will ask.
17 That's a really good -- that's a very good
18 question and good point.

19 MR. EISENMAN: I only raise it,
20 Michael, because I think that might help a lot of
21 people's comfort level.

22 CHAIR BENNETT: I agree. Great idea.

1 We hadn't thought about that. We certainly will
2 ask.

3 MR. EISENMAN: Thank you.

4 MS. MILLER: Thanks, Ross. That is a
5 great idea. We appreciate that. Thank you.

6 MR. EISENMAN: Okay, my pleasure. I'm
7 going back to mute.

8 CHAIR BENNETT: Randy, next person.

9 (Pause.)

10 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay, *3 if anybody
11 wants to speak. Okay, no hands raised.

12 What we're going to do now is we're
13 going to -- somebody is ready.

14 MS. PICKERING: Hello.

15 CHAIR BENNETT: Yes.

16 MS. PICKERING: Hi. My name is Marya
17 -- can you hear me?

18 CHAIR BENNETT: Yes, we can. Thank
19 you.

20 MS. PICKERING: My name is Marya
21 Pickering. I live in Ward 3 on 44th Street in
22 American University Park. And I have a couple of

1 questions, one with respect to contracting with a
2 mail house to send out the ballots. Are we
3 looking at a competitive solicitation or have we
4 already selected the vendor on a sole-source
5 basis?

6 And my second question is with respect
7 to setting up the 40 polling locations. This is
8 a much smaller number than the 144 precincts that
9 are usually open in normal elections and we've
10 got a lot of unemployed people, so I don't see
11 why it would be a challenge to find people to
12 staff up especially if we have all this lead
13 time. Thank you.

14 CHAIR BENNETT: Sure, thank you. The
15 quick answer to your question is the mail house,
16 rather, we have not contracted with them yet.
17 There is a particular mail house that we believe
18 fits our situation well and the D.C. Procurement
19 Office is working through that to determine if
20 it's a real long wait from -- if we don't make
21 the selection, the D.C. Office of Procurement and
22 Contracting will make the selection.

1 Number two, we have online, we're
2 actually trying to hire about 4,000 people to
3 work in the vote centers and I think we've have
4 gotten a really good response. We don't know
5 exactly what November -- October/November will
6 end up looking like.

7 One of the things we learned was that
8 there are a number of unknowns and some are
9 unknown unknowns, and some are known unknowns.
10 And I think one of the known unknowns is that you
11 don't know exactly what circumstances will end up
12 being during election week. And so we want to
13 try and hire as many people as possible with the
14 recognition just like what happened in May/June,
15 many people who signed up decided that they would
16 not work. So we were left very, very short of
17 the numbers that we needed in order to remain
18 open.

19 But one thing about the difference
20 between the 144 precincts and the vote centers is
21 that a precinct actually is only for a certain
22 number of people and they're actually assigned to

1 that particular precinct.

2 There are 144 precincts and at least
3 40 of those are private facilities, especially --
4 and most of those are churches. And so if a
5 church is not holding services, then they
6 certainly aren't going to let us in just to have
7 voting.

8 And so even if we decided -- and even
9 if we decided we wanted to -- or went in the
10 direction of the precinct, it would be really
11 difficult to determine exactly how that's going
12 to look in November. We want to be prepared in
13 that regard. That said though, the thing that's
14 really important here is making sure that in-
15 person voting is a convenient option for all the
16 voters in D.C.

17 And so part of what our conversation
18 is and the one for today is to get some feedback
19 relative to that in terms of what makes sense for
20 voters in Washington being able to have the
21 option of walking in and voting safely. So
22 that's probably my best response to that, at

1 least from where we stand right now.

2 Is there another person who wants to
3 make a comment?

4 MS. PICKERING: Thank you.

5 CHAIR BENNETT: Thank you. I think we
6 have one more person who wanted to make a
7 comment. I don't hear you, so you may need to
8 unmute yourself if you are muted.

9 I can't hear you yet.

10 MS. MILLER: The number begins with
11 917. If you are unmuted, if you could speak up.

12 PARTICIPANT: I don't have a question
13 at the moment.

14 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay, all right.
15 Thank you. Well, well then if there's no one
16 else, then what we're going to do is to -- I'm
17 sorry, Alice wants to kind of walk through the --

18 MS. MILLER: Just talk a little bit
19 about the voting -- the vote centers of both
20 types as we have proposed. We have nothing final
21 yet.

22 As the chairman mentioned, we're

1 looking at a minimum of 40 vote sites and then
2 super vote centers. Super vote centers is a new
3 concept, but it kind of comes to our mind and I
4 want to say a little bit of what that is. It
5 would be a larger kind of arena, a ballroom type
6 facility or an area where we could accommodate
7 very large numbers of people so that instead of
8 -- like if you look at how we have our vote
9 centers set up now where there's one polling
10 location literally. Within a super vote center,
11 we could get multiple, maybe five, six, or seven
12 of those voting locations to accommodate many,
13 many more people at the same time.

14 So for example, and I'll just give
15 this as an example, one of the locations we're
16 looking at to use is 30,000 square feet. So that
17 is something that we can certainly accommodate
18 and marshal many, many more people in than the
19 regular-size gymnasium or multi-purpose room or
20 just the regular polling place period. And we
21 could set something up like that a whole lot
22 differently than we would normally set up a

1 voting precinct or even a voting center because
2 of the space that we would have.

3 So nothing has been final. We're
4 looking at all of them. We have a couple of
5 places that we're working with now. If you want
6 me to put some on the record I can. If not,
7 nothing that's final yet, it's all pretty much up
8 in the air. But as we move forward, we would
9 certainly let everybody know and continue to let
10 everyone know where we are and as we get them
11 final, we intend to do a lot of messaging around
12 it.

13 And in addition to the vote center and
14 the super vote centers, we will also be using
15 mail drop boxes throughout the city that we would
16 set those up and the mail drop boxes are -- for
17 those who are not familiar with or haven't seen,
18 they're not just a mailbox as you would see that
19 the U.S. Postal Service uses.

20 They are super-size, huge, mailboxes
21 just for ballots. And they are a secure --
22 they're secure in the way that they function and

1 we would pick ballots up from those regularly,
2 daily, if not more than daily. And they would be
3 located throughout the city. So individuals
4 could drop their ballots off regularly without
5 even having to wait for the vote centers to open.
6 But once the mail ballots go out, we would have
7 those available for individuals to drop their
8 ballots off if they chose to do so.

