

MEETING OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF ELECTIONS
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK
HELD ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2023 AT 1:30 P.M.
42 BROADWAY, 6th FLOOR, COMMISSIONERS' HEARING ROOM
NEW YORK, NY 10004

PRESENT: President Simon Shamoun
Secretary Rodney L. Pepe-Souvenir

Commissioners Michael J. Coppotelli, Carol R. Edmead, Michele A. Sileo,
Frederic M. Umane

Vincent M. Ignizio, Deputy Executive Director
Georgea Kontzamanis, Operations Manager
Michael Corbett, Administrative Manager
Hemalee J. Patel, General Counsel
Raphael Savino, Deputy General Counsel
Steven B. Denkberg, Counsel to the Commissioners
Kenneth Moltner, Counsel to the Commissioners

GUESTS: Gail Oakes
Alan Flacks

Mr. Ignizio opened the meeting with item #1 of the meeting agenda, the approval of the minutes of the October 24, 2023 Commissioners Meeting.

Hearing no objections, the minutes of the October 24, 2023 Commissioners Meeting were adopted.

Mr. Ignizio continued with item #2 of the meeting agenda, an Update on the November 7, 2023 General Election.

Mr. Ignizio provided the following update:

- Today is the 4th day of Early Voting, and the polls are open until 4:00 P.M.
- Today is also Halloween, and the first 300 voters at each Early Voting poll site will be able to snag one of our snazzy “I Voted” stickers, that are back by popular demand and are all the rage on X, formerly called Twitter.
- At the close of polls last night, 22,637 New Yorkers have voted early. Early Voting continues until Sunday, November 5, 2023 and the hours can be found at www.vote.nyc or by calling our offices.
- In total, we’ve processed and mailed out 82,937 absentee ballots, and an additional 159 accessible ballots citywide. To date we have received back a total of 22,736 ballots citywide.

Reminder to the Public: The last day to apply for an absentee ballot in person is Monday, November 6, 2023.

Our borough offices have extended office hours which can also be found on the Board’s website at www.vote.nyc or by calling 1-866-VOTE-NYC.

- The last day to register to vote for the General Election was this past Saturday, October 28, 2023.

Here in the General Office, we received 75 walk-ins, 374 walk-ins combined at our borough offices, 229 through our online voter registration system, and 24 at Early Voting sites through the affidavit process.

All registrations have been processed. To date since the June Primary, we have registered 52,168 new voters citywide.

- Preparations and voting equipment testing are still ongoing for our General Election, and we expect to meet all of our targets.

This concluded the update on the November 7, 2023 General Election.

Mr. Ignizio informed the Commissioners that there is someone here today that would like to address the Board.

Mr. Ignizio acknowledged Gail Oakes and asked that she present her matter before the Commissioners Committee.

Ms. Oakes stated that she has been a poll worker for approximately 40 years, and lately it seems that she has been retaliated against. Ms. Oakes stated that she is reporting that her brother has been using her address falsely for a very long time. Although he sold his interest in the property, in the family home, he is still voting under her address. Ms. Oakes stated that she is present today because she has tried to no avail and has called the DMV, the USPS Postmaster, and several people at the Board and yet his name still remains active under her address.

Ms. Oakes stated that there is also another party, and as a poll worker it is a part of her duty to challenge someone that she is aware of that does not live where they claim to live on her block. Ms. Oakes stated that she feels that she is being retaliated against due to these two issues and feels that both parties have connections and know “people”.

Mr. Ignizio thanked Ms. Oakes for her 40 years of service to the City of New York and stated that the Legal Team will sit and meet with her today to gather additional details and provide her with the next steps in this process, as long as that meets the Commissioners’ approval.

Ms. Oakes stated that she would also like to look into the matter of her assignment for this election; out of the 10 days that she signed up for she has only received 2, and they're at different locations.

At Commissioner Umane's request, Ms. Oakes provided her address and stated that she lives at 33-33 98th Street, Corona, New York. Ms. Oakes stated that for all these years she has worked at P.S. 92, for different reasons, noting that she has difficulty walking and pulmonary issues.

Commissioner Coppotelli informed Ms. Oakes that there is a process under the New York State Election Law where she will be sworn in and will challenge the voters, the borough Commissioners will appoint a committee to go out and visit the house and confirm and investigate, and the voter can then be taken off the rolls. This is a process that has to happen, and the Legal Team will review that process with her.

Ms. Oakes stated that she has been trying to remedy this situation for more than six years. At the Commissioners' request, Ms. Oakes provided the Legal Team with the names of the voters that she is challenging.

While Ms. Oakes met with the Legal Team, the Commissioners acknowledged Alan Flacks who has requested to address the Commissioners Committee.

Mr. Flacks addressed the Commissioners, and stated that a small handful of friends, voters and party officials questioned what is the cost per vote for having Early Voting, with the possible exception of a presidential election year, should Early Voting be continued in non-presidential election years, noting that it is not being cost effective. How much per vote, the aggregated cost of early voting divided by the number of people who have voted, whatever borough, may not be worth it. Mr. Alan suggested that the Board do away with early voting, except for a heavy vote during a presidential year.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Flacks for his comments.

The Commissioners took a brief recess while Ms. Patel gathered the voter challenge information from Ms. Oakes.

In the interim, Mr. Ignizio requested that the Commissioners set the date of the next meeting for Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 1:30 P.M. due to fact that next week Tuesday, November 7, 2023 is Election Day.

Commissioner Umane moved to set the date of the next meeting for Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 1:30 P.M. Secretary Pepe-Souvenir seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously.

The meeting resumed with the voter challenge presented by Ms. Oakes.

Commissioner Umane noted that Ms. Oakes did not mention the names of the voters that she is challenging in her previous statement. For the record, Mr. Ignizio asked that Ms. Oakes state the names of the people that she said do not live at the address, and state said address.

Ms. Oakes stated that she would like to challenge the voter registrations of Robert E. Oakes, Jr. and Irene Ramos. Ms. Oakes stated that Robert Oakes uses her address at 33-33 98th Street, Corona, New York 11368. Ms. Oakes also stated that she has produced an online copy of her deed. Ms. Oakes confirmed for Mr. Ignizio that Robert Oakes is not eligible and has not lived at that address, her address, since 1985 or 1986. For Ms. Ramos, Ms. Oakes provided the address of 33-41 98th Street, Corona, New York 11368 and noted that this address is three doors down from her residence.

Commissioner Umame administered the challenge oath to Ms. Oakes, and she did solemnly swear and affirm that the forgoing statement made by her on October 31, 2023 is a truthful disclosure of the reasons for her belief that the registered voters named by her are not qualified to continue to be registered in the election district in which they are now registered.

Mr. Ignizio informed Ms. Oakes that the Board will now conduct an investigation as approved by the Board of Commissioners.

President Shamoun moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Umame seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next stated meeting of the Commissioners is scheduled for Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 1:30 P.M.