

MEETING OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF ELECTIONS
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK
HELD ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2024 AT 1:00 P.M.
42 BROADWAY, 6th FLOOR, COMMISSIONERS' HEARING ROOM
NEW YORK, NY 10004

PRESENT: President Rodney L. Pepe-Souvenir
Secretary Frederic M. Umane

Commissioners Jose M. Araujo, Carol R. Edmead, Gino A. Marmorato, Jodi Morales, Simon Shamoun, Michele A. Sileo, Keith Sullivan

Michael J. Ryan, Executive Director
Vincent M. Ignizio, Deputy Executive Director
Georgea Kontzamanis, Operations Manager
Michael D. Corbett, Administrative Manager
Raphael Savino, Deputy General Counsel
Eric Butkiewicz, Associate General Counsel
Steven B. Denkberg, Counsel to the Commissioners
Kenneth Moltner, Counsel to the Commissioners

GUEST: Octavio Sacasa
Marcia Reese

Mr. Ryan opened the meeting, and provided the following updates:

This past Thursday, October 10th, the Board conducted the second Local Registration Day for 2024. 73 sites were opened across the five boroughs, and for both days a total of 402 registration forms were received:

82 Manhattan

132 Bronx

- 94 Brooklyn
- 81 Queens
- 12 Staten Island
- 1 General Office

In that same time period, we received a total of 1,462 online voter registration forms.

Mr. Ryan continued with item #1 of the meeting agenda, the approval of the minutes of the October 1, 2024 Commissioners Meeting.

Hearing no objections or amendments, the minutes of the October 1, 2024 Commissioners Meeting were adopted.

Mr. Ryan continued with item #2 of the meeting agenda, an Update on the November 5, 2024 General Election.

Mr. Ryan provided the following updates:

Preparations are well underway for the November 5, 2024 General Election. The early voting period runs from October 26, 2024 through Sunday, November 3, 2024. The Election is on Tuesday, November 5, 2024.

The Board will open 155 early voting sites across the five boroughs, the most amount of early voting locations and early voting hours in the State. In addition, there will be 1,211 Election Day sites, which will be in use. Early voting hours and poll site locations, including sample ballots, can be found on the Board's website at www.vote.nyc, as well as any other election needs you may have, and information is plentiful on the website.

All voting equipment, logic and accuracy testing is well underway and set to be completed by October 25th. Early voting equipment will be delivered the week of October 21st, with onsite team meetings set for October 25th which is the day before the commencement of Early Voting. In total, 13,127 pieces of early voting equipment will be delivered, including 68 generators to power early voting sites which will begin delivery also the week of October 21st.

For Election Day, we are scheduled to deploy roughly 76,600 pieces of equipment across 1,211 election day sites. Election Day deliveries begin the week of October 21st with tables and chairs, and equipment delivery will begin the week of October 28th.

Training, both in-person and online, and assignments are ongoing for both Election Day and Early Voting. We have 35,576 total poll worker positions and

expect to meet our needs. To date, training has been completed for 35,118 and training is ongoing for two more weeks. This month the Board has received almost 6,568 new poll worker applications, and the poll worker recruitment campaign was a success bringing in 31,858 new applications citywide since August 1st. And since the beginning of the year, to give some context, we received 41,201. So, almost 32,000 have occurred within the last two months. If anyone is interested in serving as a poll worker, you can still sign up. New York City elections are made possible by the active participation of individuals in the community who are willing to serve as poll workers.

We continue to receive and process absentee ballots for the November General Election. To date, the Board has received and mailed out 278,471 ballots citywide, including 542 accessible ballots. A total of 62,626 ballots have been returned, 54,342 have been deemed valid and canvassed, 1,950 have been deemed invalid with the cure process ongoing, and the remainder are being canvassed as the process is ongoing.

Commissioner Araujo asked with respect to the upcoming Presidential Election, Question #1: how are we looking at readiness compared to the last Presidential, has anyone had the opportunity to look at the numbers from the last Presidential to this number to see if we are in line with it, underneath it or over it; Question #2: do we have, or has Executive Management spoken about the plan for

AD Monitoring Teams, how many AD Monitors will be around on Election Day; Question #3: and the third part, since we are giving an update on all of these issues he'd like to address these, and how are we dealing with line and line maintenance during the Election Day, and asked that Mr. Ryan speak on these items for the public.