9 CHAIR BENNETT: All right. Is there
10 someone else? I think I got a note that Joanne
11 Young would like to speak, if you could unmute
12 her. I think you press *3 to raise your hand.
13 You may need to unmute yourself.

14 Ms. Young?

15 MS. YOUNG: Hello, can you hear me?

16 CHAIR BENNETT: I can hear you now.

17 Thank you.

18 MS. YOUNG: Okay, yes. Good
19 afternoon. Joanne Young. I'm a Board Member --
20 I'm an attorney in Washington and a Board Member
21 of the Bipartisan Lawyers Democracy Fund. I live
22 in Ward 3. And I wanted to make a few remarks.

1 First of all, I appreciate this
2 opportunity to be heard. A couple of points
3 based on the limited call we did have the other
4 that Michael Gill set up with the Board. One,
5 it's our understanding the Board said their voter
6 rolls have not been cleaned up. They tried.
7 They're working on it, but they are not in
8 position to accurate.

9 Number two, it's very important that
10 studies have shown that poor and minority voters
11 prefer at twice the rate to vote in person as
12 white voters. They trust the system more. And I
13 think that rushing to implement mail-in voting
14 without getting the proper education of the
15 public, the time it takes years of other
16 jurisdictions it's taken within the availability
17 of sufficient polling places risk changing the
18 makeup of the electorate because a lot of
19 minority voter turnout could be significantly
20 depressed, decreased.

21 Mail ballots are notorious for the
22 inability to be corrected or cured in time if

1 there are disqualifying mistakes and this is less
2 likely to occur if in person and we're looking at
3 potentially having tens of thousands of votes
4 rejected hurting mostly again poor minority and
5 young voters.

6 Third, I think the idea of potentially
7 having people vote by mail and then coming to the
8 polls puts the election officials in a terrible
9 position of choosing and getting rid of certain
10 ballots and also ensuring that D.C. will be very
11 late in reporting its results.

12 And finally, I'd like to comment that
13 the idea of mail drop boxes around the city is an
14 invitation for vote fraud, for vote harvesting.
15 You've got a lot of apartment buildings, multi-
16 people dwellings in the city especially in
17 minority communities. These ballots will be
18 dropped in the halls, probably, and there's
19 nothing to prevent people who have ill intent
20 collecting these ballots and marking them and
21 putting them in the mail drop boxes.

22 And also, it's very important to

1 consider that foreign governments, the Chinese,
2 for example, could counterfeit ballots quite
3 easily and put those in the mail drop boxes.

4 I think that -- I personally think
5 that the Council had authority, it gave the --
6 under the emergency COVID legislation, gave the
7 Board of Elections the authority to send out
8 absentee applications for the primary and I
9 understand the only problem with that was the IT
10 didn't work. You've got otherwise a very robust
11 return and I think the thing to do here is to
12 build on that success with better IT that works
13 this time.

14 And finally, I'd like to point out in
15 the Washington Post today, there's an editorial
16 which also points out the concerns and problems
17 for mail-in voting. The D.C. Board is proud of
18 its innovative track record in this area and I
19 think to have national publicity about a disaster
20 in mail-in voting is not where you want to go.

21 Thank you for listening to me.

22 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay. Thank you. Is

1 there another comment? *3 if you need to raise
2 your hand.

3 Okay, it doesn't look like we have any
4 other comments, so what we're going to do now is
5 we're going to go -- okay, we're supposed to go
6 into Executive Session. So I would like to get -
7 - the purpose of the Executive Session is to
8 consult with Terri Stroud, our general counsel,
9 and get any legal advice that we need with regard
10 to taking the position on the things that we've
11 heard.

12 So if I can get a motion from Ms.
13 Greenfield to go into Executive Session?

14 MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yes, I move that
15 we go into Executive Session.

16 CHAIR BENNETT: Can I get a second
17 from Mr. Gill?

18 MEMBER GILL: Second.

19 CHAIR BENNETT: It's been properly
20 moved and seconded. All in favor, Ms.
21 Greenfield?

22 MEMBER GREENFIELD: Aye.

1 CHAIR BENNETT: Mr. Gill?

2 MEMBER GILL: Aye.

3 CHAIR BENNETT: And it's aye for me as
4 well, so it's unanimous. We're going to close --
5 stop the meeting now and go into Executive
6 Session and then the Board will make comments
7 once we come back in probably about ten minutes
8 or less. All right, thank you.

9 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
10 went off the record at 1:38 p.m. and resumed at
11 1:50 p.m.)

12 CHAIR BENNETT: I need to get a vote
13 to come out of Executive Session.

14 Is Board Member Gill on the line?
15 Board Member Gill?

16 Board Member Greenfield?

17 MEMBER GREENFIELD: I'm on the line.

18 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay, Board Member
19 Gill, are you on the line?

20 MEMBER GILL: I just got on.

21 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay, great. Can I
22 get a motion to come out of Executive Session and

1 resume the public meeting, Mr. Gill?

2 MEMBER GILL: Motion to end the
3 Executive Session and return to the meeting.

4 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay, can I get a
5 second, Ms. Greenfield?

6 MEMBER GREENFIELD: I second.

7 CHAIR BENNETT: It's been properly
8 moved and seconded. And I vote aye as well.
9 We're out of Executive Session and we're in the
10 public meeting.

11 How we're going to proceed prior to
12 adjournment is I'm going to ask each Board Member
13 to state their current position relative to the
14 plan and in support. So I'll start with Ms.
15 Greenfield.

16 MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, yes, I'm
17 very supportive. I have voted absentee and it
18 was very easy. I got everything and I got
19 everything in.

20 I think it's important with this
21 pandemic still ongoing and one of the safer
22 methods to do that, so I'm very supportive of

1 doing that and then also having the vote centers
2 for those that need to go or want to go into the
3 vote centers.

4 In taking a look when we talked about
5 it, so where they need to be and especially with
6 respect to some neighborhoods where they may be
7 concerned about mail or whatever, but I'm very
8 supportive of this plan that they have.

9 CHAIR BENNETT: Thank you, Ms.
10 Greenfield.

11 Mr. Gill?

12 MEMBER GILL: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.
13 So as I said, I feel like we're trying to please
14 everyone and I'm worried that in doing so we're
15 going to fall short here. But I support where
16 Alice -- in light of the crisis, Alice has put
17 together a plan and I want to support the success
18 of the plan. I do want to raise my reservations
19 though.

