



**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
FINAL OFFICIAL MINUTES
Mayor's Elections Advisory Group
(MEAG)**

Stephen P. Clark Center
111 Northwest 1st Street
18th Floor, Conference Room 18-4
Miami, Florida 33128

January 30, 2014
As Advertised

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**CLERK'S SUMMARY AND OFFICIAL MINUTES
MAYOR'S ELECTIONS ADVISORY GROUP
JANUARY 30, 2014**

The Mayor's Elections Advisory Group (MEAG) convened at 10:30 a.m. on January 30, 2014 at the Stephen P. Clark Government Center, 111 NW 1 Street, 18th Floor Conference Room 18-4, Miami, Florida 33128. The following members were present: Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez; Board of County Commissioners Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa; Commissioners Linda Bell, Sally Heyman, and Dennis Moss; Mr. Kendall Coffey; Mayor Oliver Gilbert, City of Miami Gardens; Mr. Murray Greenberg; Ms. Lovette McGill; and Ms. Metellus Gepsie. Ms. Alice Ancona, Bishop Victor T. Curry, Mr. Robert Fernandez, and Mr. DJ Ortuno were absent.

The following staff members were present: Deputy Mayor Alina Hudak, Assistant County Attorney Oren Rosenthal, Supervisor of Elections (SOE) Penelope Townsley, and Chief Deputy Supervisor of Elections Christina White.

WELCOME

Mayor Gimenez welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked the Elections Department to present a status report for the 2014 election preparations.

2014 ELECTION PREPARATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY ROLLOUT

Ms. Penelope Townsley, Supervisor of Elections, noted enhanced voter convenience was a top priority of MEAG and some of the Group's recommendations were piloted by the Elections Department during the November 2013 Special Election. She noted the focus in 2014 would be on poll worker recruitment and training; and greater productivity with absentee ballots. Ms. Townsley explained the following: 1. poll worker recruitment was a year-long activity and required individuals of a higher skill set and technological experience; 2. there would be coordinated efforts with the School Board and through community outreach; 3. more intensive poll-worker training would take place from February through August 2014, consisting of daily training labs and hands-on workshops; 4. County employees would play a more essential role in the upcoming elections and be utilized as first level tech support.

Ms. Townsley continued outlining the Election Department's goals by stating more Early Voting sites will be opened and options for additional sites would be explored in anticipation of high voter turnout. She expressed her support for additional voting days; noted modifications were made with the voter check-in system; that pre-coded thumb drives would become a Department policy; that two new high speed sorters were installed; and automated signature verification would be utilized which reduced voter check-in time, updated voter registrations, verified voter eligibility, and provided real-time vote statistics.

Ms. Townsley noted 1400 of the 1600 poll books arrived in January and the final shipment was expected in early February; one sorter had arrived and the second sorter was scheduled to arrive in days; and upon conclusion of Phase One of Sorter Training, which was currently underway through February 13, 2014, Phase Two of the training would begin.

Commissioner Heyman commented on using poll workers with IT skills and suggested students be provided with independent study credit if they volunteered to serve as poll workers.

Commissioner Sosa asked Elections to prepare an analysis on the costs associated with Early Voting; the percentage of voter turnout in local elections without Early Voting sites; and the percentage of increased voters resulting from the availability of Early Voting sites.

A discussion ensued regarding State and County elections that were held in conjunction; the wait times experienced during certain elections, particularly Presidential Elections; and the need to look into other viable options that could be made available to voters in precincts where severe wait times were experienced.

Ms. Townsley explained that the goal of the re-precincting plan was to reduce congestion in certain areas that experienced high voter turnout. She also noted that many problems would be remedied by installing an electronic voting process.

Commissioner Bell supported the electronic voting process in lieu of the inefficient paper process and urged that favorable consideration be given to adding additional voting days for Presidential Elections.

Ms. Townsley responded that she would discuss the matter with the Mayor and suggested General Elections be provided 14 Early Voting days and Primary Elections be given 8 Early Voting days, including the Sunday prior to the actual Election Day.

Following a discussion on the number of Early Voting days, the associated costs, and the need to properly educate and inform voters, Mayor Gimenez noted the main issue was not the number of Early Voting days, but the number of polling places that would need to be opened to accommodate Early Voting, which constituted fiscal consideration.

Mayor Gimenez spoke about a meeting he had with the Elections Department regarding re-precincting and asked that the process be held off until after the new technology and procedures were put in place. He suggested any re-precincting action not be taken until the bigger elections in 2015 and 2016.

RE-PRECINCTING UPDATE

Ms. Townsley briefed the Committee on the re-precincting project and provided each member with a handout that outlined the purpose of adjusting the precincts; the need to eliminate split precincts; create equitable distribution; cap precincts to 2,500 voters; and have a maximum wait time of one hour. She explained the re-districting process whereby district lines were merged to create core boundaries and each core created unique lines which could stand alone as precincts. SOE Townsley noted however, the core boundaries were divided to keep the 2,500 voter threshold. At that point, polling places were located, each having to be a minimum of 700 square feet, have adequate parking, and within a two mile limit.

Ms. Townsley further explained that prior to re-precincting, there were 829 polling places and after re-precincting, there would be 1,048; approximately 55% of registered voters would be assigned to a new voting place; and the entire process would affect 27% of Miami-Dade County voters. She noted the time frame was subject to change and each Commissioner was initially briefed; however, dialogues would continue as the re-precinct plan was refined. She anticipated the plan being presented to Commission Committees in December, 2014 and be presented to the County Commission in January, 2015. She noted, if approved, new voter information cards would be mailed to voters in May, 2015 and everything would be ready and in place for the elections in November, 2015.

Mayor Gimenez noted the re-precincting plan was not finalized inasmuch as he had asked Elections to wait and see what happens during the Governor's race, to determine if there was a need to recalibrate should the technology allow for more than 2,500 voters per polling location. He stressed the importance of allowing the technology portion to proceed before making any precinct changes.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Mayor's Elections Advisory Group, the meeting adjourned at 11:41 a.m.

Mayor Carlos Gimenez, Chair
Mayor's Elections Advisory Group

NOTE: These minutes were archived without the Chairman's signature.