

Grady County Board of Elections & Registration
250 North Broad Street, Suite 3
Cairo, Ga 39828

*****OFFICIAL*****

January 6, 2025

The Grady County Board of Elections and Registration (BOE&R) had the January monthly meeting at 5:30 PM at the Grady County Courthouse located at 250 North Broad Street, Cairo, Ga 39828 with the following board members present:

Renee Gee-Theophille: Chair
Sam Carnline: Vice-Chair
Kathy Mills: Secretary
Sandy Reagan: Board Member
Bobby Gwaltney: Board Member

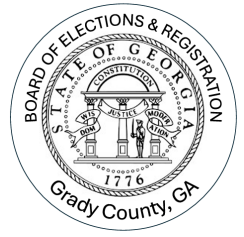
Staff present:
Jason Tate

Cairo Messenger:
Laura Cassels

Chair Gee-Theophille called the meeting to order, thanked everyone for attending, Bobby Gwaltney gave the benediction.

Chair Gee-Theophille requested the agenda be approved, Kathy Mills made a motion, 2nd by Sam Carnline, motion carried by all signifying aye. Chair Gee-Theophille asked members to review the December 2 and December 9 minutes, Mr. Carnline made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, Mr. Gwaltney 2nd, motion carried by all signifying aye.

Jason Tate proposed changing the official title to “Board or Office of Elections and Registration” to avoid confusion with the Board of Education. The inclusion of “Grady County”



and “Registration” in the title was emphasized for clarity and completeness. The letterhead will include the Grady County seal and a seal for the Elections and Registrations Office. The board unanimously agreed on the name “Grady County Board of Elections and Registration.”

A motion was made by Mr. Carnline, seconded by Mr. Gwaltney to adopt the new name, “Grady County Board of Elections and Registration.” The motion was approved unanimously.

Discussion on using Applaud Note for recording meetings to facilitate minute-taking. The device has been used successfully to create transcripts. A motion was made and seconded to officially use Applaud Note for recording meetings. The motion was approved with no opposition.

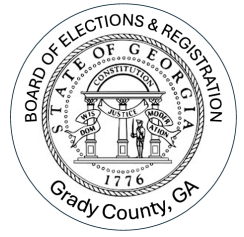
Mr. Tate reported that an official election schedule for 2025 has been received from the state, consisting of 40 pages. The first election is scheduled for June 17th for the Public Service Commissioner. Mr. Tate also offered options for receiving the schedule including digital copies via email or printed hard copies. Preferences for receiving the schedule were discussed, with some opting for digital and others for printed copies.

The first election on June 17th will have early voting as per state requirements. If a runoff is needed, it will occur on July 15th, followed by the general election in November.

The need for budgeting discussions related to election preparations was highlighted.

Jason Tate will be in Valdosta next week for 40 hours of training with Deb Cox and her team. The Clerk Position training plan will vary based on experience.

State-Level Training is scheduled for the last week of April and the first week of May, lasting about three to three-and-a-half days. This is primarily for Supervisor and the clerk, with a half-day session for new board members.

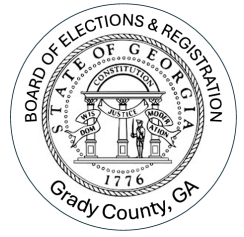


Mr. Tate reported that he will be out for a week in February and the last week of March, with additional days at the end of February and April 24-25. These days are unpaid due to county rules on accruing time.

Board Members interested in Certification training will need to coordinate through the Secretary of State's office to access the training. It consists of 10 modules with tests, but passing is not required. The training deck was built in 2021 and may contain outdated information due to law changes as of January 1st.

Mr. Tate reported that the Cairo City Council voted against the budget share proposal for handling city elections and against allowing further negotiations. There may be interest from a council member to revisit the topic, but the city is reluctant to contribute financially, arguing that city residents already pay county taxes. Recommendation from Regional Supervisor was the approach to dealing with municipalities should be "all or nothing" to avoid complications. Currently, cities are responsible for handling their own elections unless they initiate discussions for collaboration. There was a mention of city council members discussing the cost of running city elections, estimated at \$18,000 per election. The city taxpayers' concerns were noted, but no formal agreement exists between the city council and the county commissioners. The county funds the election operations, and any additional responsibilities would require an annual contract with the city. No current interest from the city council in changing the existing setup, except for potential interest from one individual. If the state mandates changes, they must provide clear guidelines to avoid conflicts over funding. Philosophical discussions on the efficiency of running separate elections were acknowledged, but no authority exists to change the current system. Dana Barfield is the current supervisor of elections for the city, handling their elections, which will be paper ballot elections. Judge Denise Maddox, another key figure, agrees with the current approach and setup.

Mr. Tate informed board members of the scheduled Meet-and-Greet with Lowndes County Board of Elections for the 14th at 4:30 PM. Attendees are advised to arrive by 4:00 or 4:15 PM to observe the entire meeting. The meeting will be held in the Lowndes County Department of Elections building. Departure by 3:00 PM is recommended to account for school traffic and



ensure timely arrival. Coordination among attendees is necessary for travel arrangements. Participants have the flexibility to attend future sessions.

