

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**

MONDAY

10:00 A.M.

NOVEMBER 16, 2020

PRESENT:

Bob Lucey, Chair
Marsha Berkgigler, Vice Chair
Kitty Jung, Commissioner (via telephone)
Vaughn Hartung, Commissioner
Jeanne Herman, Commissioner (via telephone)

Jan Galassini, Chief Deputy County Clerk
Eric Brown, County Manager
David Watts-Vial, Assistant District Attorney (via Zoom)

The Washoe County Board of Commissioners convened at 10:00 a.m. in special session in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. Following the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our Country, the Clerk called the roll and the Board conducted the following business:

20-0790 AGENDA ITEM 3 Public Comment.

A voicemail was played from Mr. Daniel Purdy, whose brother Thomas Purdy died at the Washoe County Jail in 2015. Mr. Purdy felt his recent trip to Washoe County a month and a half prior had paid dividends. He had come to the region to encourage citizens to vote, and he assured Commissioners he would be back the next time any of them were up for re-election. He stated there was an outbreak of COVID-19 currently occurring at the jail, but nothing was being done; he had received letters from family members who were worried about their incarcerated loved ones. He expressed concerns about air quality in the facility and believed inmates were being kept in their cells 24 hours a day without access to medical care.

A voicemail was played from Ms. Annemarie Grant, sister of Thomas Purdy. Ms. Grant congratulated Alexis Hill, who had been elected to replace Commissioner Berkgigler. Ms. Grant spoke about another inmate, Justin Thompson, who also died at the Washoe County Jail. She named staff members involved in the incident and noted they were still employed at the jail. Ms. Grant played an audio recording of interactions between jail staff and Mr. Thompson prior to his death, and she expressed disapproval of the way Mr. Thompson had been treated by staff. She believed the County Commissioners had a duty to take action to protect their citizens, and she urged them to do so before someone they loved also ended up dying at the jail.

20-0791 **AGENDA ITEM 4** Announcements/Reports.

Chair Lucey advised that the current meeting was a special session, but the Board of County Commissioners would have its regularly scheduled meeting the following day. It would also participate in a concurrent meeting on Wednesday, November 19, with the Cities of Reno and Sparks.

20-0792 **AGENDA ITEM 5** Declaration of Canvass of the Vote and Order for 2020 General Election per NRS 293.387. Registrar of Voters. (All Commission Districts.)

Washoe County Registrar of Voters Deanna Spikula conducted a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. She reviewed slides with the following titles: 2020 General Election; Going into the 2020 Elections – The Year of Change; Election Statistics – Registered Voters in Washoe County – 304,224; Election Statistics – 2020 General Turnout by Tally Type; Early Voting; Election Day; Mail In Ballot Processing; County Departments; Special Thanks to Our Adopt a Polling Place Partners; Post-Election Activity; VVPAT Audit; Staff Introductions; Final Thank You; and Voter Registration and Elections Administration.

Ms. Spikula acknowledged 2020 had been a challenging year for many reasons, but she expressed pride in what had been accomplished, such as running a safe and secure election and implementing new systems and tools to enhance and expand the ability for registered voters to vote. She mentioned the BallotTrax system, an electronic sample ballot partnership with a new vendor, and the voting wait times application developed by the County’s Technology Services department and Geographic Information Systems staff. She said there had been a tremendous countywide effort to put everything together. Ballots had been mailed to all registered voters in Washoe County, which had never been done before, and automatic voter registration and same-day registration had also taken effect in January 2020.

Ms. Spikula described party affiliations in the County as being almost evenly split at the start of the election, and she noted the number of nonpartisan voters had increased. She said mail-in ballots and early voting had been the preferred choice of voters during the 2020 election, and fewer voters had shown up to vote in person on election day. Overall, there had been a historic turnout, with 83 percent of registered voters choosing to participate in the electoral process. She felt this was a testament to increasing awareness and interest in local elections, as well as the importance of local elected officials to the process.

Ms. Spikula thanked the many staff and volunteers who had worked long hours during the pandemic in order to support their fellow citizens’ right to vote. Over 130,000 ballots had been mailed in, totaling more than 43 percent of the votes. This was the most ever received in Washoe County, and the State of Nevada had assisted the County with purchasing ballot-sorting equipment that made processing much quicker and more efficient.

The staff member in charge of coordinating absentee ballots had left the Registrar of Voters in April, Ms. Spikula stated, and she expressed gratitude that the rest of her staff had taken on additional duties in order to help fill in for the vacancy. Temporary staff had been hired and contributed to the overall success of the election, and eight County departments allowed their employees to volunteer. Many worked during both the primary and general elections. She gave special thanks to those who had stepped up with the Adopt a Polling Place program, saying there had been a strong push in the past year to recruit poll workers and engage citizens.

