

March 3, 2014

The Honorable Bruce Williams, Mayor of Takoma Park, and  
Members of the Takoma Park City Council  
City of Takoma Park  
7500 Maple Avenue  
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Re: Board of Elections Report of Activities, 2012-2013

Dear Mayor Williams and Members of the City Council:

The Board of Elections (BOE) is pleased to transmit its report of activities for the period 2012-2013. We are available to discuss any questions you may have regarding items in this report.

Sincerely,

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Marilyn R. Abbott, Chairman  
Takoma Park Board of Elections

cc: Jessie Carpenter, City Clerk

Board of Elections:  
April Kissel  
Oliver Njong  
James C. Roberts  
Paras N. Shah

## **City of Takoma Park Board of Elections Activity Report 2013-2013**

The Board of Elections is pleased to report its activities for the two year period 2012-2013.

### **Reports to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.**

Final reports were submitted to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission in January 2013. The three reports, *Policies and Procedures*, *Best Practices for E2E Voting*, and *Data Analysis Report from Takoma Park 2011 Municipal Election*, together describe Takoma Park's experience with use of the Scantegrity end-to-end (E2E) verifiable voting system during the 2011 municipal election.

These reports were required as part of the City's participation in the "2010 Voting System Pre-Election Logic and Accuracy Testing and Post-Election Audit" initiative. The city, with Scantegrity (now the Voting Systems Institute), had successfully applied for a \$25,000 grant that was administered by City staff.

### **Election Systems to Support the 2013 General Election.**

After the November 2011 election, the Board of Elections reviewed all aspects of the election to consider what worked well and what improvements could be made. As a result of that evaluation the Board recommended that the City issue a request for proposals (RFP), for election services and equipment. The RFP was issued in February 2013 and two responses were received by the closing date. The Board followed a multi-step evaluation process and presented its findings to the Council.

In May 2013 the City awarded a contract to Election Systems and Software (ES&S). Under the contract ES&S provided pre-election services (ballot design), ballot scanning, results tabulation, voter assistive technology, and on-site technical support. Further, the ES&S process provided the ability to audit 100% of the ballots

The ES&S solution fit within existing City procedures for handling absentee and overseas voting, as well as checking-in voters, issuing voter authority cards, and closing the polls at the end of the day.

Overall, the system was a success. We were able to quickly incorporate absentee ballots and ascertain contest winners the night of the election. The official canvass, reconciling ballots used, ballots scanned, voter authority cards issued, and write-in candidate totals, went smoothly.

## **Ward 5 City Council Special Election, 2012**

In June 2012 the Board of Elections co-sponsored the Ward 5 special election candidates' forum.

The Ward 5 special election was held Tuesday, July 17, 2012. A single polling place, Wilkinson Hall on the Washington Adventist University campus, was open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Members of the Board of Elections served as election judges and performed the manual count of the ballots after the polls closed. An instant run-off was necessary and conducted in accordance with established procedures.

## **Voter Outreach Activities in 2013**

Councilmembers Grimes and Male attended the Board's January 2013 meeting January 2013. The proposal for election day voter registration and the right-to-vote resolution were discussed. The Board appreciated the opportunity to discuss these two items while they were still in draft format.

The Board of Elections expanded its voter registration and outreach efforts in 2013.

- In May, the Board and the City Clerk registered voters at Celebrate Takoma! We registered our first person eligible to vote at age 16 in the next City election.

- In July, City staff, members of the Board of Elections, and Library staff attended a special session conducted by Betty Ann Lucey of the Montgomery Board of Elections and were trained as volunteer state voter registrars.

- In August, the Board and City Clerk planned to participate in National Night Out. (Unfortunately, our participation had to be cancelled at the last minute.)

- In September, the Board and City Clerk, with assistance from members of the City's Task Force on Voting, staffed a voter information and registration booth at the Takoma Park Folk Festival.

- In October, the Board and members of the City's Task Force on Voting staffed a voter information and registration booth at the Takoma Street Festival.

- In October, Marilyn Abbott and April Kissel made a presentation at Victory Towers and followed up with an afternoon conducting voter registration, providing applications for absentee voting, and verifying prior registration through the county.

- In October, the Board and City Clerk conducted voter registration during the Police Department Drug Take-Back Day event.

In addition, the Board met with Alvaro Calabria of City TV regarding developing the public service announcement (PSA) on extending voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds. The PSA was aired on City TV and was posted to Facebook and YouTube.