20 In the June 2nd primary, the mail-in
21 absentee ballots, the process worked. And I
22 think had we not had the surge that we weren't

1 expecting on the last day because we had had 11
2 days of early voting and there weren't a lot of
3 turnout and I think the protests that are going
4 on around the country, that's generated part of
5 that surge.

6 Had we not had that, I think we had a
7 good system for June 2nd. We had more voting
8 centers than we've ever had in the past. We had
9 more days of early voting than we ever had in the
10 past and the mail-in absentee ballots system
11 worked. We tried to use our online system to
12 please people and it wasn't built for that and it
13 didn't work and a lot of the criticism we
14 received were people that had tried to get
15 ballots through the online system and didn't get
16 it. So had we not even attempted to use
17 something that wasn't built for it, they would
18 have been required to get the usual absentee
19 ballots through the mail and I think we would
20 have had more success. So our attempt to try to
21 use something that wasn't built for it, wasn't
22 ready, that caused a lot of the confusion.

1 I would also add that we had in our --
2 we have an independent status and we had Council
3 Members that were unilaterally telling people to
4 use our system and email us and go around what
5 our -- the voting regulations that we set up.
6 And in our attempt to accommodate because we err
7 on the side of wanting people to vote which I
8 absolutely support, but in our attempt to
9 accommodate, I think we allowed a Council Member
10 to also throw confusion into this.

11 And so those are things I'm worried
12 about if we have vote by mail and vote by the
13 vote centers. I would like us to double down on
14 one or the other in order to concentrate our
15 resources. That being said, none of the
16 decisions the Board has made are moving the
17 District of Columbia into ballots being send by
18 mail in the future. I think that would require a
19 lot of discussion with the Council, with the
20 Mayor. I think we would really need to have a
21 long plan for that to ever happen.

22 This decision is in light of the

1 crisis. And one of the things that didn't come
2 out in the public session but I think is
3 important to recognize is while we have done
4 yeoman's work getting new online applications and
5 getting new workers signed up, we continue to
6 have that poll workers saying they're not going
7 to be there. And I think it may be too
8 Pollyannaish to simply say open them up and
9 they'll come.

10 We still struggle for guidance on how
11 to handle public activity. We as a Board have to
12 rely on the newspaper and guidance from the D.C.
13 Health Department, but in my mind it's just as
14 risky to double down on the precincts and suggest
15 that that's all going to work fine when honestly
16 I've got two kids that a month ago I thought were
17 going off to college and here I am five weeks out
18 and I still don't know if they're going to have
19 classes or not. And so we can't -- we have to
20 make decisions on the facts as they are and move
21 forward on those.

22 So I support the plan, Alice, because

1 I want to make sure that everything I do can make
2 for a successful election and a successful
3 election day. I do -- my advice or counsel is we
4 have to internally double down on one or the
5 other, either we are going to focus on the
6 ballots that have been sent out or we're going to
7 focus on these voting centers, but I worry that
8 we're stretched too thin to do both.

9 CHAIR BENNETT: Thanks, Mr. Gill. I'm
10 sorry, are you done, Mr. Gill?

11 MEMBER GILL: Yes.

12 CHAIR BENNETT: And then lastly from
13 me, I support the plan that has been laid out. I
14 think that vote by mail, sending ballots out to
15 all voters is the right thing to do. The process
16 of making the absentee ballot request was the
17 only choice we had for the primary based on the
18 time being and the state of affairs. And we've
19 had lots and lots of requests particularly from
20 individuals from that are Ward 7, and 8, and 5
21 for that matter is to send out ballots by
22 request. I think all these meetings will explain

1 exactly how we avoid or ensure that there's no
2 opportunity for double voting, but I think that's
3 the right way to go.

4 And secondly, having large vote
5 centers, 40 plus and also focus in the areas
6 where -- focus in areas where it is less where
7 they have reported more issues or problems around
8 the mail. The good thing about the vote by mail
9 process using a mail house is we'll have
10 intelligent barcode tracking so we'll track
11 ballots going in and coming. We'll have a good
12 sense of what is happening to those ballots.

13 The other piece in terms of the vote
14 centers is having the large numbers, trying to
15 concentrate those folks in those areas where
16 people will need to walk in and also have the
17 super large vote centers that will accommodate
18 large numbers of people.

19 The other thing is we leave a message
20 going forward of election week versus election
21 day to try and encourage people to vote early or
22 all during the week versus one day.

1 Clearly, that's the position I have
2 and I support the plan going forward. In August,
3 at our August meeting, we'll discuss this further
4 and as the questions and comments have been
5 incredibly good, will allow, I think, the Board
6 to fashion and to address how we do some of the
7 things going forward at the operational level a
8 little bit more and also to give the public
9 assurance of the process and the validity of it.

10 So I think that is it unless Ms.
11 Miller has another comment or Ms. Stroud.

12 Ms. Miller?

13 MS. MILLER: Well, I would just thank
14 the Board for supporting the process and
15 supporting the plan. And I must say we will do
16 everything in our power and everything that we
17 can to make this as seamless as possible. But
18 having said that, I do want to say that it is not
19 a perfect process. It's not going to be perfect.
20 There are going to be some hurdles that we have
21 to cross and have to jump and we will try to
22 figure those things as we go along. The chairman

1 has said there are a lot of unknown knowns and
2 some of these things we just don't know. But for
3 everything that we do know, we'll put in place
4 and try to address it and deal with it as we move
5 forward.

6 Any process that involves people is
7 not a perfect process. People are not perfect.
8 It's not going to be perfect. It's going to be
9 as close to perfect as we can get it and we know
10 there are going to be some challenges moving
11 forward with it, but again, just thank the Board
12 for the support.

13 CHAIR BENNETT: Ms. Stroud, do you
14 want to make the last comment?

15 MS. STROUD: I do. I want to say
16 three things. The first is that in advance of
17 our mail-in ballots, we will be mailing out
18 postcards asking people to confirm their
19 residence addresses and also to provide a mailing
20 address if they will not be in D.C. on election
21 day or during the November election. Yes, so if
22 you want to send something, you mail it, so

1 confirming residents' addresses and soliciting --
2 confirming residents' addresses and soliciting
3 mailing addresses.

4 So whenever you get election mail from
5 the Board of Elections, we ask that you pay heed
6 to it. It is important election information and
7 we want you to look at it and interact with it
8 and when necessary respond to it. So I encourage
9 you to, when you get these postcards, especially
10 when they're asking you to confirm information
11 that you do respond to those in a timely fashion.

