

Atlantic County Board of Elections



2009 Year End Report

Mary Alyse Strother, Chairperson

Maureen Gallagher Bugdon, Commissioner

Paula S. Dunn, Secretary

Bernice (Sandy) Couch, Commissioner

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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 is the appointing authority and as such is responsible for all operations at the Board of Elections. The Board is a quasi state agency that is funded by the county.

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)

NUMBER OF ELECTIONS and STATISTICS

Number of Elections Held in 2009

There were 6 elections in 2009. The annual School Board Elections were held on April 21st, the Primary Election was on June 2nd and the General Election was on November 3rd. Fire District Elections were held Saturday February 21st. Also, there were Special School Elections on September 29th and on December 8th. These included referendum questions for Hamilton Township and Northfield School Districts in September and the Estell Manor School District in December.

Eligible Voters and Turnout

As of December 1, 2009 the total number of active registered voters in the county is 168,295. 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
Fire District	2/21/2009	7458	1*	*
Annual School	4/21/2009	144164	12462	8.64
June Primary	6/2/2009	167241	19851	11.87
Special School – Hamilton & Northfield	9/29/2009	21264	1186	5.58
General Election	11/3/2009	166959	74915	44.87
Special School – Estell Manor	12/8/2009	1250	238	19.04

* voter history only for mail in ballot recorded in SVRS

Paper Ballots Processed

During 2009, the BOE Office and the Board Commissioners have processed over 8,300 Paper Ballots including 7,382 Mail In Ballots and 958 Provisional Ballots. The breakdown for each Election is as follows:

Date	Election Name	Mail In	Provisional	Total Paper Ballots
2/21/2009	Fire District	1	0	1
4/21/2009	Annual School	515	21	536
6/2/2009	June Primary	1896	225	2121
9/29/2009	Special School	56	5	61
11/3/2009	General Election	4907	707	5614
12/8/2009	Special School	7	0	7
	2009 Totals	7382	958	8340

POLL WORKERS and POLLING PLACES

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.

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. The following indicates the number of precincts and the number of poll workers that worked:

Election Name	# of Precincts	# of Poll Workers
Annual School	64	252
June Primary	163	822
General Election	163	823

Poll Worker Training

In addition to assigning the Poll Workers, the Board of Elections is responsible for qualifying Poll Workers to work on Election Day through statutory required training. There are currently over 2025 poll worker names in the database. During 2009, 264 attended classes in the months just prior to the June Primary. An additional 913 were trained just prior to the November General Election. Approximately 58% of all Poll Workers attended some training during 2009 with a total of 1177.

Month	April	May	September	October
# Trained	61	203	437	476

Certification of Polling Places for Election Day

The Board of Elections is responsible for the selection 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 (ADA). The Board of Elections works with an appointed committee to survey accessibility of all Polling Places. 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.

Area Leader Program

In 2007 the Board began a new program to bring in "troubleshooters" on Election Day known as Area Leaders. 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 2009, the Area Leader role was further defined by requiring them to visit each polling site a specific number of times & to "call in" to the Board Office at specified times throughout Election Day. They also pickup the Poll Worker Break & Rotation forms and Pay Vouchers and return them to the office after the polls have closed.

In the General Election 2009, 1 additional area leader team was utilized as "floaters" to deal with any extraordinary situations or adverse circumstances.

REDISTRICTING and MAPS

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 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 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 Township and Hamilton Township 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.

Preparations for Mapping and Redistricting

The Commissioners have begun the redistricting requirements by awarding a contract to an engineering firm to update maps & district boundary descriptions. This will be accomplished in about 3 phases. First will be new maps and boundary descriptions of the current voting wards and districts in those municipalities that have wards. Next will be new maps and boundary descriptions of the current voting districts in those municipalities that have voting districts only. After the 2010 Census has been completed, various scenarios will be formulated and reviewed by the Board to evaluate where election district consolidation and splitting will be required by the statutes.