Mr. Ryan stated that with respect to election planning, he does not think that anything can compare with 2020; we were in the middle of a pandemic in 2020.

Mr. Ryan acknowledged that Commissioner Morales has just joined and recognized her participation in the meeting.

Mr. Ryan continued and stated, with respect to absentee ballots, if the numbers were to stay where they are, we're more than half a million absentee ballots behind 2020, and that is an entirely different set of circumstances. But we are significantly ahead in terms of the number of early voting locations. So we're hopeful that the increased number of early voting locations, which is probably about 50, and recalls in 2020 we had topped the 100 mark but not by a lot, maybe it was 103 or 106, and we're now at 155. So, those plans are certainly further ahead than where we were at, but we still rely ultimately on individual voters to adjust their habits with respect to the various ways that they can access their franchise. We have a new law that allows for early mail ballots, whereas in 2020 we only had

the absentee ballots and you needed the excuse of you being away from the county. They did expand the use of those ballots by Executive Order to include people who either had COVID-19 or had a fear of getting COVID-19. We are in a different universe right now than we were in 2020, with respect to that.

AD Monitoring Teams: We plan to have a robust number of AD Monitoring Teams, the assignments have not been completed but will be, they are normally completed a little closer to election day. Commissioner Edmead noted that in Manhattan, she and Secretary Umare already have the number of teams, three AD teams per AD. Mr. Ryan stated that the assignments of who's actually doing the monitoring has not been completed yet. All boroughs move at a pace and when the work is completed it will be shared with the Commissioners.

Regarding Commissioner Araujo's third question concerning line management, the Commissioner asked are we are still implementing line coordinators to help out with the lines? Mr. Ryan stated that's something that's baked into the plans, which is included in the number of poll workers. This was something we did for the first time in 2020, maybe something we could have done before that, but we did it for 2020 and it was helpful. But again, Mr. Ryan stated he'd like to remind everyone that there's early mail ballots, absentee ballots if you qualify, and there's 9 days of early voting. Until we get to the point where the voting public adjusts itself away from Election Day, you're going to have lines on

Election Day. Mr. Ryan further noted that there is one misconception that he'd like to clear up, because it always comes back in a Presidential election year, in 2020 specifically, people seemed to be eager to get out of their homes which created a different vibe, but they also showed up both for early voting and for election day. In the real wee hours of the morning, we had sites where people were there with chairs at 3 or 4 O'clock in the morning. Mr. Ryan mentioned that for him that was not a negative, it was a positive. People made a choice that exercising their right to vote was important to them and wanted to be the first on the line, and we had that in 2020. It was probably related to the fact that we were all "cooped up" for a period of a couple of months and were looking for a reason to get out of the house. Mr. Ryan stated that he would like the public to understand, when that happens, if there is a backup before the poll sites even open, it's going to take time to catch up and if the flow is steady throughout the day, it may be late into the day that it takes time for it to catch up. But the one thing that you didn't see in New York City that you saw in other jurisdictions, our sites were closed down pretty close to the end of the election night, at the end of the day. So, while you're having issues during the day, you didn't see what you saw in nearby counties where there were people still on line after midnight. We didn't have that here; we had our own issues associated with volume. But we can make all the plans and have all of the set up but ultimately, voters get to vote at a moment of their own choosing, and when they do that, if there is enough of them gathered, you're going to have some lines. Mr. Ryan stated that we just ask that people be patient. We didn't have any major

system malfunctions in 2020, and we didn't have any major machine malfunctions in 2020, and we're not anticipating any now. If something were to go wrong at an individual site, we have plans to remedy those quickly. We have our teams out in the field, our internal and external tech teams, and they will be there to assist in those issues. Mr. Ryan stated that he thinks we're as well situated for this election as we can be, and our jobs are not done yet we still have a few weeks.