12 And the other thing, too, as everyone
13 has indicated, the election day in the District
14 of Columbia has been for ten years the last day
15 to vote. We've had in-person, absentee voting,
16 and early voting for quite some time now and
17 particularly in light of the public health
18 emergency, I think that the voters do need to be
19 cognizant of the fact that there is not just --
20 election day is sort of a misnomer at this point,
21 and so while I understand that people do want to
22 come out on election day and participate in this

1 civic engagement event, there are multiple days
2 on which you can do that and multiple modes for
3 doing it.

4 We've come a long way in terms of
5 election administration and therefore, there's
6 no such thing as simply election day at this
7 point in this jurisdiction. And so we will be
8 open for some time before election day and we
9 would like for you to come out and participate on
10 any of the various days that are available to do
11 so.

12 CHAIR BENNETT: Okay, with that, I'm
13 going to ask for a motion to adjourn.

14 Ms. Greenfield?

15 MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yes, I move that
16 we adjourn the meeting.

17 CHAIR BENNETT: Mr. Gill, can I get a
18 second?

19 MEMBER GILL: Second.

20 CHAIR BENNETT: All right, it's been
21 properly moved and seconded. I vote to adjourn
22 the meeting as well. The meeting is hereby

1 adjourned. Thank y ou and this is not the last
2 time you'll have an opportunity to speak with us.
3 Thank you.

4 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
5 went off the record at 2:06 p.m.)
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18
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22

A

able 7:18 9:17 20:20
above-entitled 29:9
 41:4
absentee 27:8 30:17
 31:21 32:10,18 35:16
 39:15
absolutely 33:8
accept 4:10
access 16:12
accommodate 22:6,12
 22:17 33:6,9 36:17
accurate 25:8
activity 34:11
add 33:1
addition 7:5 23:13
address 14:21,21 37:6
 38:4,20
addressed 5:12,13
addresses 38:19 39:1,2
 39:3
Adele 10:6
adjourn 40:13,16,21
adjourned 41:1
adjournment 2:14
 30:12
administration 2:7 40:5
adopt 3:21 4:3,4,11
Adoption 2:5
advance 38:16
advice 2:11 28:9 35:3
affairs 35:18
afternoon 24:19
agenda 2:2,5 3:22,22
 4:3,5,11,11
aggressive 11:9
ago 34:16
agree 16:22
air 23:8
Alice 1:20 5:20 6:3
 14:16 21:17 31:16,16
 34:22
all-mail 9:2
allow 37:5
allowed 33:9
ambitious 11:2
American 17:22
amount 11:22
ANC3 6:22
ANCs 5:1 6:18
answer 12:8 18:15
anybody 17:10
anyway 5:21
apartment 26:15
application 11:20
applications 27:8 34:4
appreciate 12:9 13:22
 14:4 17:5 25:1

area 22:6 27:18
areas 36:5,6,15
arena 22:5
arrive 8:15
ascertain 3:8
Ascertainment 2:4
asking 38:18 39:10
aspects 5:2
assigned 19:22
assist 8:5
associated 6:13 7:16
 8:17
assurance 37:9
attempt 32:20 33:6,8
attempted 32:16
attorney 2:11,12 24:20
attorney-client 2:12
August 37:2,3
authority 27:5,7
availability 25:16
available 24:7 40:10
Avenue 15:2
avoid 36:1
awarded 8:11
aye 28:22 29:2,3 30:8

B

back 8:15 13:1 17:7
 29:7
ballot 7:15,21 9:2,3
 11:13 12:3,14,18,20
 12:21 13:1 15:19
 35:16
balloting 13:10
ballots 7:19 8:6,13 13:5
 13:6 18:2 23:21 24:1
 24:4,6,8 25:21 26:10
 26:17,20 27:2 31:21
 32:10,15,19 33:17
 35:6,14,21 36:11,12
 38:17
ballroom 22:5
barcode 8:10,21 36:10
based 25:3 35:17
basis 18:5
began 7:16
begins 21:10
believe 18:17
Bennett 1:12,14 3:3,9
 3:13,18 4:6,9 9:10
 10:3,6 12:7,12 13:20
 14:9,13,20 15:4 16:14
 16:22 17:8,10,15,18
 18:14 21:5,14 24:9,16
 27:22 28:16,19 29:1,3
 29:12,18,21 30:4,7
 31:9 35:9,12 38:13
 40:12,17,20

best 20:22
better 27:12
Bipartisan 24:21
bit 15:13 21:18 22:4
 37:8
Board 1:4,6,11,11,13
 1:18 2:6 3:5,10,10,14
 4:13,17 5:10,16,17
 6:4 7:7 10:9 24:19,20
 25:4,5 27:7,17 29:6
 29:14,15,16,18 30:12
 33:16 34:11 37:5,14
 38:11 39:5
Board's 5:22 8:15
body 2:12
booths 10:16
boxes 23:15,16 26:13
 26:21 27:3
briefly 12:11
bring 12:2
build 27:12
buildings 26:15
built 32:12,17,21
burdens 16:2

C

call 2:3 3:3,7,19 10:8,8
 10:13 25:3
call-ins 3:6
capacity 8:21
cast 15:19
category 13:12
caused 32:22
center 12:15 13:2 15:20
 22:10 23:1,13
centers 2:8 4:20 5:18
 19:3,20 21:19 22:2,2
 22:9 23:14 24:5 31:1
 31:3 32:8 33:13 35:7
 36:5,14,17
certain 19:21 26:9
certainly 12:15 14:4,6
 16:15,16 17:1 20:6
 22:17 23:9
chair 1:12,14 3:3,9,13
 3:18 4:6,9 6:3,4 9:10
 10:3 12:7,12 13:20
 14:9,13,20 15:4 16:14
 16:22 17:8,10,15,18
 18:14 21:5,14 24:9,16
 27:22 28:16,19 29:1,3
 29:12,18,21 30:4,7
 31:9 35:9,12 38:13
 40:12,17,20
chairman 10:6 21:22
 31:12 37:22
challenge 8:16 18:11
challenges 7:15 38:10

