

Scott County Board of Supervisors  
June 9, 2020 8:00 a.m.

The Board of Supervisors met pursuant to adjournment with Croken, Kinzer, Maxwell, Beck and Knobbe present. Due to social distancing concerns relating to COVID19, Supervisors and staff were spaced apart during the meeting with some staff participating via telephone. The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

This special meeting was called for the purpose of canvassing the votes cast at the June 2, 2020 Scott County Primary Election.

Roxanna Moritz, County Auditor, said the results from the primary election show a record-breaking primary, and counties delivered results in record time to the Secretary of State. She said Scott County had 17,670 absentee ballots returned, which was good considering the fact that the County was under COVID restraints, with the Governor asking people to not go out unless necessary, and also two days before the election two murders occurred in Davenport and a curfew was issued. She said Scott County voters still had a great day due to the Secretary of State mailing out absentee ballot requests.

Supervisor Kinzer noted his polling place in Blue Grass was very calm and was very well ran even with the consolidated precincts at that location.

Moritz said she and her staff took the time to methodically evaluate what locations and which poll workers were available. She said she did not want to consolidate because she feels the likelihood of people voting is less if they have to drive too far or to somewhere they are not used to going.

She said she left the rural polling sites in-place, consolidated to two locations in Bettendorf, and consolidated to one location in every ward in Davenport. She said the USB drive in each ballot tabulator was programmed to read all 126 ballots in case of the need to move a polling place. She said going into the presidential election her office is working with GIS Manager Ray Weiser to create a GIS overlay of where absentees are coming from to help decide where staff are needed. She said her staff also made training videos for procedures and equipment used at the polls on Election Day.

Supervisor Knobbe asked out of the 17,000 requests received how many were returned.

Moritz said over 17,000 of the 23,000 plus ballots requested were received back to the Auditor's Office.

Knobbe asked how many voters switched from independent to Democrat or Republican and voted in the primary.

Moritz said only active registered voters were mailed request forms, and the number of party changes are not broken out yet. She said she could report those numbers by the end of the month.

Knobbe asked out of the 127,000 voters, how many were mailed an absentee ballot.

Moritz said over 23,000 were mailed a ballot and Scott County received 17,670 back. She said the Iowa State Association of County Auditors (ISACA) started a committee last year to look at all-mail elections, with the understanding that it would take four to five years to put that in place because of all of the laws that would have to be changed. She said she did not want an all-mail election this year because of the opportunity for mishaps to occur. She said the data clearly shows over the last 10 years voting patterns have changed to early voting because it is more convenient.

Knobbe asked about the procedure for incomplete ballot requests.

Moritz said under Iowa law for a voter with an incomplete request her staff have to immediately send a letter and/or a phone call and/or look at the I-Voters system to confirm. She said typically voters leave a number off or invert numbers in two places, their birthdays and their addresses. She said Auditors can use the I-Voters database to look up every voter and see all of their documentation. She said a bill being considered in the legislature will take away that ability.

Beck asked if the Secretary of State sent out absentee requests forms to active voters regardless if they were Democratic, non-party or Republican.

Moritz answered correct.

Supervisor Maxwell asked if someone sent in an application and transposed the birthdate, what would happen.

Moritz said we have to send a letter and a new application to the voter, saying that the first application was incomplete or incorrect and then hopefully the voter will send back the new application and we will send them a ballot. She said she cannot change the information according to what is in this bill.

Croken thanked Moritz and her team from the Board for a successful election under the crazy circumstances.

Moved by Croken, seconded by Maxwell a motion to certify the results of the June 2, 2020 Scott County Primary Election. Roll Call: All Ayes.

Moritz gave a presentation regarding the upcoming general election. She said statistics show that people are going to move towards early voting.

Roland Caldwell, Auditor's Office Operations Manager, reviewed results from a recent NBC News survey which asked how voters plan to vote; either by mail, in-person early or in-person on election day. He said applying the percentages from the survey to Scott County results in a projected 58,915 early votes, with 40,860 by mail. He said comparing this result to the 2012 general election, which had the greatest turnout in

both early voting and overall voting, shows the County would have 15,237 more votes by mail than ever before. He noted that in-person early voting would be slightly less and in-person election day voting would be significantly less. He said the total number of early votes would be overwhelming under current planning, creating staffing and space problems. He said more people could be hired, but questioned how to accommodate more space. He said the Auditor's Office is looking at various scenarios. He said to remove the absentee program to outside the Administrative Center would require a secure facility and be under camera. He also said the general election will incur more costs than anticipated because the Auditor's Office will have to run two programs, a by-mail program and an in-person program.

Moritz said she had intended to bring a plan to the Board, but that for the last 10 years she has been asking the Board to put the elections department someplace where she can train and where she can facilitate elections. She said she last asked when the Tremont facility was vacated by the Sheriff's Office. She said, with 4,000 square feet, it would be a great venue to accommodate the elections department and to continuously train poll workers. She said at that time it was too costly because such a move would require an additional employee and another high-speed copier. She said all the other auditor offices in the larger counties are within walking distance of their equipment. She also said the warranty for the high-speed scanners requires ES&S personnel to move those off site.

She said based on the numbers presented there is insufficient space in the Administrative Center. She said the absentee board was barely able to social distance using the sixth floor conference rooms with the 17,000 ballots received. She said she needs guidance from the Board because what she has asked for in the past has not worked.

Knobbe asked what the cost is to deliver mail-in versus in-person voting.

Moritz said she wants to make sure the Board and the public understands that during her tenure in office she has never seen a mass mailing of absentee requests in a primary election, and it only occurred in this primary because of the pandemic. She said typically in general elections the parties and candidates mail absentee requests and so the only cost to the County is mailing out the ballot. She said the likelihood is that she may consolidate precincts going into the general election. She said the variable costs will increase.