### **Cooperation with Takoma Park's Task Force on Voting**

Two members of the Board of Elections, Jeffrey Noel-Nosbaum and Oliver Njong are members of the Task Force on Voting. This has provided a synergy between the two groups. Members of the Task Force assisted with voter registration, participated in the ES&S logic and accuracy testing, served as early voting and general election judges, and conducted voter interviews during early voting and the general election.

### **Redistricting**

As a result of the redistricting within the City certain voters were assigned to new wards. Jim Roberts reviewed all changes in the electronic pollbook prior to the 2013 election to assure that the County update information had assigned City voters to the correct new ward.

### **Nominating Caucus for the 2013 Election**

Marilyn Abbott served as secretary, Jeffrey Noel-Nosbaum, April Kissel, and Jim Roberts checked people in to be nominators and seconders at the October 1, 2013 nominating caucus. Same day voter registration enabled two persons to be eligible to second nominations.

### **Conduct of the 2013 Election**

Several changes affected the conduct of the 2013 general election. These included: same day voter registration, granting the right to vote to 16 and 17 year olds, expanded early voting times and accessibility, reduction of the City residency requirement from 30 to 21 days, and reduction of the County voter registration deadline from 30 days to 21 days prior to the general election.

To accommodate expanded early voting to five (5) days, including the weekend before the election, the Board determined, with the City Clerk, to use the Lilac Room as the early polling place and have election judges conduct the early voting. Election judges included Board of Elections members and City residents. City staff was available at all times for same day registration.

Closing judges were used for the first time this year. These election judges provided relief at the end of the day and assisted with closing the polls. This process proved successful and the Board hopes to continue it in future elections.

This year the Board determined that one room (the Azalea Room) would be used for voting and a separate room (the Lilac Room) would be used by the City Clerk to conduct same day registration, handle any provisional voting, and house the assistive voting machine and scanner. Voter check-in remained in the lobby area. This arrangement worked well, though the Board may consider a slightly different configuration and voter flow for the next election.

The interest in this election, due to the fact of the City's providing for 16 and 17 year olds to vote, was high. Much effort was made to control media coverage. The Board does not consider this to be a continuing issue.

To assist voters a simplified poster showing how to mark ballots and rank candidates was developed and posted in each voting booth. Also, as required, a notice was posted in each polling place regarding the pre-registered write-in candidate for mayor.

The numerous changes expanding voter access and use of a new voting system required the Board to look at all procedures, forms, and documentation. A major re-write of the Election Judges Manual, in effect making it an Elections Manual, was undertaken. Improvements included updating process flow diagrams, defining additional election judges roles (closers and early voting judges), and developing new forms.

### **Board Additions and Departures**

There have been several changes to the Board of Elections during this reporting period. Anne Sergeant resigned from the Board after the 2011 general election. Robin Schaefer joined the Board in January 2013. Bill Lawson resigned in May 2013. Oliver Njong joined the Board in June 2013. Both Robin Schaefer (Ward 5) and Jose Zambrana, Jr. (Ward 6) resigned after the 2013 general election. Three of the resignations from the Board were due to members moving out of the City.

In February 2014 Jeffrey Noel-Nosbaum (Ward 3) resigned from the Board, and Paras Shah (Ward 6), joined the Board.

Continuing members of the Board are: Marilyn Abbott (Ward 1), James C. Roberts (Ward 2), April Kissel (Ward 4), Oliver Njong (Ward 4), and Paras Shah (Ward 6). There are two vacancies on the Board.

### **Recommendations**

One responsibility of the Board of Elections is to recommend to the Council amendments to the City's elections law and regulations when it deems such amendments are necessary or other actions that it deems will provide for the improved conduct of elections. The Board makes two such recommendations:

- Consider a statutory change in the age of minor children allowed in the voting booth to accompany voters, in order to better align the City's law with state law and the City's expansion of the voting franchise to include 16 and 17 year olds.

- Make the state aware of the importance and benefits of purchasing election equipment that in addition to providing an auditable paper trail, are also capable of being used with instant runoff and/or other ranked choice voting systems.

### **Current Activities**

Current activities being studied and discussed by the Board include:

- Assessment of the impact of the new ethics rules on election processes and procedures.

- Creation of a volunteer registry of persons interested in being election judges, registering voters, or making presentations regarding voting.

- Changes to the certification of elections report to provide official results with tallies of the votes in each race and write-in names; and creating a second report, to be provided at a later time to include analysis and details of interest.

- Review the Task Force on Voting report for recommendations that the Board may want to consider for action.

The Board of Elections is available to provide further information regarding any items discussed in this report or to receive guidance.

Marilyn R. Abbott (Ward 1)

James C. Roberts (Ward 2)

April Kissell (Ward 4)

Oliver Njong (Ward 4)

Paras Shah (Ward 6)