changed 15:8
changing 25:17
Chinese 27:1
choice 35:17
choosing 26:9
chose 24:8
church 20:5
churches 20:4
circumstances 19:11
citizen 15:17
citizens 15:11 16:1
city 23:15 24:3 26:13,16
civic 40:1
classes 34:19
cleaned 25:6
clear 14:3
Clearly 37:1
close 29:4 38:9
Code 2:13
cognizant 39:19
collecting 26:20
college 34:17
Columbia 1:2,11 33:17
 39:14
come 10:12 29:7,13,22
 34:1,9 39:22 40:4,9
comes 22:3
comfort 16:21
coming 26:7 36:11
comment 2:9 5:16
 14:11 15:7 21:3,7
 26:12 28:1 37:11
 38:14
comments 4:18 9:4
 28:4 29:6 37:4
Committee 6:21
communities 26:17
community 6:6
competitive 18:3
component 11:18
concentrate 33:14
 36:15
concept 22:3
concerned 16:7 31:7
concerns 27:16
conducted 7:14
conference 10:8
confirm 38:18 39:10
confirming 39:1,2
confusion 32:22 33:10
consider 27:1
consideration 14:5
considered 7:13
considering 7:13
constructing 6:16
consult 2:11 28:8
CONTENTS 2:1
continue 23:9 34:5

continues 7:9
contract 8:2,11
contracted 18:16
contracting 18:1,22
convened 1:11
convenient 20:15
conversation 20:17
coordinating 8:5
coordinators 6:16
corrected 25:22
Council 15:10 27:5 33:2
 33:9,19
counsel 1:21 28:8 35:3
count 13:13,17,19
counted 12:22 13:3
counterfeit 27:2
country 32:4
couple 15:5 17:22 23:4
 25:2
COVID 10:19 16:13
 27:6
crisis 31:16 34:1
criticism 32:13
cross 37:21
cured 25:22
current 5:21 30:13
cycles 11:5

D

D.C 2:13 3:5 15:10
 18:18,21 20:16 26:10
 27:17 34:12 38:20
daily 24:2,2
day 32:1 35:3 36:21,22
 38:21 39:13,14,20,22
 40:6,8
days 10:11 32:2,9 40:1
 40:10
DC 6:20
deal 38:4
decide 15:17
decided 19:15 20:8,9
deciding 13:18
decision 16:9 33:22
decisions 33:16 34:20
decreased 25:20
Democracy 24:21
Democratic 5:2 6:21
Department 34:13
depressed 25:20
designated 16:11
detailed 14:6
determine 18:19 20:11
difference 19:19
different 13:10
differently 22:22
difficult 15:14 20:11
direction 9:8 20:10

directly 9:15
Director 1:20 5:20 6:3
disaster 27:19
disastrous 11:3
discuss 37:3
discussed 4:21 5:5
discussion 6:18 33:19
disqualifying 26:1
District 1:2,11 33:17
 39:13
doing 31:1,14 40:3
double 12:17 13:8
 33:13 34:14 35:4 36:2
drop 23:15,16 24:4,7
 26:13,21 27:3
dropped 26:18
dwellings 26:16

E

E-I-S-E-N-M-A-N 15:1
early 15:21 32:2,9
 36:21 39:16
easily 27:3
easy 30:18
editorial 27:15
EDT 1:12
education 25:14
effective 9:13
efficient 9:12
Eisenman 14:12,15,16
 14:22 15:5 16:19 17:3
 17:6
either 35:5
elderly 10:17
election 2:7 6:17,20 7:7
 7:8,11,14,20,22 8:7
 8:17 9:3,4,7,9 10:11
 11:5 16:10 19:12 26:8
 35:2,3 36:20,20 38:20
 38:21 39:4,6,13,20,22
 40:5,6,8
elections 1:4,11,13,18
 3:5 6:4 14:17 18:9
 27:7 39:5
electorate 25:18
eliminate 8:16
email 33:4
emails 4:18
emergency 7:9 27:6
 39:18
encourage 36:21 39:8
engagement 40:1
enjoy 11:16
ensure 36:1
ensuring 8:12 26:10
err 33:6
especially 18:12 20:3
 26:16 31:5 39:9

essential 16:11
event 40:1
everybody 9:2 23:9
exactly 19:5,11 20:11
 36:1
example 15:16 22:14
 22:15 27:2
exception 7:2,4
Executive 1:20 2:10
 5:20 6:3 28:6,7,13,15
 29:5,13,22 30:3,9
exist 7:9,10
expected 12:2
expecting 32:1
explain 4:14 35:22
express 5:10,11

F

facilities 20:3
facility 22:6
fact 8:19 12:18 39:19
facts 34:20
fall 31:15
familiar 23:17
far 15:3
fashion 37:6 39:11
favor 28:20
feedback 20:18
feel 31:13
feels 11:6
feet 22:16
figure 37:22
final 8:4,22 15:18 21:20
 23:3,7,11
finally 26:12 27:14
find 3:10,14 10:13
 18:11
finding 10:14,21
fine 34:15
first 3:21 5:19 12:20
 14:22 25:1 38:16
fits 18:18
five 22:11 34:17
focus 35:5,7 36:5,6
folks 7:15 36:15
forcing 11:14
foreign 27:1
format 11:9
forward 4:16 5:16,18
 6:9,19 7:10,16 14:5
 23:8 34:21 36:20 37:2
 37:7 38:5,11
fraud 26:14
FRIDAY 1:8
front 8:2
function 23:22
Fund 24:21
further 37:3

future 33:18

G

general 1:21 2:7 6:19
 7:8 9:4 10:11 28:8
generated 32:4
getting 8:6 25:14 26:9
 34:4,5
Gill 1:15 3:14,16,16 4:2
 4:4 25:4 28:17,18
 29:1,2,14,15,19,20
 30:1,2 31:11,12 35:9
 35:10,11 40:17,19
give 5:8,15 9:13 14:21
 22:14 37:8
given 16:3
GOP 7:1
gotten 19:4
GOVERNMENT 1:1
governments 27:1
gradually 11:4
Greenfield 1:16 3:11,12
 4:7,8 28:13,14,21,22
 29:16,17 30:5,6,15,16
 31:10 40:14,15
guidance 34:10,12
gut-wrenching 16:8
gymnasium 22:19

