

CECIL COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Jennifer Graham, President
Stephen Stiles, Vice President
Krista Moretz, Secretary
Eunice Grant, Member
Holcombe Grier, Member



Gary Holmes,
Director

Karen Benecewicz,
Deputy Director

Bradley A. Moore, Esq., Board Counsel

Cecil County Board of Elections

April 16, 2025
MINUTES

Public Notice of the Meeting was provided by displaying the meeting information and agenda on the bulletin board in the lobby of the Cecil County Administration Building, and by posting on the Election agency website and Election agency social media platforms. A copy of the agenda was made available.

Meeting of the Cecil County Board of Elections was held on April 16, 2025 in the Rising Sun Room on the second floor of the Cecil County Administration Building located at 200 Chesapeake Boulevard in Elkton, Maryland. Public viewing of this meeting was available in person. Board member attendance was in person, unless otherwise noted.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by President Jennifer Graham at 3:06pm.

Attendees: Jennifer Graham, President
Stephen Stiles, Vice President
Krista Moretz, Secretary (Recorder of the Minutes)
Eunice Grant, Member
Holcombe Grier, Member
Gary Holmes, Cecil County Board of Elections Director
Sheri Woodruff, Cecil County Board of Elections Supervisor
Bradley Moore, Esq., Cecil County Board of Elections Counsel
Dan Schneckenburger, Cecil County Director of Administration
Steve Reisler, Cecil County Director of Facilities Management
Karen Nusic, Cecil County Risk Manager
Michelle Henson, Representative of Council
Jeff Sellers, Commercial Real Estate Broker
Mary Nelson, Public
Sean Brimm, Public

Declaration of Quorum:

The meeting was called to order by President, Jennifer Graham, at 3:06 PM. Quorum was established with all five (5) Board Members present.

President's Remarks:

Jennifer Graham started by thanking everyone for their attendance at the meeting. She then invited the Director to begin his presentation to the county representatives, as listed above, regarding the new facility request.

Note: There was a warehouse tour prior to the meeting to establish that current warehouse conditions are not conducive to Cecil County Board of Elections' needs for housing election materials and electronic equipment. Those persons touring included: Gary Holmes, Michelle Henson, Karen Nusic, Stephen Stiles, Holcombe Grier, and staff member Ashira Martin.

Presentation for New Facilities Request for Cecil County Board of Elections:

Gary Holmes led the meeting regarding the Board's request for new office and warehouse space to support ongoing election operations. The presentation opened with a brief review of the earlier tour of the current warehouse, which was acknowledged to be insufficient in both size and condition. Concerns were raised about the facility's overall safety and its inability to support growing operational demands. It was emphasized that election operations require extensive preparation, including hiring and training both temporary workers and election judges each election cycle. The current office space is not only undersized but lacks adequate safety features. Given the heightened concerns around election official safety, secure and functional workspaces are a priority. The Board noted difficulties in reserving meeting rooms within the county building for critical operations such as election judge training, staff meetings, and canvassing procedures. Additionally, the presentation highlighted logistical challenges related to the secure transport and storage of ballots, ballot marking devices, and scanners. Both the warehouse and office spaces have been outgrown by the staff and the scope of election activities. Power supply issues including insufficient outlets and overloaded circuits were noted as ongoing concerns, along with limited floor and table space for election preparation tasks. The board emphasized that upcoming state regulations will require enhanced warehouse conditions, including climate control, fire prevention measures, and protections against leaks, and pest infestations. A proposed floor plan was also presented. The justification for the request was the safety and security of both personnel and critical election equipment and materials.

Discussion:

A productive conversation took place between the county representatives and the Board of Elections regarding the facility needs and potential options within the community. Everyone agreed that the existing facilities are insufficient to meet the current needs of the Board of Elections. Representatives had the opportunity to share their concerns. In particular, it was noted that many county residents prefer to vote at the administrative building. Additionally, concerns were raised about the facility not being fully utilized 100 percent of the time. There was also discussion of the cost of retrofitting an existing building and the question was raised about whether the State Board of Elections would assist in funding some of the cost for this facility. Gary Holmes will inquire with the State Board of Elections.

Decision:

All members agreed to prioritize the development of a new facility in the next fiscal year, ensuring these efforts do not interfere with the preparations for, and execution of, the 2026 gubernatorial election. This timeline allows for adequate planning and coordination, ensuring the facility is ready to meet the increased demands following that election cycle.

