



Board Of Civil Authority

Town of Hinesburg
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Meeting Minutes – January 16, 2020

- Draft -

Attending the Meeting: Gill Coates, Chair; Missy Ross, Clerk to the Board; Vicki Matthews, Mary Hurlie, Mary Crane, Sarah Toscano, Tom Giroux, Marie Gardner

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. Gill reviewed the language in VSA Title 17 Subchapter 2546a which allows the Board of Civil Authority to process the early votes on the day before the election. Vicki Matthews made the motion to allow members of the Board of Civil Authority and the town clerk and other election officials to process the early/absentee ballots according to VSA Title 17 Subchapter 2546a. The motion was seconded by Marie Gardner.

An objection was raised by BCA member Sarah Toscano. She expressed her concerns that people processing the ballots would view the ballots during the process and could ascertain who was leading and let a candidate know that they were either ahead or behind. Mary Hurlie asked Toscano to explain the basis for her concern so that the Board could have a better understanding. Board members who have had several years of experience opening and processing absentee ballots explained that this isn't possible. Several of the Board members reviewed the process that is followed when early / absentee ballots have been opened and put in the machines on the day of the election. The same process would be followed on the day before the election. Town Clerk Missy Ross outlined the procedures that the BCA has always followed to insure privacy for early voters. She addressed Toscano's specific concern about knowing who was leading after the early votes were processed by assuring her that there would be no machine tally and that the Board would be sure to process the ballots with the voted side down as the machine can read the ballot no matter how it is oriented in the machine. Gill Coates noted that any candidate can have poll watchers on the day of the election who can keep track of who is coming in to vote and then initiate phone calls to bring out more supporters. Ross reiterated that any member of the public will be able to come to the clerk's office to view the process of early ballot opening and processing. She stated her belief that if anything, this will afford even more oversight for the process than doing it during the hectic day of the election. Toscano remained unconvinced and left the meeting before the motion was voted on. The time of her departure was noted as approximately 9:25 a.m.

Gill Coates then called the motion to a vote. The motion was passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Melissa B. Ross, Clerk