She said that in a letter she wrote to the General Assembly on behalf of the ISACA Board she showed how absentee ballots have shown an increase in popularity with both majority parties in Iowa. She said for Republicans absentee voting in presidential elections increased from 109,827 in 2000 to 225,800 in 2016. She noted that five states vote by mail in its entirety and about 18 states utilize some form of mail-in ballots and/or precinct depositories.

Beck said he was wondering about the costs to mail the ballots, and when the ballots come back in, tracking down and calling voters who did not sign the ballot envelope. He said when a polling place is open the voters are there. He said if this is the trend then in the future the County is looking at greater expense and be aware of in future budgeting.

Moritz said she absolutely thinks that is the trend because people do not want to be out and she cannot forecast the issues such as in the primary.

Croken asked if Moritz has had conversations about space for elections, if there are options she has her eye on and if four or five months is adequate time to relocate and be ready for the general election.

Moritz said she thinks the County is in trouble going into the general election. She said she worked with Tammy Speidel, FSS Director, in looking at the Tremont Warehouse site, which would be a great place and where the equipment is stored now. She said they also looked at the opportunity of DHS moving out of the Administrative Center, possible to the ground transportation center which had a full floor available. She said that space is gone now.

Croken asked if the space at the Tremont Warehouse is still available.

Speidel answered that the space Moritz is talking about is currently available but will very shortly be full of parts and pieces for the SECC Radio Project, that the County is required to store. She said, long term, it was thought that it may be a space for disaster recovery, so that if something happened downtown, County offices could resume operations out there.

Croken asked Speidel if there is another space that could accommodate the Auditor's needs.

Speidel said not in our current spaces.

Moritz said her concern is to put things in place for her current and future staff to be successful and for Scott County to be successful. She said she does not know how to facilitate both the law and social distancing if we are still in a pandemic scenario.

Kinzer said COVID could makes its return this fall, and the same situation would occur again. He suggested that FSS could come up with a plan and come up with a place. He said the County put money in the budget to purchase land recently and maybe we could look at available facilities around here for the needed space and start today with coming up with a plan to find a place.

Knobbe said it is clear that the methods of voting are changing and asked Moritz to walk through the process that they have in place and work with the Administrative team, produce the facts and figures and statistics that, in her mind, justify the case, withstand scrutiny and make sure it stands up and said they can bring a recommendation to us.

Moritz said she will do that, and said her intentions were to bring that today, but because the Senate went in session Wednesday, she has been busy with representing ISACA regarding House File 2486.

Croken asked if the Board could get the recommendation for the next Board cycle.

Moritz said she can give the Board her plan of what the numbers are of what she thinks she needs, the square footage needs, what it is going to take to facilitate November and put that in a document. She said in the meantime she can work with Speidel to see if there is something available.

Beck asked how the space would be utilized between elections.

Moritz said for the Tremont location she asked to move the four elections staff out there. She said she thought that was a great idea because it was centrally located within the County for people coming to the elections department and for absentee voting. She said the elections department is on constant cycles, taking about six weeks for National Change of Address (NCOA) work, taking about six weeks to deliver an election and then moving into maintenance of equipment and voter records.

Maxwell said the solution may be in two pieces where something is done for this election and later find a solution for the future.

Moritz asked everyone to think out of the box and said she will put a plan together and said that having multiple conversations will help.

Moritz reviewed a letter that she wrote to the Iowa General Assembly and said there is a short turnaround with the Senate and the House about HF2486. She said she does not know if or how the County's lobbyist organization has registered on this bill.

Knobbe said they are talking about it.

Moritz said it came out of the Senate on Friday night at 10:30 and said the minority in the House believes that it will come to the House on Wednesday and probably voted on by Thursday. She said she wrote this letter on behalf of the ISACA organization and she requested that the Board consider voting in opposition to it.

Moritz said the I-Voters system is the best means available and not allowing Auditors to utilize the system hurts all of us. She said Senator Smith's amendment, which was a 30 page amendment to a two sentence bill, has lots of things that hurt all of us. She said the majority of other Auditors feel that removing the best means available is the one provision that will hurt Auditors the worst by not being able to use the I-Voter state voter registration system. She said Auditors really care about the limitation on consolidation of precincts because County Auditors know their Counties better than the legislature. She said Scott County went from 63 down to 23 precincts which would fall within the 35 percent limitation. She said County Auditors know where their voters are, have the

statistical data and that decision should be left to local control. She said she does not care if the Secretary of State mails absentee ballot requests.

She said another concern has to do with healthcare facilities. She said during the pandemic the Secretary of State mailed request forms to residents of healthcare facilities and allowed for ballots to be mailed directly to residents of healthcare facilities. She said under this new bill that would not happen, which she assumes will cause a lawsuit if the facilities are closed to the public. She said normally the activity directors in healthcare facilities help the residents who wish to vote fill out absentee request forms and then send them to the Auditor's Office. Our office then sends a healthcare facility team consisting of a Republican and a Democratic member of the Absentee and Special Voter Precinct Board to the facility to assist residents in voting.

Kinzer asked if there was any room at the Secondary Roads facility to store the Radio Project equipment.

Speidel said it would have to be a climate controlled space but she would check.

Kinzer asked the Chair and Vice-Chair, who speak to the lobbyists, to oppose the bill, because the letter referenced by Moritz comes from ISACA, a bi-partisan board.

Moved by Beck, seconded by Kinzer at 9:13 a.m. a motion to adjourn the special meeting. All Ayes.

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Tony Knobbe, Chair of the Board  
Scott County Board of Supervisors

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ATTEST: Roxanna Moritz  
Scott County Auditor