

## City of Salisbury Election Board - Minutes

Thursday, February 22 2024

Salisbury HQS Building

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

Others Present: Kim Nichols, City Clerk, Julie English, Assistant City Clerk, Ashley Bosche, Law Office of Cockey, Brennan, Maloney, and one member of the public.

### **Call Meeting to Order**

Susan Carey, President of the Salisbury Election Board, called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

### **Approval of January 30, 2024 Minutes**

- Dr. Basehart suggested the correction of a spelling error on page 2, the addition of four words for clarity on page 3, and moved for approval of the January 30 minutes. Motion was seconded by Mr. Rimbach. Motion was approved, 3-0.

### **Review and Discussion of Campaign Finance and Reporting**

#### **(Ms. Ashley Bosche)**

- Discussion of the City of Salisbury Code, Chapter 1.12, City Election Campaign Advertising and Finance. The Board asked Ms. Bosche to research other Maryland communities to determine if Salisbury's current campaign finance contribution limits (including loans) and fines/penalties for violating the laws are too low, too high or about right.

Included here is a suggestion made at the end of the meeting to change the due date of the Initial Campaign Finance Report from seven days prior to the general election to fifteen or twenty days prior to the general election. This would allow campaign finance reports to be timelier and more transparent before election day.

- Proposed amendments to campaign finance reports.

The Board reviewed the document, "Campaign Financial Disclosure Requirements," which is part of the "Candidate Packet" that is given to all candidates. It contains Chapter 1.12 of the City Code and finance reporting forms.

Items discussed: change "disclosure" to "report" and include separate cover sheets and separate forms for initial and final reports; consensus on both of these. Ms. Nichols, Ms. English, and Ms. Bosche will work together on researching the following questions:

- Should the City Clerk offer campaign finance reporting instruction for all candidate treasurers?
  - Should bank statements of candidate campaign accounts be submitted?
  - Can candidates make contributions from their campaign treasuries to other candidates? (Not clear if this is allowed or not.)
  - Can campaign funds be used to pay filing fees?
  - How are loans to a campaign paid back?
  - Should a time limit be given to candidates to respond to comments from the City Clerk or the Board on their initial and final campaign finance reports?
  - Is a separate checking account/debit card required for a campaign committee?
  - Are “outstanding expenses” an exception to the zero-balance rule?
  - Are filing fees similar to other communities?
- Review of Campaign Finance Reports Received from November 2023 Election  
Comments on individual reports reflected questions raised in the above discussion. For example, the importance of having instruction for campaign treasurers to ensure they understand the City Election Campaign Advertising and Finance section (Chapter 1.12), how treasurers’ report outstanding expenses, among others.  
One candidate was fined for being five days late with the Final Report.  
Consensus to continue discussion of 2023 finance reporting forms.

**Discussion of Confidentiality of Complainants**

- It was a consensus that a complainant’s name must be on the new “City of Salisbury Election Board Complaint Form.” The confidentiality or anonymity of a complainant’s name will not be a blanket rule and will not be guaranteed to the complainant. If a complaint reaches the stage of a hearing before the City of Salisbury Election Board all names would be public information.

Consensus to change 20 days to 10 days for complainant or respondent to reply to requests from the Board for additional information.

## **Miscellaneous**

- Ms. Carey and Ms. Bosche reported that the City Council has agreed to move forward with Salisbury Charter changes proposed by the Board: SC1-2 Corporate Limits, SC2-2 Qualifications, and SC3-2 Qualifications.

The Council wants clarification on the kinds of information the Board can request from citizens filing to become candidates, SC6-6 Nomination. The Board will take this under consideration as it continues discussion of “Candidate Packets” and will report to the Council.

## **Public Comments**

- Public comments included following: a reminder to the Board that original campaign finance reports for state and county elected positions can be amended to make corrections and perhaps the city should allow this; also noted was that the Board should ensure that deadlines in the complaint procedure allow citizens time to research applicable city laws.

Next meeting: 10a.m., Tuesday, April 23, Council Chambers, SBY HQS

**Meeting Adjourned at 11.29a.m.**

Harry Basehart, Secretary

Approved May 16,2024