

Public Hearing

APPROVED

July 27, 2013

Ms. Keeffe called the public hearing to order at 10:06 a.m. In attendance were Board Members Ms. Keeffe, Mrs. Jeter, Mrs. Khozeimeh, Mrs. Rivera-Oven; Ms. Phillips, Mr. Naimon, and Board Staff Ms. Jurgensen, Ms. McLaughlin, Mr. Peña, Ms. Roher, Mrs. Ross, Mrs. Rzeszut, and Ms. Merino. Also in attendance were 12 interested individuals. The following is a summary of discussions during the meeting.

Ms. Keeffe thanked the public for their attendance and introduced the Board members and staff. She briefed the public on the approval process for early voting sites and stated that staff will present proposed changes with public comments following.

Ms. McLaughlin presented maps depicting the growth of Montgomery County and explained the need to expand early voting sites from five to eight or nine. She reviewed the population of registered voters and the historical levels of diversity throughout the County.

Ms. Jurgensen summarized the site selection criteria and guidelines detailed in the Agreement for Early Voting Centers under COMAR 33.17.02.03. She reviewed early voting sites previously approved by the State Board of Elections (SBE) for 2010 and 2012.

Mrs. Rzeszut reviewed a power point presentation of proposed early voting sites: Bauer Drive Community Recreation Center, Bethesda Regional Services Center, Board of Elections, Activity Center at Bohrer Park, Damascus Community Recreation Center, Executive Office Building, Germantown Community Recreation Center, Jane Lawton Community Recreation Center, Long Branch Community Recreation Center, Longwood Community Recreation Center, Marilyn J. Praisner Community Recreation Center, Mid County Community Recreation Center, Potomac Community Center, Silver Spring Civic Building, Upper County Community Recreation Center, Wheaton Fire and Rescue, and White Oak Community Recreation Center.

Ms. Keeffe thanked the staff. The Board proceeded to accept public comments. (All submitted comments have been provided to the Board and have been placed on the website.) Ms. Keeffe noted additional public comments received prior to the Public Hearing will be part of the Public Hearing record. She notified the attendees that public comments may also be received at the Board Meeting held on Monday, July 29.

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Barbara Sanders, League of Women Voters (LWV) Service Chair commended the staff and the Board on their extensive work and research with the selection of early voting sites. She stated that the LWV is pleased that the Board is considering the expansion of the legal requirement for eight early voting sites to nine early voting sites. The LWV suggests that the centers expand the geographic coverage to be within the five mile circumference of the five combined early voting centers. Ms. Sanders expressed the disappointment of voters who did not have an early voting site in the western part of the County and encouraged the Board to select a site in that area. The Board thanked Ms. Sanders.

Dan Adcock, Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee (MCDCC), Chair of the Early Voting Site Recommendation Committee, thanked the Board for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the MCDCC. He stated the MCDCC is in support of the Chevy Chase Jane Lawton Center for Bethesda with alternative locations of Bethesda Regional Services Center and the Village of Friendship Heights Center. MCDCC recommends the Bohrer Recreation Center, Long Branch Community Center, and Wheaton Neighborhood Recreation Center with Mid-County Regional and Holiday Park as alternate potential early voting sites. The Board discussed challenges with parking and access and thanked Mr. Adcock.

Patricia Fenati, forty year Damascus resident, expressed her support for an early voting site in Damascus. She stated that new development in the Damascus and Clarksburg areas continues to grow and soon Germantown may be unable to handle the influx of new voters brought by the expansion. Ms. Fenati noted that voters living in the Damascus and Clarksburg areas have difficulty getting to the Germantown Early Voting site via public transportation. She stated that many voters express the concern that they are the forgotten part of Montgomery County. Ms. Fenati is also in support of an early voting site in the Brookeville area so that Olney residents may have a closer place to vote. She stated that the Montgomery County Board of Elections has the best website of all State and County websites that she has reviewed when researching for information. Ms. Keeffe responded that the Up-County area is not forgotten, adding that staff is aware of the growth and is currently looking into site locations. Mrs. Rivera-Oven asked if Ms. Fenati had any suggestions on where an early voting site could be placed for staff to research. Ms. Fenati will contact the Board with suggestions. The Board thanked Ms. Fenati.

Cathy Drzyzgula, Council Member in the City of Gaithersburg, expressed the City's support for the Activity Center at Bohrer Park since it is in the City limits. She thanked the Board for realigning the boundary lines and re-opening Gaithersburg Elementary School as a polling site. Ms. Keeffe thanked Ms. Drzyzgula and Mayor Katz for the opportunity to use Bohrer Park at a reduced rate.

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Mark Uncapher, Montgomery County Republican Central Committee (MCRCC), spoke on behalf of the MCRCC regarding minimizing the number of voters who live more than five miles from an early voting site. He expressed concern that residents in northern and western Montgomery County will be outside five miles unless Damascus and Potomac have sites. Mr. Naimon responded that the BOE is meeting the legal requirement that 80% of the voting population must be covered within the five mile radius with the existing five centers. Mr. Uncapher responded that the BOE has the opportunity to reach 98% of the voting population by using sites in Potomac and Damascus. The Board thanked Mr. Uncapher.

Sylvia Darrow, on behalf of Legislative District 15, stated their support for the use of Potomac Community Recreation Center as an early voting site. She thanked the Board and staff for the extensive amount of work on the implementation and expansion of the early voting process. Ms. Darrow provided a map split into four quadrants. Ms. Keeffe thanked Ms. Darrow.

Delegate Charles Barkley, District 39, spoke on his own behalf and not that of a Delegate. He expressed his concern with the lack of an early voting site Up-County, north of Shady Grove Road. He supports the five current locations as well as Bohrer Park and the Wheaton Fire and Rescue sites. Ms. Keeffe thanked Delegate Barkley.

Wayne Johnson, Early Voting Judge at Silver Spring and Election Day Judge at his home precinct, expressed his views on Early Voting and its impact on election judges. Mr. Johnson stated that both sites proposed in Bethesda are competitors, as are the three sites proposed in Gaithersburg. He stated the Board should consider a site in Long Branch and Wheaton to increase access for Hispanic voters. The Board thanked Mr. Johnson.

Ms. Keeffe stated that the Board would not be making any decisions until the October Board Meeting; she thanked everyone for their comments and attendance.

Sept. 16, 2013
Date

Mary Ann Keeffe
Mary Ann Keeffe, President