

STATE ELECTION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
July 19, 2023
10:00 a.m.

1122 Lady Street, 5th Floor
Columbia, SC 29201

Present: Mr. John Wells, Chairman; Mr. Clifford Edler; Ms. Linda McCall

Others Present: Howard Knapp, Executive Director; Thomas Nicholson, General Counsel; Shannan Woovis, Executive Assistant; Sharese Johnson, Administrative Coordinator

Chairman Wells called the meeting to order. Director Knapp advised all notices of the meeting had been posted as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

COMMISSIONERS

JOHN WELLS
Chairman

JOANNE DAY

CLIFFORD J. EDLER

LINDA MCCALL

SCOTT MOSELEY

Approval of Minutes

The first item of business was the approval of minutes for the May 17, 2023 (SEC) meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. McCall, seconded by Mr. Edler. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

New Business

HOWARD M. KNAPP
Executive Director

The first item under new business was the introduction of new SEC staff. Director Knapp stated that the State Election Commission now has 75 FTE positions, reminding members that there were only 29 two years ago.

1122 Lady Street
Suite 500
Columbia, SC 29201

P.O. Box 5987
Columbia, SC 29250

803.734.9060
Fax: 803.734.9366
www.scvotes.gov

Director Knapp discussed the recent mailings of the postcards for those registered South Carolina voters whose names were flagged in the 2023 Voter List Maintenance. The cards were sent to 167,207 voters who had not voted since the 2020 election. These individuals have 90 days to respond or else be placed inactive. However, these voters can reactivate their status at the polls by showing their ID with proof of residency.

The third item under new business was preparations for the upcoming municipal elections. Currently, there are 272 municipal elections in South Carolina. Sixty four percent are held on municipal elections days while 36% are held on either random days or during a statewide election. The SEC is encouraging municipalities to switch to Municipal Election Day in order to save tax dollars and encourage voter participation. Two years ago, to further encourage municipalities to make the switch to Municipal Election Day, Director Knapp said SEC started to provide election night reporting on scvotes.gov. Introduced in January 2023, Bill H3734 would mandate all municipalities move their elections to the 3rd Tuesday in March, at the end of June or on Municipal Election Day. This Bill has

already passed in the House and is currently sitting in the Senate Judiciary Constitutional Subcommittee.

In preparation of the upcoming Presidential Preference Primaries, the South Carolina Democratic Party has set their date for Saturday, February 3, 2024. This date would be the first in the nation. Additionally, the Republican Party, GOP, has set their primary for Saturday, February 24, 2023. This would be the first-in-the-South state primary. Both parties will allow two weeks of early voting leading up to their primaries. Director Knapp reiterated that both parties have made these verbal commitments, but neither party has officially notified him of any of their Presidential Preference Primary plans.

The SEC will be co-hosting an election security tabletop exercise with the Department of Homeland Security and SLED on November 27, 2023. This will be offered to all county directors and staff, as well as county IT personnel and Public Information staff. On the following day, November 28, 2023, the SEC will host a Presidential Preference Primary workshop for all county directors and staff.

South Carolina law allows the SEC to charge up to \$20,000 for each candidate who files for President. The parties themselves can charge as much as they want, but the State Election Commission is restricted to a maximum of \$20,000. As the SEC has charged \$20,000 for previous Presidential election cycles, Mr. Knapp asked that the Commission approve this filing fee for the 2024 election cycle. A motion was made by Ms. McCall to approve the request of a \$20,000 filing fee, seconded by Mr. Edler. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The fifth topic of new business was the FY 2023-2024 budget request, which received full approval. To assist in county election training and support, SEC received \$3.5M recurring funds for 23 FTEs and \$1.1M for 7 FTEs to assist in critical needs area. Additionally, SEC received \$217K non-recurring monies for a state match associated with the federal 2022 HAVA security Grant.

The final item of new business was the discussions of the Planning Stage for the Agency Head Evaluation. Although appointed in January 2022, Mr. Knapp did not receive Senate confirmation until March 2023 due to the passage of Act 150. Therefore, the only document required for Mr. Knapp's evaluation is the Planning Stage. This document is due on October 12, 2023 and will require the approval of the Commission.

Old Business

The first item under old business was the election infrastructure security update. Mr. Knapp stated the agency has upgraded the security system and continues to work with federal, state, and private security partners to protect South Carolina's election infrastructure and staff.

Executive Session

Chairman Wells asked for a motion to go into executive session to receive and discuss legal advice. Mr. Edler made said motion, seconded by Ms. McCall. The motion passed unanimously.

Zigmantanis, et al v. McMaster, et al
SC Safe Elections, et al v. SC State Election Commission, et al
S.C. NAACP, et al v. Alexander, et al
Curry v. S.C. State Election Commission
Any other matters, as needed, pursuant to the S.C. Code of Laws §30-4-70.

No votes were taken during executive session. Ms. McCall made a motion to exit executive session, seconded by Mr. Edler. The motion passed unanimously.

Upon returning to open session, Chairman Wells reminded the Commissioners the next SEC meeting would be August 16, 2023. With no further business to discuss, Mr. Edler made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. McCall. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannan C. Woovis