City of Salisbury Election Board - Minutes

Friday, January 6, 2023

City County Government Building, Room 306

Members Present: Susan Carey, Chair, Harry Basehart, Secretary, and Lou Rimbach.

Others Present: Kim Nichols, City Clerk, Ashley Bosché, Mac Baldwin, City Attorneys. From the Wicomico County Board of Elections: Dionne Church, Election Director; Bill Blockston, Deputy Director; and Jocelyn Abbott Montgomery, Election Supervisor.

Harry Basehart called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Susan Carey is participating by phone.

Committee discussion with attorneys focused on possible revisions of election law in the Salisbury City Charter and City Code. Revisions originated from SEB. The upcoming Salisbury 2023 General Election was the focus of conversation with representatives from the Wicomico County Board of Elections.

**Approval of September 13, 2022 Minutes**

Minutes approved, no additions or corrections.

**Discussion of changes suggested for the City of Salisbury Charter and Code**

Ms. Bosché explained procedures for amending the Charter and Code. Details of suggested changes from the Salisbury Election Board were analyzed by Mr. Baldwin with comments from members of the committee and others in attendance. Details follow:

Salisbury Charter

* 2-1 No clarity is added by changing “qualified” to “certified.” Leave as is. Committee agrees.
* 2-16 Verification of signatures on petitions should be required and added to duties of SEB in the Code. Committee agrees.
* 3-2 No clarity is added by changing “qualified” to “certified.” Committee agrees.
* Article VI-Elections The correct name is Salisbury Election Board and it should be used consistently in the Charter and Code. Where Board of Supervisors is used it should be changed. Committee agrees.
* 6-11 Include brief statement that Challengers and Watchers at the polls is part of election laws of the State of Maryland. Committee agrees.
* 6-13H This section should be reworded. Remove verification of signatures, only voter registration of signer is checked. 100% of signatures will be checked for voter registration. City Clerk will forward petition signatures, addresses, and districts to Wicomico County Board of Elections identify that signers are City of Salisbury residents. Annapolis City Code Chapter 4.40 should be consulted for appropriate language. Committee agrees.
* 1.08.030 Transfer of certain SEB duties to WCBE is appropriate. Committee agrees.
* 6-13 k.6 This section applies to Council districts that have more than one member. It should be deleted because currently all five Council members are elected from single-member districts. Committee agrees.

Salisbury City Code

* 1.08.020 Duties of Salisbury Election Board need to be updated to include the following: supervision nominations, observe and inspect polling places, participate in canvassing process including mail-in ballots (preferred over absentee ballots), certify the election, hear contests concerning voting and validity of any ballot, and enforcement of election campaign financing rules in Chapter 1.12. Committee agrees.
* 1.08.030 Transfer of certain functions to Wicomico County Board of Elections (WCBE) was reviewed by City Attorneys and only recommendation is to change “shall” to “may.” Committee agrees.
* 1.08.040 Minor rewording. Committee agrees.
* 1.08.110 thru 1.08.140 City Attorneys recommend no changes. Committee agrees.
* 1.08.150 Remove “The County Board shall keep its office in the County Court House opened…” No county election office is the Court House. City attorneys agree. Committee agrees.
* 1.08.190 thru 1.08.270 Section 190 “sufficient reason” for requesting an absentee ballot which is inconsistent with state law and should be deleted. Substitute mail-in ballot for absentee ballot. City Attorneys recommend no changes in other sections. Committee agrees.
* 1.08.280 SEB should be involved where appropriate in the canvassing of absentee ballots (mail-in ballots). City attorneys will suggest language. Committee agrees.
* 1.08.290 No changes recommended by City attorneys. Committee agrees.
* 1.08.300 No changes recommended, except election precincts shall be assigned according to City Council district. Committee agrees.
* 1.08.310 No changes recommended by City attorneys. Committee agrees.
* Title of Chapter 1.12 City Campaign Advertising and Finance. For clarity, change title to read “Campaign Advertising and Finance for City Elections.” Committee agrees.
* 1.12.010 Advertising. Requirements of Subsection A should apply also to any individual publishing or distributing campaign literature promoting passage or defeat of any principle or a proposition (sometimes called a question) submitted to a vote at any city election. Committee agrees to defer for discussion at a later meeting.
* 1.12.020 Books, Records and Receipts. If above is approved, rewrite this section so it is consistent with above. Committee agrees to defer for discussion at a later meeting
* 1.12.030 No change in contribution limits. Committee agrees.
* 1.12.040 Change “Financial Disclosure Statements” in all places it appears in this section to “Campaign Finance Reports.” This distinguishes campaign finance reports from personal financial disclosure statements. No change in total of contributions required before filing a report. Committee agrees to defer for discussion at a later meeting.
* 1.12.050 Enforcement and candidate compliance with this chapter should be included in list of duties of SEB, as noted above in comments on 1.08.020. Committee agrees.
* 1.12.060 Change “Financial Disclosure Statements” to Campaign Finance Reports.” Committee agrees.
* 1.12.080 No change. Committee agrees.

**Additional discussion items**

Questions and ideas focused on the Salisbury General Election, Tuesday, November 7, 2023. Representatives from WCBE, members of SEB, and Kim Nichols look forward to a cooperative effort in planning and executing the various phases of this election: registration, nomination, campaign, and voting. Next meeting to continue discussion will be in February.

**Meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.**

Harry Basehart, Secretary