Following the discussion, the county representatives departed the meeting.

Board Meeting Resumed:

The meeting was called back to order by President, Jennifer Graham, at 4:01 pm.

Agenda:

No additions to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes of the March 19, 2025, Board meeting were provided to the Board with a copy in each of their folders.

MOTION: Stephen Stiles, Vice President Cecil County Board of Elections motioned to approve

the minutes for the March 19, 2025 Board Meeting.

SECOND: Holcombe Grier, member Cecil County Board of Elections

ACTION: Minutes approved unanimously.

Director's Report:

Everyone present received a copy of the Director's Report in their folder.

Gary Holmes, Director started the meeting reviewing statistics and processing details, which included: the completion of the critical oversight report for Worcester County; the office processed 782 voter records; the office processed the first quarter Jury List, researching non-resident and deceased voter records; and the office received one candidacy filing for 2026 election.

Besides weekly staff meetings, there were additional meetings, trainings, and workgroups this past month as well. Gary Holmes visited the Circuit Court Jury Clerk to discuss reports and rooms used by the office and provided them with applications for voters to make changes to their voter records. Several of our office personnel attended the following meetings, including: Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) Voting Meeting, MAEO Board Meeting, MIV Lessons Learned Meeting, Voter Registration Committee Meeting, Municipal Election Questionnaire Meeting, State Board of Elections Meeting, MAEO Conference Planning Committee, Election Judge Manual Workgroup, and Gemini Google Training. Karen Benecewicz attended the Drop Box Demo at the Elections Warehouse. The office put together a very nice gift basket highlighting several Cecil County businesses and organizations for the MAEO conference.

With regards to Information Technology (IT), the website and our warehouse, it was noted that the Post Election Maintenance (PEM) was concluded two weeks ahead of the deadline. The staff are currently working on inventory. They have met with the County IT department about the future requirements of broadcasting Board meetings online, as will be required by law, starting in June. Additional meetings were expected

as there will be a need for software and licensing. In the meantime, all future Board meetings will be taking place in the Rising Sun Room (2nd floor) due to the new requirement. There may be occasions where we meet in the Elk Room as well. Further information will be announced.

Lastly, the Director reviewed legislative and other news. There is a new staff member that will be working in the office beginning mid-May. All members received a copy of the MAEO CONNECT 24 Newsletter which contained a highlight of Cecil County on page 5. In addition, all members received a list of bills that have gone through legislation and not passed or that passed and were awaiting the Governor's signature. At this time, SBO313/HBO426 Postelection Tabulation Audits (Risk Limiting Audits) passed both the House and Senate – so the Clear Ballot auditing may become optional. Finally, everyone was encouraged to take a look at the new brochure board in the main lobby of the Cecil County Administration Building.

Sheri Woodruff added that the primary date has changed to June 23 and early voting dates will also move.

Counsel Report: None

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Announcements and Disclosures:

Holcombe Grier, member of the Board of Elections, disclosed that he made a donation to "Act Blue." Jennifer Graham, Board President disclosed that she is working with an advocacy workshop to train people to tell their story in 2 minutes.

A in Delaware

*non-political,
non-profit*

Questions and Concerns:

Mary Nelson inquired if the Election Judge Manual was going to be updated. Sheri Woodruff responded that she and Karen Benecewicz are editing Chapter 8 of the Election Judge Training Manual as part of a MAEO workgroup. Mary Nelson also asked who mandated the hire of new office employees. Gary Holmes responded that it was previously planned and approved by the State. Mary Nelson expressed that she didn't like virtual meetings during Covid because there wasn't a way to have conversation with members on livestream. Gary Holmes responded that the public can submit discussion questions ahead of the meeting. Sean Brimm told the Board to not be afraid to request supplemental appropriation if we find the right location. He stated this County Council is much better at listening to the public.

Next Board Meeting:

The Board Meeting will convene at 3:00 PM on May 21, 2025 in the Rising Sun Room (2nd floor) of the Cecil County Administrative Building. We will practice running our meeting on livestream. Jennifer Graham, Board President, can expect to swear in new staff members at that time.

Details for the MAEO conference are in each member's packet.

Adjournment:

MOTION: Stephen Stiles, Vice President Cecil County Board of Elections motioned to adjourn.

SECOND: Eunice Grant, member Cecil County Board of Elections

ACTION: The meeting adjourned at 5:09 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Krista Moretz, Secretary

Jennifer Graham, President