Ms. Spikula reviewed the post-election activity, stating the certification board had performed all tasks required by law, including the voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) audit, post-election logic and accuracy testing of the voting machines, and certification of team members. She explained the audit team ensured everything had been done properly and the equipment had tallied votes as it should; no errors had been found.

The Registrar of Voters' Office had a spectacular team, Ms. Spikula continued, and she thanked all the staff members and volunteers who had helped with the elections in 2020. She mentioned Assistant Registrar of Voters Heather Carmen, whose position covered everything from human resources to purchasing and poll worker recruitment. Elections Specialist Cate Salim had worked for the Registrar of Voters since 2008, managing equipment and supplies in the warehouse, and had also taken on functions of the Absentee Ballot Coordinator for the primary election. Elections Specialist Jon Brown had recruited, trained, and managed many of the volunteers and poll workers, as well as overseeing the poll worker help line. Elections Specialist Mike Chavez, who Ms. Spikula noted had been with the Registrar of Voters almost two years, worked to assist voters and troubleshoot issues. Department Systems Specialist Mike Mulreaney had been with the office for a little over a year, and Ms. Spikula said they would not have accomplished everything they had if not for his assistance, as well as that of Senior Business Systems Analysts Brian Takemoto and Dan Simpson.

Ms. Spikula offered final thanks to the County Manager's Office and the County Commissioners for their support. She thanked the Communications Department for helping to ensure voters had the information they needed, Technology Services for providing their personnel, equipment, time, and effort, and the citizens of Washoe County for their participation and for exercising their right to vote. She felt the historic turnout was a testament to the hard work done by staff and volunteers.

Vice Chair Berkbigler asked for more information regarding the term 'undervotes' from the election summary report. Ms. Spikula explained that voters were not required to vote on every contest available to them, and undervotes were instances where voters had chosen not to vote on certain issues or candidates.

Commissioner Jung thanked Ms. Spikula and the staff who helped with the elections, indicating their work helped to support democracy in Washoe County. She recalled bemoaning low voter turnout just two years prior but expressed pride as a citizen and taxpayer that turnout had since increased under Ms. Spikula's watch.

Chair Lucey also thanked the Registrar of Voters' team, saying they had done a wonderful job despite the year's challenges and adjustments. He was impressed with the voter turnout, and he thanked the audit committee, the volunteers, and everyone who had given time and effort to support the election. The Chair asked Assistant District Attorney David Watts-Vial to affirm the information needed in order to declare the results of the election.

Mr. Watts-Vial asked whether the Registrar of Voters had the opportunity to review the election results; Ms. Spikula confirmed she had. Mr. Watts-Vial asked whether any errors had been noted, or any clerical errors discovered after the canvass of results. Ms. Spikula responded no errors had been noted or discovered after the canvass. Mr. Watts-Vial asked whether there was any need to make changes, and Ms. Spikula answered there was not. Mr. Watts-Vial stated that, based on the answers provided, it was the District Attorney's legal opinion that the information provided by the Registrar of Voters was sufficient to declare the results of the election.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

On motion by Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Vice Chair Berkgigler, which motion duly carried on a 4-1 vote with Commissioner Herman voting "no", it was ordered that the Declaration of the Canvass of the Vote and Order for the 2020 General Election be approved.

20-0793 **AGENDA ITEM 6** Public Comment.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

20-0794 **AGENDA ITEM 7** Announcements/Reports.

County Manager Eric Brown noted that, after showing such proficiency in recruiting volunteers to help with the election, Elections Specialist Jon Brown had agreed to assist the Health District in recruiting contact tracers to help slow the spread of COVID-19 (C19) in the community.

Chair Lucey acknowledged the past few weeks had been difficult, with rapidly increasing C19 infections throughout the state, and Governor Steve Sisolak himself testing positive for the coronavirus. He wished the Governor a speedy recovery and implored the public to help address the widespread transmission currently occurring in the community. He asked everyone to continue wearing face coverings, washing their hands, and practicing social distancing. He expressed concern that the colder weather was driving people indoors where the virus could more easily spread. The Chair asked citizens to do everything they could to keep themselves and their fellow community members safe, and to work together to take care of one another. He asked that anyone needing assistance during quarantine contact the Health Department, which would work with residents to help them find solutions.

Vice Chair Berkbigler shared concerns regarding recent global outbreaks of measles, which further complicated the existing C19 pandemic and flu season. She agreed with Chair Lucey's comments and reiterated pleas for community members to do everything they could to protect themselves and others.

Commissioner Jung thanked everyone who had participated in the voting process as well as the individuals who had run for office. She reiterated her belief that voting was critical to the processes of democracy and an act of patriotism.

* * * * *

10:33 a.m. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

BOB LUCEY, Chair
Washoe County Commission

ATTEST:

JANIS GALASSINI, County Clerk and
Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners

*Minutes Prepared by:
LJ Burton, Deputy County Clerk*