

8/26/2021 Meeting with Monmouth County Election Officials

Office of the Superintendent of Elections, 230 Halls Mill Rd., Freehold

ATTENDING:

From the County

- Mary DeSarno: Mon. Co. Superintendent of Elections
- Robin Major: Administrator, Mon. Co. Board of Elections (by phone)

From the League

- Barbara Chaudhery: President, LWVGRBA
- Peggy Dellinger: LWVSMC
- Evelyn Murphy, President: LWVSMC
- Sharon Steinhorn: President, LWVWM

STATUS OF VOTING MACHINE REPLACEMENT

(Information on the machines was augmented by research on the ES&S website, post meeting.)

- **DECISION:** County has made the decision to use Election Systems and Software (ES&S) equipment for both early and election-day voting. It is replacing the entire, 16-year-old, no-paper-trail fleet of machines. The new equipment will be in place for the 2021 General Election, both early in-person and same-day voting.
- **E-POLLBOOKS:**



The new equipment includes [electronic pollbooks](#)—tablets mounted on a pedestaled base on which voters will identify themselves at the polls and electronically enter their signatures, using a stylus. The base includes a scanner where voters can use their sample ballot or driver's license to identify themselves—or they can use the touch screen on the tablet to enter their name and date of birth.

The e-pollbooks are connected to the secure state system via network technology provided by Cradlepoint that shows the voter's voting activity (e.g. whether the voter has already requested or cast a ballot in this election). The poll worker verifies the signature entered on the screen as with physical poll books. If the poll worker questions the signature, the voter can show identification. If the question of voting eligibility is not resolved, the voter can vote by provisional ballot using the ES&S voting machine (described below); however, the marked ballot in question is placed in a secure provisional ballot envelope and set aside to follow the

process for provisional ballots. The provisional ballot is not added to or counted in the machine tally.

- ACTIVATION CARD PRINTER:



[This device](#) works with the e-pollbook to generate an “activation card”—a card with a bar code that identifies the correct ballot for the voter. The poll worker inserts a blank activation card into the printer, which is hard-wired to the e-pollbook. The printer prints the bar code identifying the correct ballot information on the card. The voter takes this card to the voting machine.

- VOTING MACHINES:



The [voting machine](#) is the ExpressVote®XL. Voters insert their activation card with the bar code identifying the correct ballot for the voter (printed by the activation card printer, above) into the machine. An image of the ballot fills the large screen. Voters use the touch-screen to mark their ballots. When they are satisfied with their choices, they press “Print” on the screen. Their choices are printed on the Activation Card which becomes the voter’s paper ballot. This paper ballot of the voter’s choices is displayed to the side of the large screen, visible to the voter.

When voters have verified their choices are correctly printed on the paper ballot, they press the “Cast” button on the screen. (There is a “Quit” option in the “Cast” dialogue box on the screen. It cancels the ballot. At that point, voters ask a poll worker for assistance.)

The voting machines are ADA compliant.

[Video demonstration of the voting machine](#): click on the last photo in the series of images on the left side of the screen.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS and FUNDING

- SHOWCASE COMPARING COMPETITORS: Mary invited three major voting equipment vendors (Dominion, Tenex, and ES&S) to set up mock elections and held a “showcase” to which she invited 130 people, including members of Monmouth County election-related departments, election officials from other counties, and Bob Giles (Director, NJ Division of Elections). The showcase was not open to anyone from the public; it was intended as an internal decision-making process. She designed a feedback survey and collected and tallied the anonymous responses. The survey covered ease-of-use and other characteristics. ES&S was the 13 to 5 favorite, based primarily on ease of use.
- IT INPUT: Mary asked for input on the ES&S equipment from the County IT department.
- PRESENTATION TO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS: Mary made a presentation recommending the ES&S equipment to the Board of Commissioners sometime in August. It was made in a private, not public meeting. As best we can tell, the decision was Mary’s to make. The Commissioners express their endorsement of the decision through their funding authorizations.
- FUNDING AUTHORIZATIONS: On August 12, the Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution to accept the state’s “Early Voting Grant” in the amount of \$3,962,045 to cover the

cost of the voting machines and e-pollbooks required for **early** voting. (\$1.5 million for early voting machines; \$2.5 million for e-pollbooks.) The Board of County Commissioners drafted ordinance #2021-0005 to issue \$11,425,000 in bonds or notes and appropriating \$12 million for the acquisition of voting machines, e-pollbooks, and scanners. The orders for the equipment cannot be placed until the funding is official, but Mary is confident that 900 voting machines (80 for early voting) have been placed in reserve by ES&S for Monmouth County. August 12 was the “first reading” of the bond ordinance. The second reading and approval was scheduled for the August 26 meeting. The August 26 meeting agenda also included approval of the expenditures.

STATUS OF PLANS

- EARLY-VOTING LOCATIONS: There will be 10 early voting locations in Monmouth County. The Monmouth County Board of Elections is meeting at 3:30, September 2, at their conference room at 300 Halls Mill Road, Freehold, to identify the locations. The meeting is open to the public. The early-voting in-person voting locations will be posted on the County website.
- PUBLIC EDUCATION: Robin intends to amplify the information on the County website with commercials and ads on radio, cable, and print media. Both Mary and Robin welcomed the offer of help from the League to educate voters on the changes to the process.
- POLL WORKERS: The County must train 4,000 poll workers on the new process. They have scheduled 43 sessions, which began August 23. The schedule is posted on the County website. Robin agreed to accommodate a League volunteer at a training session to help equip us to educate voters.
- DROP BOXES: Monmouth County will have 35 drop boxes (including one on Monmouth University campus), an increase of 18 over the 2020 General Election. Once the locations are finalized, they will be posted on the County website.

CONCERNS

- ATTRACTING POLL WORKERS: The state paid a \$200 bonus to poll workers in the 2020 General Election. So far, there has been no word that a bonus or increase is being offered this year. The pay for poll workers is \$14.29 /hour. Mary and Robin believe more is needed to attract the number of workers required. They would appreciate any help the League can offer at the state level to urge for the increase.
- PUBLIC EDUCATION: The new machines AND early in-person voting add up to big changes for voters. Mary and Robin both committed to work with the League to help get the word out.