

Year End Report – 2008

3/23/2009 3:50 PM

The Atlantic County Board of Elections works in conjunction with a variety of local, county, state and federal offices and agencies to carry out its statutory responsibilities to the election process. As a vital component to the process, the Board of Elections has certain mandated responsibilities that encompass a myriad of duties to ensure smooth and efficient elections.

The Board of Elections is made up of four commissioners appointed by the Governor, for two-year terms: there are two Republican Commissioners and two Democrat Commissioners. The appointed Board, at its annual reorganization meeting elects a Chairperson and a Secretary. The Board appoints the necessary staff to run the day-to-day operations. The Board meets at scheduled meetings, sits in session for elections and holds special meetings as needed.

The Board members include:

Mary Alyse (Lisa) Strother, Chairperson (R)	Paula Dunn, Secretary (D)
Maureen Gallagher Bugdon, Commissioner (R)	Bernice (Sandy) Couch, Commissioner (D)

The administrative staff consists of:

Michelle Vitiello, Clerk of the Board (R)	Bill Sacchinelli, Clerk of the Board (D)
Dolores Slemmer, Data Control Clerk (R)	Henrietta McKenzie, Data Control Clerk (D)

The Board of Elections met at 4:30 PM at the Historic Courthouse in Mays Landing on the following Tuesdays:

January 29	February 26	March 25	April 29	May 27	June 24
July 29	August 26	September 30	October 28	December 12	

Redistricting Election Districts and Maps

The Board of Elections in conjunction with the Superintendent of Elections and the County Clerk oversees the voting process for more than 270,000 residents. There are 23 municipalities in Atlantic County spread over an area of 561 square miles. Ten of the Atlantic County municipalities have wards. There are a total of 27 wards and 163 election districts in Atlantic County. The State of New Jersey provides strict guidelines for everything related to the election process, including the creation and maintenance of Election District maps. Besides updating, filing and maintaining the maps, the Board is also responsible for providing the legal, geographical boundary descriptions of each election district, as well as any ward, legislative, and Congressional district with the Secretary of State's office. Our long-term goal is to update maps and descriptions in preparation for the 2010 Census.

After the census and promulgation of the census figures by the Governor or a referendum, the Board must draw new ward boundaries in those municipalities that elect their local governing body by ward. (Title 15, Title 19 and Title 40) If an election district due to size or other considerations as noted in Title 19, require altering or merging, the Board must prepare such information and materials to effectuate this change. (Title 15, Title 19 and Title 40)

Color coded municipal maps must be prepared by the Board and available for inspection by the public. These maps must contain each municipal election district(s), state legislative election district(s) and federal election district(s). The Board must maintain maps of each municipality and a county wide map. All maps must be filed with the Secretary of State and as changes occur, maps must be updated accordingly. (Title 15, Title 19 and Title 20)

Election redistricting in NON census years is another responsibility of the Board of Elections. With the ongoing growth particularly in Egg Harbor Township, Galloway and Hamilton there has been a need to add districts. When the total number of registered voters reaches 1000, the district must be split and polling places identified and poll workers added. In addition, if a district falls below 350, the district must be consolidated. After each change in districts, a new map is needed and notification to voters is required.

Certifies Polling Places for Election Day

The Board of Elections is responsible for the selection, equipping, and operation of polling places. Communication with the municipal clerks has been established to meet these needs. The Board maintains contact information for every polling site. Each polling place must be of sufficient size and layout to accommodate all the election needs and must be handicap accessible in accordance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA. Federal and State law requires that the Board be responsible for certifying accessible polling places. This status is reported to the Secretary of State's office on or before May 15th of each year. The Board of Elections also communicates with advocacy groups to foster understanding and cooperation within the community.

Poll Workers

The Board of Elections is responsible for the recruitment, appointment, training and supervision of all poll workers. Recruitment of student and Hispanic bilingual poll workers is an ongoing program. The Board has established dialogue and input from the municipal clerks, municipal chairs and County chairs to compile an annual list of poll workers. Our training program features instructional classes scheduled throughout the entire county. All poll workers have been trained and are recertified every two years as required by Title 19. The training manuals are continually updated. More intense and extensive training leads to fewer problems on Election Day.

Challengers

The Board of Elections issues challenger certificates and challenger candidate badges. Candidates are contacted by telephone and or mail with deadline notification with enclosed challenger applications. Credentials are prepared and can be changed up to and including Election Day.