MAIL IN and PROVISIONAL BALLOTS

Mail In Ballots

Effective July 1st, 2009, a new law essentially changed "Absentee Ballot Voting" to Vote by Mail. There are two "options" on the mail in ballot application. Option A allows the voter to receive a ballot for all elections within the calendar year while with option B a voter may chose to receive a ballot for all general elections in perpetuity or until they may otherwise indicate to the County Clerk that they no longer wish to receive such. With the first option, the ballot is automatically sent for every election that the voter is qualified within that year and would need to apply again each subsequent year. Those who check option B for all General Elections would likewise automatically receive the ballot each General Election. The Board of Elections will have to maintain copies of all applications for this option. Storage space will need to be increased each year as the number of original applications increase. This legislation limits the number of messenger ballots per election to 10.

The Board of Elections works with the County Clerk who issues the Mail In Ballots. Once the County Clerk issues a Mail In Ballot, the applications is delivered to the Board of Elections for filing and matching. Once the Board of Elections receives the Mail In Ballot and the application is attached to the incoming Mail In Ballot, the Commissioners are mandated by law to verify the voter's signature by comparing the mail in 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 mail in ballot procedures which has streamlined the process without compromising the integrity of the mail in 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 mail in ballots.

ELECTION DAY CHALLENGERS

Challenger Credentials

Candidates, County Chairs and Municipal Chair may apply to the Board of Elections for Election Day Challengers. Challengers are those people who represent their party or candidate in the Polling Place.

The following illustrates the nearly 2800 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
Annual School	76
June Primary	952
General Election	1687

Challenger Training Sessions

2009 was the inaugural year of the Board of Elections conducting Challenger Seminars for stakeholders such as the Candidates, Municipal Chairs and Campaign Chairs and Managers. Invitations were sent to over 180 known candidates and municipal chairs. There were two sessions that were held in the month prior to the General Election. Over 40 participants attended with enthusiasm and encouraged the Board to continue having these informative efforts in the future.

CERTIFICATIONS OF ELECTIONS

The Monday following each election is the day for Certifications. (unless postponed in accordance with Title 19) The Board of Canvassers consist of the 4 Board of Elections Commissioners and the County Clerk.

ELECTION RECOUNTS

Election Recounts

The Board of Elections conducts all election recounts at the direction of the Superior Court. The Board has developed Recount Procedures to ensure that all Recounts are conducted in the same manner and that paper ballots are secured during the process. The Board of Elections conducts recounts at the machine warehouse with staff from the Superintendent of Elections who runs a tape for each machine in the affected districts. The Commissioners announce the numbers for each district. If there is a discrepancy, it is announced. Following the machine recheck, the Board hand recounts all paper ballots. The totals are announced but are not official until the Board certifies the recount results to the Superior Court. If there is a change in the election results, the Board certifies the numbers to the County Clerk who amends the canvassers report.

MISC INFORMATION

Legal and Display Advertisements

All public announcements are advertised in compliance with Title 19. . The Board is responsible for mandated advertising prior to each election

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.

Due to the Democracy Act that was signed in October 2009, the website includes a link to the bylaws of the county committee of the Democrat Party and the Republican Party.

There is also a link to the 2008 Annual Report on the website www.aclink.org/boardofelections/.

Staff Training

Staff members attended training throughout 2009. This included Ms. Vitiello and Mr. Sacchinelli attending Rutgers' Train the Trainer in July. All staff attended a county wide safety seminar in September.

TRAINING of MUNICIPAL CLERKS

The Board of Elections participated in various Municipal Clerks meetings and conducted 2 training sessions for the Municipal Clerks. Consistent updates and training ensures that the Municipal Clerks and the Elections offices work more efficiently together.

2010 GOALS

1. Meet at least three (3) times a year with other election offices to review election procedures and issues.
2. Attend at least three (3) Municipal Clerk's Association Meetings during the year.
3. Provide at least two (2) Training Sessions to Municipal Clerks during the year.
4. Contact service/community organizations (i.e. Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs) to schedule outreach program to recruit Poll Workers (by May, 2010).
5. Develop Power Point Presentation to be used in Recruitment and Training Sessions (by June, 2010).
6. Develop in-house Training Materials for existing and new employees (by July 2010).
7. Develop month-to-month timeline of duties for office (by February, 2010).
8. Provide at least two (2) Election Training Sessions for stakeholders during the year.