Secretary Umare added that also we just recently did a mailing that had little disks with information about the person, and it also contained the ED and the AD. So, to the extent that people have that or have the flyer, you can avoid the initial long line, you could just go in, go directly to the table and vote. So, it cuts off the initial wait time. Commissioner Edmead asked who is responsible for the ED and AD being put on? Noting that it was a good thing. Mr. Ryan held up his fast tag pass to show what Secretary Umare was discussing and noted that it is also a key fob. The barcode and number that's on there, is the barcode that is to the individual voter. That allows you to scan it when you go up to the poll pad/iPad scanner, and it will go right to your voter record. There's also a QR code on that mailer, that if you scan the QR code you can download it to your wallet or phone and have it with you at all times. So, whether you're voting early or on election day, you'll be able to help speed up the process. What we're finding over the course of time, is that years ago it was always a backup at the information table. Now there's less of a back up at the information table and more of a back up at the check in table. The

more voters that we can get to utilize what we've provided to assist the movement at the check in tables, the better off the individual voters are going to be, and the better off the poll workers are going to be, and their friends and neighbors will move more quickly. And, you will not have the issues associated with the spelling of a name or maybe someone didn't understand what you said, especially in busy poll sites. The acoustics are not always the best as we know, and it might be difficult for somebody to hear, and you have to repeat it several times. If you just come up with your card and you scan it, you'll move along much more quickly. Mr. Ryan stated that he appreciated both Secretary Umame and Counsel Denkberg for his eagerness in showing his phone.

President Pepe-Souvenir added another point, while Mr. Ryan mentioned the number of poll workers who applied, over 31,000, she thinks that gives credit to the agency and the work its done as far as recruiting poll workers, which will help in moving the lines. As far as line management and that sort of thing, that's going to happen. The second thing, President Pepe-Souvenir noted that anecdotally you find the more mature voters don't even want to get off the line. Whenever you try to tell them that you'll take them off the line and bring them up further, they are determined, more to the point that Mr. Ryan is making, of standing on the line. Sometimes when you see the line and you think that they're not moving people, it's not that, people want to stand on that line. The Commissioner stated that that is

what she experienced in 2020 and thinks that the same thing will happen for this go around as well, where people will not want to get off the line.

Mr. Ryan mentioned that especially in Presidential Election Years, there are the highest vote totals/voter turnout, to put it into perspective, there's upper 2 million to over 3 million voters for a Presidential Election. The highest Gubernatorial Election since he's been the Executive Director was 2.1 million, and it usually floats in the middle of 1.3 million to 1.5 million. You're talking about typically a Presidential Election being almost double a Gubernatorial Election, and our Mayoral Elections are down in the 1.1 to 1.3 million range. So, a Presidential Election would be close to triple a Mayoral Election. The people that vote consistently year in and year out in every election are more up to date on some of the changes that have been made, and the people that vote every 4 years, which is a lot of the voters, are less up to date. That is something that just requires us to be patient, us as an agency, our poll workers and the fellow voters, to say "Hey, they're all here to do the same thing that I'm doing; I should be patient with them, they should be patient with me", and in these circumstances, a little bit of politeness and a little bit of understanding goes a long way, with the understanding that there are a lot of people to move through. And we're trying to send that message, there's more ways to vote now than ever before and we're encouraging people to utilize the additional ways. The less people that we're trying to push through 1,211 poll sites on election day the better off we'll be, and if we can

sustain the overall turnout number and still have less people on Tuesday, November 5th, that's just better for everybody. Robust participation, less waiting and processing people more quickly, that will work out well for everyone. Secretary Umame noted that there are many ways to vote, but you still can only vote once and would not want to give anyone the idea that they can vote early and often.

Georgea Kontzamanis, Operations Manager, added that we obviously urge everyone that once they make a voting plan, they can always visit our website to check the Wait Time Map, which will go live for the first time on Election Day in this election. We've been testing out the Wait Time Map during Early Voting for almost two years now. You can go on and add your address, it will show you your poll site and let you know what the wait is; whether it's 20 minutes or less, an hour or less or an hour or more, and now you will be able to do that on Election Day as well.

Mr. Ryan stated that the election law requires us to service all voters that are present on Election Day before 9:00 or before. This election will be no different, at 9:00 PM the poll worker and police officer will establish the end of the line, if there is one still at 9:00, and whoever is on the line at 9:00 will be able to come in; for those people that aren't on the line at 9:00 they would be out of luck. To clarify, Ms. Kontzamanis noted that it is relevant for every day of voting as long

are you are on line, even if it's 8:00 PM during Early Voting, not just Election Day. If you are on line by the time that the polls close, the officer will designate the end of the line, and we will service all voters until that line is clear. Mr. Ryan noted that maybe we are doing ourselves a disservice; we keep talking about elections in terms of Election Day, and its really Election Days. We have 10 election days now, not 1, and so the same rules apply to all of those individual days. Mr. Ryan thanked Ms. Kontzamanis for the reminder.