H

half 7:19
hall 6:12
halls 26:18
hand 9:18 24:12 28:2
handle 34:11
hands 17:11
happen 33:21
happened 9:6 13:6
 19:14
happening 36:12
happens 12:22
harvesting 26:14
health 7:8 34:13 39:17
hear 10:2 17:17 21:7,9
 24:15,16
heard 15:16 25:2 28:11
heed 39:5
held 7:4
Hello 17:14 24:15
help 16:20
Hi 10:5 17:16
high 5:21 6:11
hire 19:2,13
hold 9:14
holding 20:5
honestly 34:15
house 8:3,9,14,20 18:2
 18:15,17 36:9

huge 10:21 23:20
hundred 11:6
hurdles 37:20
hurting 26:4

I

idea 16:22 17:5 26:6,13
identify 9:22 14:14
II 2:4
III 2:5
ill 26:19
implement 25:13
important 15:22 20:14
 25:9 26:22 30:20 34:3
 39:6
impossible 8:1
in- 20:14
in-person 39:15
inability 25:22
inbound 8:10
incredibly 37:5
independent 33:2
indicated 39:13
individuals 6:14 13:5
 24:3,7 35:20
information 39:6,10
innovative 27:18
intelligent 8:10 36:10
intent 23:11
intent 26:19
interact 39:7
internally 35:4
invitation 26:14
invited 5:3,5
involved 6:5
involves 38:6
issues 36:7
items 2:2 5:13
IV 2:6

J

Joanne 24:10,19
July 1:9 3:5 6:20,21 7:1
jump 37:21
June 6:8,11,14,14,17
 6:18 7:4,14,20 8:17
 9:7 11:19 16:7 31:20
 32:7
jurisdiction 40:7
jurisdictions 25:16

K

Karyn 1:16 3:11,13
kids 34:16
knowing 7:17 16:2
known 19:9,10
knowns 38:1

L

laid 35:13
large 7:2 22:7 36:4,14
 36:17,18
larger 11:22 22:5
lastly 35:12
late 26:11
Lawyers 24:21
lead 18:12
learned 19:7
learns 13:15
leave 8:13,14 36:19
left 19:16
legal 2:11 28:9
legislation 27:6
letters 6:6 9:5
level 5:21 6:11 16:21
 37:7
light 7:8 15:7 31:16
 33:22 39:17
limited 8:19 25:3
line 9:12 29:14,17,19
listening 27:21
literally 22:10
little 15:13 21:18 22:4
 37:8
live 15:2 17:21 24:21
located 24:3
location 12:5 22:10
locations 10:14,16,18
 10:21,22 18:7 22:12
 22:15
long 18:20 33:21 40:4
look 20:12 22:8 28:3
 31:4 39:7
looking 18:3 19:6 22:1
 22:16 23:4 26:2
lot 16:6,20 18:10 22:21
 23:11 25:18 26:15
 32:2,13,22 33:19 38:1
lots 35:19,19

M

mail 4:19,20 5:17 7:7,15
 7:18 8:3,9,10,14,16
 8:20,21 11:2,4,12,14
 11:14 12:4,14,14,17
 13:5,5,16 15:18 18:2
 18:15,17 23:15,16
 24:6 25:21 26:7,13,21
 27:3 31:7 32:19 33:12
 33:18 35:14 36:8,8,9
 38:22 39:4
mail-in 25:13 27:17,20
 31:20 32:10 38:17
mailbox 23:18
mailboxes 23:20
mailed 7:21 11:20

mailing 38:17,19 39:3
mails 13:1
makeup 25:18
making 20:14 35:16
Malpass 10:2,5,6 13:9
 14:8
man 10:16,22
manually 7:20
marking 26:20
marshal 22:18
Marya 17:16,20
matter 29:9 35:21 41:4
matters 2:6 4:13,20 5:6
 5:7,12,22 6:13
May/June 19:14
Mayor 33:20
meeting 1:6,11 3:4,4,7
 3:20 4:12,15 5:9 6:11
 6:12,17,22 7:4 29:5
 30:1,3,10 37:3 40:16
 40:22,22
meetings 4:22 5:4 6:6
 7:3 35:22
Member 1:15,16 3:11
 3:12,15,16 4:4,8
 24:19,20 28:14,18,22
 29:2,14,15,16,17,18
 29:20 30:2,6,12,16
 31:12 33:9 35:11
 40:15,19
members 1:13 5:11 6:8
 6:12 7:6 10:9 33:3
mentioned 21:22
message 36:19
messaging 23:11
met 6:14,20,22
methods 30:22
Michael 1:12,14 3:9,14
 15:3 16:20 25:4
Mike 1:15 3:16,19
Miller 1:20 5:20 6:1,2,3
 12:11,13 17:4 21:10
 21:18 37:11,12,13

million 7:19
mind 7:12 8:8 15:8 22:3
 34:13
minimum 22:1
minority 25:10,19 26:4
 26:17
minutes 9:14 29:7
misnomer 39:20
missed 5:4
mistakes 26:1
modes 40:2
moment 21:13
month 34:16
motion 4:2 28:12 29:22
 30:2 40:13

move 4:4 6:9 7:16 14:2
 14:5 23:8 28:14 34:20
 38:4 40:15
moved 4:10 28:20 30:8
 40:21
moving 5:16,17 6:19
 33:16 38:10
multi- 26:15
multi-purpose 22:19
multiple 22:11 40:1,2
mute 17:7
muted 21:8

N

N.W 15:2
name 3:9 14:15,21,22
 15:1 17:16,20
national 27:19
necessary 39:8
need 15:14 21:7 24:13
 28:1,9 29:12 31:2,5
 33:20 36:16 39:18
needed 19:17
neighborhoods 31:6
neighbors 11:17
Nevada 15:2
new 11:1 22:2 34:4,5
newspaper 34:12
non-public 2:10
normal 18:9
normally 22:22
note 24:10
notice 1:12
notorious 25:21
November 2:7 6:10,19
 7:8,11,22 8:6 9:3,9
 19:5 20:12 38:21
number 4:17 6:5,6 18:8
 19:1,8,22 21:10 25:9
numbers 19:17 22:7
 36:14,18

O

obtain 2:11
occur 26:2
October/November
 19:5
office 8:15 18:19,21
Official 2:13
officials 26:8
once 8:11,13,14 11:7
 24:6 29:7
ongoing 30:21
online 19:1 32:11,15
 34:4
open 18:9 19:18 24:5
 34:8 40:8
operational 37:7

opportunity 5:9,15 9:19
14:2 25:2 36:2 41:2
option 20:15,21
order 2:3 3:4,7,20 9:12
19:17 33:14
organizing 8:5
ou 41:1
outbound 8:11

