

REGULAR MEETING – April 8, 2020

On this the 8th day of April 2020, at approximately 10:05 A.M. the Honorable Election Commission of Blanco County convened in a REGULAR MEETING via video conferencing with the following members to-wit:

BRETT BRAY	COUNTY JUDGE
LAURA WALLA	COUNTY CLERK
KRISTEN SPIES	COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR COLLECTOR
CARLETTE LEWIS	REPUBLICAN PARTY CHAIR
TERRY CASPARIS	DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHAIR

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ITEM 1 – Call to Order and Roll Call.

County Judge Bray, County Clerk Walla, County TAC Spies, Republican Party Chair Lewis, Democratic Party Chair Casparis announced present. Also, present Assistant County Attorney Kim Ashby.

ITEM 3 –Public Comments attached

ITEM 4 – Approval of prior Election Commission minutes.

COUNTY TAC SPIES made the motion to approve the prior minutes as presented. Seconded by REPUBLICIAN PARTY CHAIR LEWIS. Judge Bray called for discussion and vote.

JUDGE BRAY – YES.

COUNTY CLERK WALLA – YES.

COUNTY TAC SPIES – YES.

REPUBLICAN PARTY CHAIR LEWIS – YES.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHAIR CASPARIS – YES. MOTION CARRIED. 5/0

ITEM 5 – Consider applications and possible action regarding appointment of an Elections Administrator.

No action taken on this item.

ITEM 6 – No Executive Session

ITEM 8 – Adjourn

COUNTY CLERK WALLA made the motion to adjourn, seconded by DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHAIR CASPARIS. Judge Bray called for discussion and vote.

JUDGE BRAY – YES.

COUNTY CLERK WALLA – YES

COUNTY TAC SPIES – YES.

REPUBLICAN PARTY CHAIR LEWIS – YES.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHAIR CASPARIS – YES. MOTION CARRIED. 5/0

Meeting adjourned at 10:28 A.M.

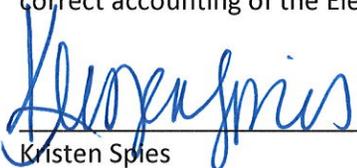
ACTION ITEMS

No action items

The above and foregoing minutes were examined and approved in Open Court this 17th
day of April, 2020.

State of Texas
County of Blanco

I, Kristen Spies County Tax Assessor Collector, Blanco County, Texas attest that the foregoing is a true and correct accounting of the Election Commission authorized proceedings for April 8, 2020.



Kristen Spies
TAX ASSESSOR COLLECTOR

I am Kenneth Welch of Blanco County,

The Texas Secretary of State issued an ELECTION ADVISORY on April 2. I have reviewed it and urge you to begin today addressing the various potential situations that may arise during the July 14 runoff election and the General Election in November.

I am only personally familiar with the Precinct 401 polling place at the South Annex in Blanco. However, considering it, I recognize the importance of action on your part. There are several possibilities that the Sec. of State has noted that might help resolve the issues. The polling place is small, therefore social and physical distancing will likely be impossible.

Consolidate Precincts for the runoff election

Sec. 42.009 allows the consolidation of precincts for certain elections. If a suitable site is available that will allow for physical spacing, then consolidation may be the easiest and most economical solution for the runoff election. Any cost for additional poll workers to continually clean and sanitize the polling place could be minimized.

Relocation of Polling places

Chapter 43 outlines the requirements for polling place selection. If the COVID-19 virus is still a factor in Nov., relocation will be the most desirable alternative to run an effective general election. Location, space, and accessibility are the three main factors. A search for such a location should be undertaken immediately. If this alternative is chosen the site could be used during the runoff, which might limit voter confusion during the general election.

If the South Annex remains the primary choice for the elections, then more significant possibilities must be considered. I have addressed Curbside Voting and Voting by Mail in my written statement. However, they should not be necessary.

Curbside Voting is mentioned by the Sec. of State.

Sec. 64.009. VOTER UNABLE TO ENTER POLLING PLACE. (a) If a voter is physically unable to enter the polling place without personal assistance or likelihood of injuring the voter's health, on the voter's request, an election officer shall deliver a ballot to the voter at the polling place entrance or curb.

- If the South Annex is used as the polling place then all voters should be allowed to:
 - curbside vote if the "stay at home orders" are still in effect.
 - Sec. 64.009 does NOT require that the voter has a "disability" to use curbside voting. It only requires that they are unable to enter the polling place without the **"likelihood" of injuring the voter's health**. In the confined space of precinct 104 it would be likely that a voter could be injured if the virus is present.
 - More election workers may be necessary with this option.

Voting by Mail is also mentioned in the Advisory.

Sec. 82.002. DISABILITY. (a) A qualified voter is eligible for early voting by mail if the voter has a sickness **or physical condition that prevents the voter from appearing at the polling place on election day without a likelihood of needing personal assistance or of injuring the voter's health**.

- If the South Annex is used as the polling place, then all voters could be allowed to vote by mail.
 - Sec. 82.002 does NOT require that the voter has a disability. It only requires that the voter has a **physical condition** that prevents the voter from appearing at the polling place ...without the likelihood of injuring the voters health.
 - All of us have a physical condition; lungs and a the breathing process.
 - If the virus is present then there would be a likelihood of injury to the voters health

- This interpretation may require a court order to implement because the Sec. of State seems to interpret the law to require a person to be defective in some way (disabled) to be eligible to vote by mail.

Communications Plan

Knowing that each of you desires to have well run elections I urge you to begin now with your decision. Assume that you will have to deal with the virus, make your decision and develop an aggressive **communications plan** to inform the voters of the changes. The public is very aware and supportive of the community together effort we are facing. Take advantage of that collaboration by informing them of the plan and encourage the best voter turnout ever for Blanco County.

With all the normal work to prepare for the elections, plus the virus complications, it is more important than ever that you find the right person to be Election Administrator. All of you have indicated full support for this position and pledged cooperation to help the individual that is chosen. It will be extremely important to **avoid a toxic, semi-hostile environment** for the new administrator to function effectively.