

SPENCER COUNTY ELECTION BOARD

August 4, 2021 – 10:00 am – Commissioners Room
Public Hearing and comment on vote centers

Meeting called to order by President Jeff Lindsey. Also present board members Gina Pennington, Clerk Darrell Stephens (via telephone from West Virginia, per approval of Brad King and Valerie Warycha, co-director and co-legal counsel of the Indiana Election Division) and Voter Registration Officer Sandy Wilkinson.

Two members of the public were in attendance for the hearing, Sarah Winner of Dale and another lady that preferred not to give her name. In addition four emails and a transcript from one phone call were received from VR officer Sandy Wilkinson.

Lindsey explained how vote centers worked and reviewed the 2020 election, breaking down vote totals for Election Day, absentee and early voting with reduced polling locations due to Covid pandemic. He also explained that no votes would be taken during today's meetings as Stephens was attending via audio and must be present to cast a vote. Lindsey also stated that the board would accept more public comment concerning vote centers from the public in the form of written statements for an additional two weeks. The board would then review any additional public input at the next meeting.

Pennington then explained some of the reasoning for going to vote centers saying it has become more and more difficult to staff vote locations with qualified people even with a move from 24 individual precincts to a total of 14 vote locations. Pennington stated that ultimately the responsibility of running elections falls on the election board and they have to do what they feel is best to conduct the best election possible. In addition she said that the move to add additional early voting (in 2018) had been wonderful and the board is considering the addition of a third early vote location in the future. Pennington also explained that in considering the proposed vote center locations secure internet access and travel distance for voters was considered. Pennington said we live in a digital age and WiFi issues are a problem. We did not have secure internet at one location. Lindsey asked if Pennington was referring to St. Meinrad and Pennington replied yes. Pennington stated we have done everything possible to make everything secure and we have to keep that going. She also added that other factors considered in choosing locations included heating, air conditioning, travel and parking. Pennington closed her statements by saying that in the future if the need to adjust locations or the number of vote locations that could be accomplished by an amendment.

After Lindsey opened the floor for questions Winner asked how the decision was made on which locations to close and was there anything political considered in that decision.

Pennington responded that the main factor was internet and that it has to be secure. Also we have seen an increase in early voting but security is still the big issue.

Winner then asked what the seven locations are. Lindsey responded by saying that the board looked at a county map and tried to spread the locations as fairly as possible. He said population centers in Dale and Santa Claus were factors. Chrisney is in the center of the county with Richland in the southwest portion. In Ohio Township there was some question about Rockport or Reo before deciding on Reo and then Grandview and Fulda due to location and secure internet. Pennington added that there is also travel board for those unable to travel. Wilkinson explained that in looking at locations an effort was made to limit travel to no more than 10 miles.

Lindsey also stated that in response to the question of whether there was a political motivation he would like to point out that when it was decided to go to seven location during the 2020 general election the board was composed of two Democrats and one Republican and that this year the board had changed due to the clerk's office. The proposal we have this year is the same as we had last year and we want to be transparent about that. Pennington added that she has been a member of the board the longest and that the people she has served with have tried to be bi-partisan. We protect the interest of our party of course, but we strive to be bi-partisan because we actually work for the voting public. My goal is to make sure that I don't care how you vote, just that your vote counts. Lindsey closed by saying that by state requirements for vote centers per population

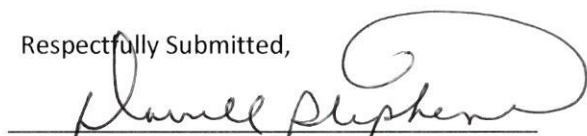
we could have gone to only two locations. We may change in the future to five but for now we chose to stay with the same seven we had last year.

Winner then asked about the integrity of absentee ballots to which Pennington responded that we have always went above and beyond. We review signatures with a bi-partisan team for verification. If we feel a signature doesn't match we call that voter and give them a chance to come in and sign their name in front of us so we can make sure that it matches. Pennington said that absentee ballots are always kept secure and are always reviewed by a bi-partisan team.

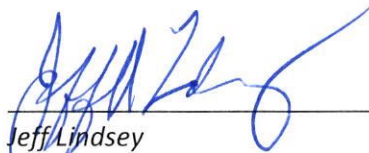
Lindsey again offered the opportunity for the public to make written comments and after some discussion it was agreed to take those until close of business on August 25th. At that time the board would consider any additional comments as well as comments made at this meeting and any previously received correspondence.

After a call for any other comments, to which there was no response, Lindsey closed the public hearing.

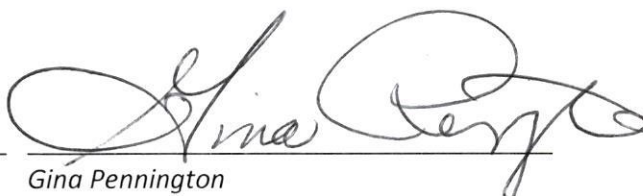
Respectfully Submitted,



Darrell L. Stephens, Secretary



Jeff Lindsey



Gina Pennington