Mr. Ryan continued with item #3 of the meeting agenda, a Voter Registration Challenge. Mr. Ryan acknowledged Raphael Savino, Deputy General Counsel, to present the matter.

Mr. Savino stated that we have a voter challenge from Octavio Sacasa against Laurie Sternberg, apparently, he purchased his current residence from her quite some time ago.

President Pepe-Souvenir administered the challenge oath to Octavio Mariano Sacasa from §5-220 of the NYS Election Law, and he signed the challenge oath form. Mr. Sacasa provided a brief background on why he is presenting this challenge: 1) When he bought the apartment, at the closing Ms. Sternberg's real estate attorney advised him that she'd moved out of state and she's no longer a resident of New York State; 2) She no longer resides at this address, as

he lives there alone. The official address is 334 West 87th Street, Apartment 6cd, New York, New York 10024. Secretary Umame advised Mr. Sacasa of the next steps of the process. The borough office will do an investigation to see whether or not the situation is as he says it is and may be bothered again at some point. Secretary Umame stated that there is one set of circumstances where this might be allowed, if she were to have moved overseas. She as a U.S. citizen, has the right to vote and would be voting, but on a limited basis only for the President, at the address that was her last address. After the investigation, the review, Mr. Sacasa will be advised of the outcome. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Sacasa for appearing before them today.

Mr. Ryan continued with item #4 of the meeting agenda, a Holiday in Lieu of the November 5, 2024, General Election, Pursuant to the Contract with CWA, Local 1183. Mr. Ryan stated that this is a matter that is brought back before the Commissioners every year because depending on the work that needs to be done for an election, we may need to adjust the schedule. But this year we have discussed this matter with the Borough Chiefs and Deputies, and we are asking the Commissioners to grant the holiday, to move the election day holiday to the Friday after Thanksgiving in exchange, and that's pursuant to the contract with CWA, Local 1183. Secretary Umame moved to grant the holiday in lieu of the November 5, 2024 General Election. Commissioner Shamoun seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously.

Mr. Ryan noted that we have an additional guest who would like to speak at today's meeting. However, he first requested that the Commissioners set the date for the next meeting, and suggested Tuesday, October 29th.

Commissioner Shamoun moved to set the date of the next meeting for Tuesday, October 29, 2024 at 1:00 P.M. Secretary Umane seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously.

Vincent Ignizio, Deputy Executive Director, recognized Marcia Reese, who has requested to speak at the meeting today.

Ms. Reese stated that she has been a Coordinator since early voting started in October of 2019 up until June of 2024, and has not been assigned for the November Election. Mr. Ryan confirmed that Ms. Reese appeared at the October 1st Commissioners' Meeting and thought that staff was directed to do some form of investigation and get back to her. Ms. Reese mentioned that the 9 days of early voting were not addressed. The Commissioners also pointed out that this is a personnel matter. Regardless of whether it pertains to early voting or the General Election, it is not something they would address. Commissioner Edmead asked Ms. Reese if her issue was that she didn't hear from anyone, or she heard and thought it didn't apply to every election? Ms. Reese stated that she heard for

November 5th but came regarding her assignment as a Coordinator for early voting. Secretary Umame informed Ms. Reese that whatever explanation was given to her as the reason why she's no longer a Coordinator applies for early voting as well. Mr. Ryan informed Ms. Reese that these assignments are done at the borough level, and thinks she was told that the last time and that it would be looked in to. If she has not heard back from the borough staff, we are not done with the assignments yet, maybe she will be assigned but there also may be a reason why she wasn't, and she may know better of that herself than any of us here would. These decisions are made at the borough level, and they're not made by the full Board of Commissioners. The Commissioners thanked Ms. Reese for appearing before them today.

Secretary Umame moved to adjourn the open meeting and convene an Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. President Pepe-Souvenir seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously.

Following the Executive Session the open meeting resumed.

The following action was taken by the unanimous decision of the Board of Commissioners:

- Nancy McLaurin, an Administrative Associate, was granted 210 hours of an advance of sick time. The effective date of the grant is August 12, 2024. Ms. McLaurin's agency start date is May 28, 2006.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next stated meeting of the Commissioners of Elections is scheduled for Tuesday, October 29, 2024 at 1:00 P.M.