Area Leader Program Implemented

In 2007 the Board began a new program to bring in "troubleshooters" on Election Day. In some counties they are called "Master Poll Workers." It has long been established in Atlantic County that a Master Poll Worker is one of those workers assigned to a polling district that is to pick up the supplies the day prior to the Election and return such after the close of the polls on Election Day.

An "Area Leader" is one of a two person, bipartisan team assigned to a zone that has multiple polling districts. Each team is responsible, throughout Election Day, to continually visit each of their assigned polling places within their zone, to observe the poll workers interaction with the voters and other stakeholders. They are available to troubleshoot any difficulties with procedures or processing and to report to the Board office and the Commissioners any irregularities which may occur. Area Leaders have additional materials or access to such should poll workers run short. Currently there are 20 Area Leaders assigned to 10 zones throughout the county. The full beneficial effects of this program were realized in 2008.

In the General Election, 2 additional area leader teams were added as "floaters" to deal with an extraordinary situations or adverse circumstances.

Absentee Ballots

The Board of Elections' duties include canvassing and counting of all absentee ballots. Through consistent communication with the County Clerk's office, applications are received and filed within our office. Once the Board of Elections receives an absentee ballot, it is mandated to ascertain that the absentee voter is entitled to vote and that the ballot conforms to the law. The Commissioners are mandated by law to verify the voter's signature by comparing the absentee ballot certification with the signature on the application. When there is a question as to the signature comparison, the Board must look at the voter signature in the Statewide Voter Registration System.

The Board has recently implemented new absentee ballot procedures which has streamlined the process without compromising the integrity of the absentee ballots. The Board is responsible for storing and archiving these election materials. All election material is recorded in our Archive binder, boxed and moved to the Records Storage Center.

Provisional Ballots

Provisional ballots are received by the Superintendent of Elections office and then sent to the Board of Elections for processing. The ballots are processed, counted and archived the same way as the absentee ballots.

Election Recounts

The Board of Elections conducts all election recounts at the direction of the Superior Court.

OPRA

The Open Public Records Act (OPRA) is a state law allowing the public fair accessibility to view and copy government records maintained by public agencies in the State. It is the policy of Atlantic County Board of Elections to comply with OPRA and the New Jersey Right to Know Law.

Legal and Display Advertisements

All public announcements are in compliance with Title 19. All communication with the Atlantic City Press is coordinated via email which allows for tracking, receipt and editing.

2008/2009 Goals

- To work together with the Superintendent of Elections and the County Clerk's office to ensure efficient results of all Elections while at all times protecting the integrity of every vote
- To work more closely with the Municipal Clerks
- To work with the political parties on election education
- To update maps and boundary descriptions.
- Continue training, recruiting and appointing pollworkers
- To develop & publish a Challenger Guideline Brochure
- Maintain 100% accessibility of all polling places
- Participate in Statewide election meetings, classes and conferences
- Community outreach for pollworker recruitment
- Advertise in county newsletter for pollworkers
- Partner with county newsletter for general election voter education piece

Number of Elections Held

There were 8 elections in 2008. These include the Presidential Primary on February 5th, the annual School Board Elections on April 15th, the Municipal Elections for Longport and Ventnor on May 13th, and the regular Primary on June 3rd. Additionally Brigantine chose to have a referendum on June 17th and as a result of a tie during the School Elections, Mullica had a runoff election on July 22nd. The General Election held on November 4th included the race for President and there was a Special School Election on December 9th that included referendum questions for Hammonton Schools and the Greater Egg Harbor Regional School District.

Poll Worker Training

In addition to qualifying Poll Workers to work on Election Day through appropriate training, the Board of Elections is responsible for assigning the Poll Workers. During 2008, of the 1890 poll worker names in the database, 211 were trained in the late winter/early spring classes held in January and 518 attended classes in the months just prior to the June Primary. An additional 599 were trained just prior to the November General Election. Approximately 70% of all Poll Workers attended some training during the year with a total of 1328.