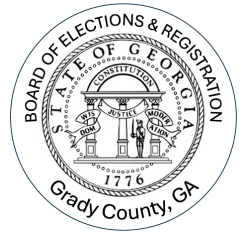
Mr. Tate announced our elections are planned for 2025: Primary in June, Runoff in July, General in November, and another Runoff in December. The Poll worker budget was based on the assumption of a single special election. Minimum staffing requires three workers for 17 days of early voting at \$10/hour for 10 hours a day. Election Day 3x workers per precinct (9 total) for a total of 27 workers a: pay scale: General workers: \$140/day
Clerks/Assistant Managers: \$160/day
Managers: \$170–\$180/day

Estimated cost per election day is just under \$10,000. The initial budget was \$15,000, based on a single special election. Current needs exceed this due to multiple elections. Discussion on whether to open all polling places for a single race, considering the low expected turnout. Legal requirements dictate all polling places must be open on Election Day. Discussion on potentially reducing the number of polling places permanently, though this requires public debate and discussion. Mr. Carnline suggested consolidating voting locations to one when there's only one race, to save resources. This would revert to multiple precincts for larger elections. Mr. Tate raised concerns about the legality of this proposal, noting that state law might dictate the number of precincts. An action item was noted to verify this with Judge Maddox or other knowledgeable parties.

Mr. Tate questioned the public's awareness of the role of a public service commissioner, suggesting low engagement in such elections. Jason Tate expressed support for simplifying the voting process and saving money, provided it aligns with legal requirements.

The Proposed Budget was discussed for travel expenses: A \$4,000 budget was proposed for travel, covering essential past trips for Judge Maddox and Mrs. Butler to attend the annual conference.

Mr. Tate explained the spreadsheet used to calculate travel expenses, accounting for worst-case scenarios to avoid budget shortfall, he also detailed upcoming trips, including training in Valdosta and Savannah.



Mr. Tate mentioned a trip to Valdosta for hands-on training with Dominion, the voting system provider, and KNOWINK, responsible for polling pads. Travel expenses were calculated assuming board members might travel separately due to personal needs.

A motion was made by Mrs. Mills with a 2nd by Mr. Carnline to enter into executive session to discuss the hiring of the chief clerk. The motion was approved unanimously. It was noted that the meeting would resume after the executive session to address remaining agenda items.

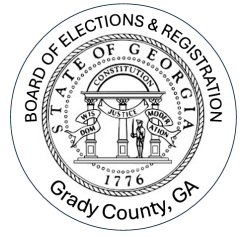
The executive session was entered at 6:32 PM.

Executive session ended at 6:41 PM. The Board took no action.

Mr. Tate explained that board meetings are currently scheduled at 5:30 PM, which poses security and cost issues as the courthouse closes at 5 PM. A suggestion was made to consider holding meetings during normal business hours to avoid additional security costs, it was also discussed the possibility of alternating meeting times to accommodate public attendance. Meetings must be open to the public, but varying work schedules make it difficult to accommodate everyone. Leaving doors unlocked for public access during meetings poses a security risk.

Mr. Tate emphasized the need for a discussion with the sheriff regarding security provisions, as the sheriff's department is responsible for the building's security. Previously, doors were propped open for public access, but Mr. Tate expressed discomfort with this practice in the current setting, preferring a more secure approach. Mrs. Mills questioned if a non-law enforcement person could manage security, but Mr. Tate clarified that only authorized personnel, like the sheriff's department, have the authority to enforce security measures.

Mrs. Gee-Theophile suggested considering daytime meetings to alleviate security concerns. Mr. Tate noted that any meeting, regardless of timing, requires sheriff's department involvement for security. Mr. Tate stressed the importance of keeping meetings open to the public, which complicates security logistics, as the courthouse must remain accessible. Mrs. Reagan proposed



returning to the commissioner's building for meetings, but Mr. Tate argued against it, citing the availability of current facilities and the need for proper security funding. Mr. Tate mentioned uncertainty about the cost of security personnel, estimating sheriff's deputies might earn around \$20 per hour. This cost consideration is crucial for planning. Mrs. Gee-Theophille and Mr. Gwaltney discussed the potential financial impact of maintaining current meeting arrangements versus exploring alternatives.

Mr. Carnline expressed a desire to keep meetings at the current location and time, emphasizing the need for public accessibility. Mrs. Mills highlighted the convenience of having access to necessary resources, such as computers, during meetings. Mrs. Gee-Theophille suggested waiting for further discussions with the sheriff before making any decisions.

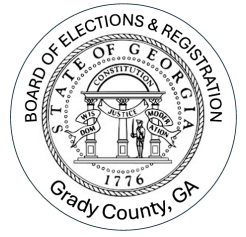
Mrs. Gee-Theophille suggested considering daytime meetings if necessary. Mr. Tate highlighted the importance of the meeting's urgency in determining scheduling, noting that emergent meetings can occur with less than 24 hours' notice, though it's not recommended.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 3rd at 5:30 PM, but Mrs. Gee-Theophille noted a personal conflict with this date.

Mrs. Gee-Theophille asked for a motion to adjourn, motion was made by Mr. Gwaltney, 2nd by Mrs. Reagan to adjourn, motion carried by all signifying ayes.

Guest Questions and Comments:

Laura Cassels, from the Cairo Messenger, asked about the number of applications received for the Clerk position and assumed since there was no vote on after the executive session that a choice for the position wasn't made. Mr. Tate asked for the evening and told Laura he would have her an answer tomorrow so as not to say something he shouldn't, dealing with personnel. Laura agreed.



Laura asked to take Board worksheets with her and was told no until clarification could be received from the county attorney. Laura agreed to reach out tomorrow afternoon for responses.