P

P 1:20
P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S
3:1
p.m 1:12 3:2,6 29:10,11
41:5
packets 7:21
Page 2:2
pandemic 10:15 16:3,8
30:21
Park 17:22
part 4:22 8:8 20:17 32:4
PARTICIPANT 21:12
participate 39:22 40:9
participated 6:7 10:10
particular 18:17 20:1
particularly 15:7 35:19
39:17
parties 5:3
Party 5:1,2
Pause 17:9
pay 39:5
people 5:15 10:15
11:12,14,20,21 15:22
18:10,11 19:2,13,15
19:22 22:7,13,18 26:7
26:16,19 32:12,14
33:3,7 36:16,18,21
38:6,7,18 39:21
people's 13:14 16:21
perfect 37:19,19 38:7,7
38:8,9
period 22:20
person 9:14 11:15,16
11:18 12:1,2,19 13:16
14:10 17:8 20:15 21:2
21:6 25:11 26:2
personally 27:4
personnel 16:11
persons 9:11
pick 24:1
Pickering 17:14,16,20
17:21 21:4
piece 36:13
place 12:16 13:8 22:20
38:3
placed 4:1
places 23:5 25:17
plan 5:22 30:14 31:8,17

31:18 33:21 34:22
35:13 37:2,15
plans 10:11
please 9:21 14:14 31:13
32:12
pleasure 17:6
plus 10:22 36:5
point 16:18 27:14 39:20
40:7
points 25:2 27:16
poll 6:15 10:17 16:10
34:6
polling 10:14,16,16,18
10:21,22 12:5 18:7
22:9,20 25:17
polls 11:16,22 26:8
Pollyannaish 34:8
poor 25:10 26:4
position 13:13,22 14:3
25:8 26:9 28:10 30:13
37:1
positions 5:11
possible 19:13 37:17
Post 27:15
Postal 8:20 23:19
postcards 38:18 39:9
potentially 26:3,6
power 37:16
precinct 19:21 20:1,10
23:1
precincts 18:8 19:20
20:2 34:14
prefer 25:11
prepared 20:12
present 1:13,18 3:11,12
3:15,17 5:21
preserve 2:11
presiding 1:12
press 9:17 24:12
pretty 23:7
prevent 12:3,17 26:19
previously 15:8
primary 6:8,16 11:19
16:7 27:8 31:20 35:17
prior 6:7 30:11
priority 16:12
private 20:3
privilege 2:12
probability 11:8
probably 10:18 11:3
20:22 26:18 29:7
problem 27:9
problems 27:16 36:7
proceed 30:11
process 6:13 8:3,4 9:1
31:21 35:15 36:9 37:9
37:14,19 38:6,7
processes 12:16

Procurement 18:18,21
proper 25:14
properly 4:9 28:19 30:7
40:21
proposed 21:20
protect 13:4,8
protests 32:3
proud 27:17
provide 38:19
provided 14:7
provisional 12:20 13:10
provisions 13:7
public 2:9,12 4:19,22
5:8,10 6:8,13 7:6
25:15 30:1,10 34:2,11
37:8 39:17
publicity 27:19
purpose 28:7
pursuant 1:12 2:12
pursuing 9:1
push 7:6
put 7:20 23:6 27:3
31:16 38:3
puts 26:8
putting 26:21

Q

question 11:11 12:9
14:18 16:5,15,18 18:6
18:15 21:12
questions 18:1 37:4
quick 18:15
quite 13:20 27:2 39:16
quorum 2:4 3:8,19

R

R-O-S-S 15:1
raise 16:19 24:12 28:1
31:18
raised 17:11
raises 9:18
Randy 9:18,21 14:10
17:8
rate 25:11
ready 17:13 32:22
real 9:15 18:20
receive 9:3 12:14
received 4:17 6:7 9:5,6
12:17 32:14
recognition 19:14
recognize 34:3
record 5:13 14:19 15:7
15:10 16:4 23:6 27:18
29:10 41:5
regard 15:21 20:13 28:9
regarding 4:18,19
regular 22:20
regular-size 22:19

regularly 24:1,4
regulations 33:5
rejected 26:4
relative 20:19 30:13
rely 34:12
remain 19:17
remarks 24:22
reported 36:7
reporting 26:11
Republican 5:1
request 6:9 7:15 9:15
11:12 13:5 35:16,22
requested 11:21
requests 35:19
require 33:18
required 32:18
requirement 8:9
reservations 31:18
residence 38:19
residents' 39:1,2
resources 33:15
respect 18:1,6 31:6
respond 12:10,11 39:8
39:11
response 14:6 19:4
20:22
responsibility 15:12
responsible 8:12 15:12
15:17 16:1
results 26:11
resume 30:1
resumed 29:10
return 27:11 30:3
rid 26:9
risk 25:17
risky 34:14
robust 27:10
rolls 25:6
room 22:19
Ross 14:15 15:1 17:4
rushing 25:13

S

safely 20:21
safer 30:21
saw 11:19
saying 34:6
seamless 37:17
second 3:8 4:6,8 13:17
18:6 28:16,18 30:5,6
40:18,19
seconded 4:10 28:20
30:8 40:21
secondly 36:4
secure 23:21,22
seeing 11:17
seen 23:17
selected 18:4

selection 18:21,22
send 13:5 18:2 27:7
 33:17 35:21 38:22
sending 35:14
sense 20:19 36:12
sent 35:6
Service 23:19
services 20:5
session 2:10 28:6,7,13
 28:15 29:6,13,22 30:3
 30:9 34:2
set 22:9,21,22 23:16
 25:4 33:5
setting 11:7 18:7
seven 22:11
short 19:16 31:15
show 13:7
showed 12:19
shown 25:10
side 33:7
signed 19:15 34:5
significant 5:8
significantly 25:19
simply 34:8 40:6
site 6:15
sites 22:1
situation 11:7 13:11
 18:18
six 22:11
smaller 18:8
smoothly 11:9
social 11:17
sole-source 18:4
solicitation 18:3
soliciting 39:1,2
somebody 14:2 17:13
sorry 9:18 21:17 35:10
sort 39:20
sounds 11:8,9
space 23:2
speak 9:14,20 12:20
 17:11 21:11 24:11
 41:2
special 1:6,11 3:4 4:15
 5:9 6:17
spoke 10:7
square 22:16
staff 1:18 18:12
stand 21:1
start 10:1 30:14
state 5:21 6:21 14:17
 14:19 15:6 16:4 30:13
 35:18
stated 15:9
states 11:3
status 33:2
stop 29:5
Street 17:21

stretched 35:8
Stroud 1:21 28:8 37:11
 38:13,15
struggle 34:10
studies 25:10
success 27:12 31:17
 32:20
successful 35:2,2
succinct 9:16
sufficient 25:17
suggest 34:14
super 22:2,2,10 23:14
 36:17
super-size 23:20
support 30:14 31:15,17
 33:8 34:22 35:13 37:2
 38:12
supporting 37:14,15
supportive 30:17,22
 31:8
supposed 28:5
surge 31:22 32:5
system 8:20 16:2,3
 25:12 32:7,10,11,15
 33:4
systems 11:2

