**Monroe County Vote Center Committee Meeting**

January 24, 2024 5:00 PM

**Conference Room 100 B, Showers Building and via Teams**

Call To Order

Chair Ilana Stonebraker called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. Also present in person were Taylor Bryant, William Ellis, Ami Gandhi, Evan Nayee, Debora Shaw, Danny Shields, Hal Turner, Stephen Volan, Clerk Nicole Browne; Stacy Kowalczyk joined through Teams.

Approval of Minutes

Hal Turner moved approval of minutes of the December 7, 2023 and January 10, 2024 meetings. William Ellis seconded.

**Motion Passes Unanimously.**

Approval of Meeting Schedule

William Ellis moved approval of the agenda. Danny Shields seconded.

**Motion Passes Unanimously**

New Business

Clerk Browne addressed and discussed with committee members seven questions the committee had posed.

a. What barriers do voters face with current voting operations?

Stonebelt clients have assessed current sites for accessibility. State experts have advised on addressing barriers that were found. Transportation to the polls is generally not a problem; nonpartisan groups, county political parties, even the IU bus system have offered rides to the polls.

b. What models exist for vote centers: is a “universal” viable, in which all current polling places would be converted to vote centers? If so, how would future potential consolidations be handled?

Clerk Browne recommends this “universal” approach. It worked well for Marion County, so should be possible to implement here. It would be difficult to offer “satellite” early voting at locations other than Vote Central in Bloomington. Mobile early voting – in various locations at different times – was tried here several years ago an proved difficult to explain to voters.

A future clerk will have data from how the vote centers work and be able to recommend any consolidations. This question of consolidations is not within the purview of this committee.

c. What methods are available to educate voters about the switch to vote centers? Are any methods more or less effective?

The county would use the same methods currently used to convey information about early voting and Election Day.

d. Should we assume that all ballots will be printed on demand, or is there interest in pre-printing ballots in anticipation of need at certain locations?

Printed ballots could be pre-positioned at locations where high demand is expected, with couriers used to supply additional pre-printed ballots if demand is heavy.

Taylor Bryant and William Ellis noted concerns about the security of pre-printed ballots and the need to reconcile/account for all ballots printed. Some voters could be concerned about election security, even decide not to vote because of this concern.

e. Should we consider the potential implications of switching to electronic voting machines?

Monroe County has chosen to use paper ballots because of the security they provide. Currently 60% to 70% of Indiana Counties use electronic voting. Vote centers work with either type of equipment, so type of machines need not concern the committee. Any recommendation to change would be made by a future clerk.

f. Is there any information on how long it takes for a voter to sign in and receive a ballot-on-demand, for example from early voting in Monroe County?

Clerk Browne’s experience is that early voting takes no more than 15 minutes. Ballot-on-demand printers cost in the neighborhood of $10,000. Hart InterCivic vendor Bob White would be a useful source for information on how many printers the county has and how many it would need.

g. Is there any legislation that we need to be aware of tha might affect our work on the vote center committee? We think HB 1265 might affect some things but are not sure.

Clerk Browne is not aware of any proposed state legislation that would abolish vote centers.

Ami Gandhi observed that from her experience in other states, vote centers are successful when adopted in conjunction with other means to spread voting across more than in-person voting on Election Day – particularly early voting and vote-by-mail. Clerk Browne noted that the high level of vote-by-mail in 2020 required considerable reorganization of staffing; some of the challenges were due to COVID restrictions.

Clerk Browne thanked the committee members for their commitment and their efforts to investigate and report on how Monroe County can implement vote centers.

Motion To Adjourn

Chair Ilana Stonebraker called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:57. Danny Shields so moved; Stephen Volan seconded the motion.

**Motion Passes Unanimously**

**Next County Vote Center Meeting**

February 14, 2024 at 5:00 PM

**Conference Room 100 B, Showers Building 1st Floor**

501 N Morton St, Bloomington, IN 47404

and via Teams

A recording of this meeting is available at Community Access Television Services (CATS):

<https://catstv.net/m.php?q=13198>