

December 17, 2020

Freeholder Director Thomas A. Arnone, Freeholder Deputy Director Susan M. Kiley, Freeholder Lillian G. Burry, Freeholder Nick DiRocco, Freeholder Patrick Imprevuduto, and Freeholder Elect Ross Licitra

The Monmouth County Board of Elections Commissioners and their respective staff are proud to forward our election report to the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

This year was the most difficult election in Monmouth County history. The unprecedented changes in a total vote by mail scenario impacted the County enormously. The recent Presidential election demanded the concentrated collaboration of teamwork within all the County departments which included the County Administration Office, Building and Grounds, Clerk's Office, Superintendent of Elections, Finance and Human Resources.

It is widely known that the pandemic placed a unique challenge on the Board of Elections and County staff during the July primary. With the anticipation of a total Vote by Mail election in November, reasonable logistical concerns were raised at the completion of the Primary. The Board realized workspace requirements and various sophisticated technical needs would have to be addressed. The Board proactively recognized the need to transform the operation from a traditional count, where the most ballots ever processed pre-Covid was 36,000. The Board and staff focused on the many elements required to scale up production; this effort included our need to process, in a timely fashion, the potential of 450,000 ballots. During the July Primary, the Board processed close to 100,000 ballots; this effort was completed totally by hand and lasted for 31 continual days.

Governor Murphy's decision to move to a total Vote by Mail election set in motion a series of upgrading requirements. Scaling for the event included relocating our offices to a warehouse facility large enough to support increased staff, creating technical and technology infrastructure support, office fixtures, sorting stations, ballot extraction and newly acquired tabulation electronics procurement. All elements required meeting CDC guidelines of wearing masks, social distancing and constant hand washing during the pandemic with most staff working 12-hour days 7 days a week.

Each step is simple enough; however, it involved a team of hired poll workers, which had been in short supply since the pandemic began. It also involved coordinating logistics at every step, from where the ballot drop boxes should be placed, to how staff would obtain access to signatures on file for matching, to where ballots would be stored in the time between the ballot arrival and when they would be counted.

Similarly, logistic coordination of reduced polling locations and staffing was challenging. Our staff accomplished this daunting task successfully. Establishing placement of VBM Ballot drop Boxes throughout the County with managed daily pick-ups was also a success. We thank Mr. Malysko from Buildings and Grounds for the rapid placement and installation of the 13 County drop boxes and the three teams of couriers. During the daily pick up, the team couriers proudly maintained excellent accountability.

In addition, 300 Halls Mills Road had to be transformed to accommodate thousands of voters who opted to personally drop off their ballots. This created another unique challenge. A newly created ADA entrance within the Board of Elections temporary warehouse had to be erected, including an interior drop off area with additional exterior parking was also created in a very short time. This also proved successful with the Board welcoming thousands of voters, assuring each person their ballots were received and would be counted. The Board appreciates the leadership of the County Administrator, Teri O'Conner, for coordinating the transformation of this warehouse into an election processing facility, including a parking area. The warehouse facility was lent to us by the Superintendent of Elections, Mary De Sarno which housed over 100 workers each day and accommodated hundreds of County voters who chose to visit the office for in person ballot submission.

Voting tabulation, the heart of the election process, was in our view, an outstanding achievement in terms of accountability and accuracy. Our existing tabulation system, post primary election, required updating; therefore, the Board lobbied for a system that would meet the current and future needs of rapid scanning and adjudication. The County Freeholders authorized the purchase of a new election tabulation system from Dominion in late August. The purchase streamlined approximately 400,000 ballots with complete accuracy in record time. Our recent state-required audit proved the tabulation system was 100% effective; every ballot tabulated was counted with 100% accuracy. We thank the Board of Chosen Freeholders for their assistance in approving the purchases. Certainly, without the Freeholders support for high-speed mechanization and software, this election would not have been successful.

In February of 2020, the Freeholders approved an increase in the number of Commissioner from four to six. The Commissioners were on site each day starting in late September and remained till completion of the recounts in December. The 2020 Election Audit proved that the vote tabulation was 100% accurate. Two municipal recounts were recently completed with one remaining municipal recount to be completed by year end. The Board again, thanks the Freeholders, for their consideration and commitment to this Board by allowing the two additional Commissioners to be appointed.

Statistically, 466,325 ballots, were mailed out by the County Clerk Christine Hanlon and her staff in a timely and efficient manner. Thus, the Board was able to start processing ballots on September 28th. The hand processing, with the assistance of 75 seasonal workers and approximately 25 National Guard, consisting of two shifts 12 hours a day, continued till November 15th.

The Board of Elections processed close to 400,000 ballots which included mail in ballots, ballots from the drop boxes, hand delivered ballots, emailed Federal and Military overseas ballots, and provisional ballots and hand delivered ballots from the polling locations.

The final certification occurred November 20, 2020.

In conclusion, the Board of Elections Commissioners believes this election success would not have been possible without the assistance of other departments including our own full-time staff of six employees, especially our Executive Director Robin Major and Chief Clerk Tracee Johnson. Our entire staff worked tirelessly 7 days a week. Their ability to adapt to a new environment under enormous pressure to meet the State mandated time frames with an unprecedented number of ballots received, deserves recognition from this Board. Every ballot received was accounted for, which was a true testament and demonstration of their devotion to the Monmouth County Board of Elections mission of excellence to conduct accurate, secure, fair and accessible elections with the highest level of professionalism and integrity, in a manner that fosters public trust and confidence in the democratic process.

Respectfully,

Chantal Bouw, Chairwoman/Commissioner
Allan Roth, Commissioner/Secretary
Pat Bennett, Commissioner
Tracee Johnson, Chief Clerk

Robert Napoli, Commissioner
Glen Mendez, Commissioner
Eileen N. Kean, Commissioner
Robin Major, Administrator