

Belmont Board of Registrars of Voters

August 24, 2023 7 PM

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**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

Members attending: Bob McGaw, Steve Shestakofsky, Paul Minor, Ellen O'Brien, Cushman
No others attending

DATE: December 14, 2023

TIME: 11:36 AM

Meeting convened at 7:04 PM

AGENDA:

- Discuss and vote whether to endorse the Town Clerk's proposal to purchase a High Speed Vote Tabulator for use with Early Voting (In person and vote by mail) ballots.
 - Ellen presented her analysis, reported her findings and asked the Board to support the purchase of the DS450 High Speed Vote Tabulator for \$57,000 a quote provided by Election Systems and Software (ES&S).
 - The quote is a sole source because by we must use the same vote tabulator system as the precinct-based vote tabulators in order to fully utilize the Election Results Management consolidation system we purchased.
 - Ellen reminded the Registrars that the motion voted by the Select Board to switch Belmont's vote tabulation systems from Accuvote to DS200, such vote includes the compatible DS450: *That in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 54, Section 34, the Select Board of Belmont authorizes discontinuing the use of the AccuVote Electronic Vote Tabulators and authorizes the use of the DS200 Electronic Vote Tabulators, and any other tabulation equipment associated with the DS200, beginning April 4, 2023, for all elections, and primaries, federal, state and local, to be held in the Town of Belmont, from that date forward, until otherwise ordered by the Select Board.*
 - The High Speed Tabulator, DS450, can only be used on Early Voting Ballots and Absentee ballots and in the event of a recount by tabulator. Early Vote by Mail is now mandated for all elections, including local elections. In 2020, the last Presidential year, and in the midst of COVID, Belmont processed 16,714 Early Vote by Mail and Absentee Ballots for only the September and November elections. . In 2022, the midterm elections and local Town Election, as COVID was on the decline due to vaccinations, Belmont processed 11,668 Early Vote by Mail and Absentee Ballots for the April, September and November elections. Early Vote by Mail is extremely popular in Massachusetts and Belmont. The Votes Act of 2022 that codified the Early Vote By Mail, included Early Processing and Tabulating provisions allowing Election officials to open the envelopes and run ballots through vote tabulators, without running any results. The extraordinary effort, time and labor that it takes to process these mail ballots cannot be overstated as thousands of the ballots are returned, many very late in the election cycle. The new precinct vote tabulators, DS200, process 7 ballots per minute as individually fed into the tabulator by a Town Clerk staff member or election worker; the DS450 process 72 ballots per minute in large stacks prepared by a Town Clerk staff member or election worker; more than 10 times faster.
 - To put this into Belmont terms – for 12,000 ballots at 7 per minute, just tabulating takes 35.6 hours (including required breaks), and the late-arrival of ballots means weekend tabulation at Staff Overtime rates. By contrast, the DS-450 for 12,000 ballots at 72 per minute just tabulating means 166 minutes, or 2.8 hours at Staff Overtime rates.
 - In 2024, and all Presidential Election Years, there are four elections, Presidential Primary, Town Annual, State Primary and State General Presidential. It's more than likely that 12,000 ballots will again be processed just for the November Presidential election and we must be ready. At a rough cost of \$2093 per election plus preparation

time versus \$200 plus all of the remaining three elections, the yearly maintenance cost of \$4800 makes sense. In addition, the ability to use election workers to perform the work with supervision by Town Clerk staff will cut the Overtime significantly.

- Ellen indicated that the vote of support by the Registrars will allow her to gain approval for the purchase; Massachusetts purchasing laws require purchases in excess of \$50,000 to get the advance approval/signature of the Town Administrator.
 - Bob asked when we could receive delivery of the DS-450. Ellen explained that the sooner we order the better as the purchase could be very competitive with other towns and cities nationwide looking at moving to high-speed tabulation. Her goal is to secure Patrice's signature around Labor Day and immediately place the order in hope of receiving the machine by year's end to deploy fully for the first election, March 5, 2024.
 - On a motion by Steve to endorse the purchase of the one DS-450 High Speed Tabulator, a roll call vote was taken by the Chair: Steve – yes, Paul – yes, Ellen – yes, Bob – Yes. 4-0 Unanimous vote
- Current status of effort to search and evaluate options for temporary polling place for Precinct 1 when the Library demolition and construction is underway (estimated early 2023 through 2025). Town Clerk final recommendation due to Registrars November 1st.
 - Ellen reviewed the basic criteria for securing a temporary polling place for the time period during which the Library will be demolished and reconstructed. Some of the most important criteria include accessibility and conformance to Americans with Disabilities, inside and including parking, adequate room size/capacity to allow at least 13 voting booths, tables for check in, warden and clerk and Police office, tabulator placement and secure flow of voters and ballots. In addition, consideration was given to vehicular traffic during the 2024 period in which two construction projects would be occurring at the same time, library and rink and the normal congestion at the underpass at the Post Office. The Town Clerk staff listed every private and publicly owned facility within and contiguous with Precinct 1 boundaries, and the possible co-location of Precinct 1 with other adjacent precincts as required. The total number of locations came to nearly 20. In the end, the two places that met all of the criteria are the Brewster Hall at All Saints Church on Common Street and the Beth El Temple Center on Concord Ave at the intersection with Blanchard Road. Ellen will contact the two location managers to determine whether each is interested in serving as a temporary polling location. Bob suggested that a tour for the Registrars be scheduled so that a decision can be made by year end. The Select Board must vote on any change of polling location and each voter must be send a card with the information by late January. The Board supported with this approach.
 - Minutes November 8, 2022 (Election Day), November 18, 2023 (Election Day +10 days, Internationally mailed ballots) and June 12, 2023.
 - On a motion by Paul to approve all three sets of minutes a roll call vote was taken by the Chair: Steve – yes, Paul – yes, Ellen – yes, Bob – Yes. 4-0 Unanimous vote

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen O'Brien Cushman