T

taken 14:5 25:16
takes 25:15
talk 10:10 21:18
talked 31:4
team 14:16
technology 8:19
Teleconference 1:12
tell 4:14
telling 33:3
ten 5:15 29:7 39:14
tens 26:3
terms 20:19 36:13 40:4
Terri 1:21 28:8
terrible 26:8
testing 16:13
thank 3:13,19 6:2 10:3
 10:7,9 12:7 14:8,9
 17:3,5,18 18:13,14
 21:4,5,15 24:17 27:21
 27:22 29:8 31:9 37:13
 38:11 41:1,3
Thanks 17:4 31:12 35:9
thin 35:8
things 7:13 15:6 19:7
 28:10 33:11 34:1 37:7
 37:22 38:2,16
Third 26:6
thought 7:9 16:16 17:1
 34:16
thousands 13:12 26:3

three 38:16
throw 33:10
tied 9:4
timely 39:11
today 3:22 4:3 12:5
 20:18 27:15
today's 4:5
top 11:1
topic 4:21
town 6:12
track 8:13,18 27:18
 36:10
tracking 8:10,21 36:10
tried 25:6 32:11,14
trust 25:12
try 8:2 19:13 32:20
 36:21 37:21 38:4
trying 8:4 10:13 19:2
 31:13 36:14
turnout 25:19 32:3
twice 25:11
two 5:22 19:1 25:9
 34:16
type 22:5
types 21:20

U

U.S 8:20 23:19
unanimous 4:12 29:4
understand 27:9 39:21
understanding 7:17
 12:22 25:5
undertaking 10:21
unemployed 18:10
Unfortunately 16:6
unilaterally 33:3
University 17:22
unknown 19:9 38:1
unknowns 19:8,9,9,10
unmute 9:19 21:8 24:11
 24:13
unmuted 21:11
upcoming 16:9
use 22:16 32:11,16,21
 33:4
uses 23:19
usual 32:18
usually 18:9

V

V 2:9
validity 37:9
various 5:2,3 40:10
vendor 8:12 18:4
versus 36:20,22
VI 2:10
views 5:10
VII 2:14

virtually 8:1
vote 2:8 4:10,20 5:17
 5:18 7:7 11:1,4,13,14
 11:15,15 12:1,14,15
 12:16,18,19,19 13:2,7
 13:18 15:9,18 19:3,20
 21:19 22:1,2,2,8,10
 23:13,14 24:5 25:11
 26:7,14,14 29:12 30:8
 31:1,3 33:7,12,12,13
 35:14 36:4,8,13,17,21
 39:15 40:21
Vote-by-Mail 2:8
voted 13:2 15:15 30:17
voter 25:5,19
voters 8:13,18 20:16,20
 25:10,12 26:5 35:15
 39:18
votes 13:14 26:3
voting 4:18,19 11:11,18
 12:4,17 13:8,16,16
 15:20,22 20:7,15,21
 21:19 22:12 23:1,1
 25:13 27:17,20 32:2,7
 32:9 33:5 35:7 36:2
 39:15,16

W

wait 15:19 16:1 18:20
 24:5
walk 21:17 36:16
walking 20:21
wanted 5:8,14 11:22
 16:4 20:9 21:6 24:22
wanting 33:7
wants 17:11 21:2,17
Ward 17:21 24:22 35:20
wards 5:3
Washington 20:20
 24:20 27:15
wasn't 32:12,17,21,21
way 7:13 12:21 13:21
 16:10 23:22 36:3 40:4
website 4:1
week 10:7 19:12 36:20
 36:22
weeks 34:17
went 20:9 29:10 41:5
weren't 31:22 32:2
white 25:12
wondering 16:9
work 10:15 12:6 13:21
 15:14 16:2,7 19:3,16
 27:10 32:13 34:4,15
worked 14:16 31:21
 32:11
workers 6:15 10:17,22
 16:11 34:5,6

| | | | |
|---|---------------------|----------|--|
| working 16:3 18:19 23:5 25:7 | 41 2:14 | | |
| works 27:12 | 44th 17:21 | | |
| worried 31:14 33:11 | 4D 6:22 | | |
| worry 35:7 | | 5 | |
| writing 14:1 | 5 35:20 | | |
| | 5816 15:2 | | |
| X | | 6 | |
| | | | |
| Y | | 7 | |
| y 41:1 | 7 35:20 | | |
| years 13:3 25:15 39:14 | | | |
| yeoman's 34:4 | | 8 | |
| young 24:11,14,15,18 24:19 26:5 | 8 35:20 | | |
| | 8th 6:20 | | |
| Z | | 9 | |
| zero 11:6 | | | |
| | 917 21:11 | | |
| 0 | 93,000 11:20 | | |
| | | | |
| 1 | | | |
| 1:00 1:12 | | | |
| 1:04 3:2 | | | |
| 1:38 29:10 | | | |
| 1:50 29:11 | | | |
| 109 10:11 | | | |
| 11 32:1 | | | |
| 12 9:11 | | | |
| 13 9:11 | | | |
| 13th 6:21 | | | |
| 14 2:9 | | | |
| 144 18:8 19:20 20:2 | | | |
| 14th 7:1,5 | | | |
| 17 1:9 | | | |
| 17th 3:5 6:12 | | | |
| | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 2 2:8 9:14 | | | |
| 2-575(b)4(A) 2:13 | | | |
| 2:06 41:5 | | | |
| 2020 1:9 2:7 | | | |
| 24th 6:14 | | | |
| 29th 6:17 | | | |
| 2nd 6:8,14,19 7:14 8:17 9:3 11:19 31:20 32:7 | | | |
| | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 3 2:3,4,5,7 9:17,18 17:10,21 24:12,22 28:1 | | | |
| 30,000 22:16 | | | |
| | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 4 2:6 | | | |
| 4,000 19:2 | | | |
| 40 10:13,21 18:7 20:3 22:1 36:5 | | | |

C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Special Board Meeting

Before: DCBOE

Date: 07-17-20

Place: teleconference

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