Month	January	March	April	May	September	October
# Trained	211	62	214	242	177	422

Eligible Voters and Turnout

As of December 31st, the total number of active registered voters in the county is 175,824. The voter turnout for each of the elections follows as well as the approximate percentage of eligible voters who voted:

Election Name	Eligible Voters	# voted	% turnout
Presidential Primary	188,524	49,634	26.33%
Annual School	179,422	12,923	7.20%
Municipal Elections	10,193	3,273	32.11%
June Primary	147,194	20,819	14.14%
Brigantine Special	9,229	2,507	27.16%
Mullica Runoff	4,865	657	13.50%
General Election	176,526	120,507	68.27%
Special School	50,518	1917	3.79%

Paper Ballots Processed

During 2008, the BOE Office and the Board Commissioners have processed over 16,000 Paper Ballots including 12,146 Absentee Ballots and 3,882 Provisional Ballots. The breakdown for each Election is as follows:

Date	Election Name	Absentee	Provisional	Total Paper Ballots
2/5/2008	Presidential Primary	1,546	495	2,041
4/15/2008	Annual School	675	46	721
5/13/2008	Municipal Elections	172	18	190
6/3/2008	June Primary	1,938	200	2,138
6/17/2008	Brigantine Special	41	17	58
7/22/2008	Mullica Runoff	67	4	71
11/4/2008	General Election	7,602	3,100	10,702
12/9/2008	Special School	105	2	107
	2008 Totals	12,146	3,882	16,028

Challenger Credentials

The following table illustrates the over 3000 credentials initially applied for by the candidates and issued for each election but does not include any changes during the two weeks after the submission deadline to Election Day.

Election Name	Credentials
Presidential Primary	268
Annual School	317
Municipal Elections	61
June Primary	579
Brigantine Special	8
Mullica Runoff	2
General Election	1927

Polling Districts and Poll Workers Assigned

There are 163 polling districts also known as precincts throughout the county. Some of these districts are consolidated for certain types of elections such as the school elections. By statute, there must be a minimum of 2 poll workers for each polling district in the school election and a minimum of 4 poll workers in all other elections.

In compliance with various other statutes, the Board may assign 2 additional workers (1 from each party) when there is an additional voting machine and/or the total number of registered voters in that district exceeds 900. In the General Election, the Superintendent of Elections decided to add a third machine in the 1st Ward of Brigantine, Districts 9, 10 & 11 of Egg Harbor Township and Districts 3, 5, 6 & 11 of Galloway Township. Additional Poll Workers were assigned to these polling sites for a total of eight (8) each. The following table indicates the number of precincts and the number of poll workers that worked:

Election Name	# of Precincts	# of Poll Workers
Presidential Primary	163	782
Annual School	64	252
Municipal Elections	10	48
June Primary	163	790
Brigantine Special	4	24
Mullica Runoff	1	9
General Election	163	972
Special School	43	172

Counters for Hand Counts

For the June 2008 Primary to better facilitate completed tallies on Election Day, the Board brought in 12 counters. They were divided into bipartisan teams to hand count and verify county committee contests. They were very effective in completing the totals on Primary Day.

This program was adapted for additional needs that occurred on General Election Day. Rather than merely counting, they were used to cover the window or "counter" when voters brought in bearer ballots. They were also instrumental in processing absentee ballots, answering telephone calls, accepting challenger changes and assisting the Board as the Commissioners reviewed and tallied absentee ballots.

Budget Considerations

Sequoia

OPRA

Advertisements

Policies & Procedures Reviews & Updates

The policies and procedures that were reviewed and updated were:

Absentee Applications sent to BOE from Clerk's Office

Absentee Ballots no longer stuffed back into envelopes

Recount Procedures developed, established & distributed to stakeholders.

Preparations for Mapping and Redistricting

The Commissioners have begun the redistricting requirements by seeking RFP's to begin updating the maps.

Equipment

Among the items that have been acquired and purchased are:

Title 19 Books & Supplements, Business Cards for Commissioners and Clerks to the Board

Indicia Machines, Letter Folder and Electric Hole Punch

Cell Phones for Polling Sites

Staff Training

Staff members that attended the Rutgers Spring 2008 Training include Mikie Vitiello and Henrietta McKenzie.

Website

Although activated in 2007 with an online poll worker application, the BOE Website has been developed further in 2008 to include accessibility to Municipal Clerks and Municipal Chairs, wherein the Chairs of the respective local organizations can go online to submit their preferences in poll worker assignments within the municipality. The Clerks can then view these selections and confirm the availability of the poll workers.

For each election all the stakeholders including candidates, municipal chairs and county chairs, can now submit their challenger applications on line.

2009 Election Considerations

Consideration is being given to the following:

Governor's Race & Lt. Governor's Office for the 1st time in the state

Voter Verified Paper Trail is currently being required for 2009

Legislation is being "fast tracked" for School Elections to coincide with General Election

Voter Turnout for Primary Election may be larger than usual