

Special Committee on Voter Confidence Meeting Minutes

(Approved May 24, 2022)

Meeting date: May 13, 2022 at 1:00 P.M.

Location: State Archives Research Room,
9 Ratification Way
Concord, NH 03301

In Attendance:

Committee: Richard Swett (Co-chair), Bradford E. Cook (Co-chair), Andrew Georgevits, Amanda Merrill, Douglass Teschner, and Olivia Zink

Secretary of State's Office: Secretary of State David Scanlan, Anna Fay, Orville "Bud" Fitch, David Lang, Jennie Taggart Committee

Co-chair Richard Swett opened the meeting at 1:00 P.M. He announced there was a sign-up sheet for the public and encouraged participation.

The members of the Committee stated their names and town/city of residence.

Co-chair Cook moved to approve the 05/02/2022 draft minutes. Seconded by Andrew Georgevits. All in favor. None opposed.

Co-chair Swett discussed the name change, from Commission of Voter Confidence to the Special Committee on Voter Confidence.

Co-chair Swett announced the public can email the Commission directly at voterconfidence.sos.nh.gov

The Secretary of State staff informed the Committee of venues for the upcoming meetings.

There was a discussion of who will be presenting at meetings and co-chair Swett assured the public comment portion of the hearing is not limited on time or topics.

Secretary of State David Scanlan said that the Committee is not going to debate but listen, engage, express concerns, and recommend how to deal with them.

Attorney Orville "Bud" Fitch gave a detailed analysis of election laws. Attorney Fitch explained how the SOS election division administers and ensures accessible voting. He also discussed how the Election Manual is put together and updated, highlighting the transparency of the election process.

Attorney Fitch explained how local election officials are trained. He added a help desk is available at the Elections Division.

Committee member Douglass Teschner gave a quick overview of the Braver Angels organization and read over its ground rules for discussion points.

Co-chair Swett asked the public in attendance if they had any comments.

Public Comments

William Maddocks from Amherst spoke about the 2020 elections, absentee ballots, and the safety of local officials.

Co-chair Swett read a letter the Committee received from Ellen Farnum of Tamworth via email.

Alvin See from Loudon spoke about AccuVote machines, Windham voting, over-votes reported on machines in Derry, and current bills that are currently in the Legislature.

Co-chair Swett said there will be a meeting on how the voting machines work.

Janet Ward from Contoocook asked if there would be interactive hybrid meetings for those who are unable to attend meetings in person.

Chief of Staff for the New Hampshire Secretary of State David Lang explained there are some technical challenges with sound and producing ADA-complaint video when using multi-media platforms.

Co-chair Swett suggested the Committee consider one full-zoom meeting so participants can interact. Details will be discussed on a later date.

Liz Tentarelli, the President of the League of Women Voters of New Hampshire, said when there are challenges with voting it creates confusion and could lead voters to decide they aren't able to register. Ms. Tentarelli spoke about SB3 and suggested making the SOS website more user-friendly, creating more diversity on the Committee, and addressing disability access.

Co-chair Swett encouraged Ms. Tentarelli to take note of which town websites do not have voting information posted and inform the Committee.

Daniel Richard, Auburn, said he is familiar with voting law and has tracked how they have changed over time. Mr. Richard suggested that the Committee read Article II Part I from the Bill of Rights RE: inhabitant vs domicile. He discussed issues with absentee voting, voting machines and the voting process.

Co-chair Swett suggested Mr. Richard write a draft brief on why voting machines should not be used.

Lidia Yen from Concord, community organizer for ABLE NH, spoke on behalf of Executive Lisa Beaudoin. Ms. Yen discussed concerns ABLE NH has about the disability community's access to elections. She said ABLE NH is willing to help the Committee hold a town forum on accessibility concerns related to elections.

Secretary Scanlan responded that accessibility is a serious issue that the state tries to proactively deal with. He suggested ABLE NH come meet with him or the Attorney General to discuss these barriers.

Co-chair Swett suggested that ABLE NH bring instances of barriers around the state to the Committee's attention.

McKenzie St Germain, of Manchester and representing the New Hampshire Campaign for Voting Rights, suggested removing barriers for all voters, modernizing the election process and increasing the transparency of the Committee. She also suggested the Committee membership be expanded to include a wider array of voices, perspectives, and backgrounds from across the state.

Co-chair Cook asked Ms. St Germain how she suggests they modernize elections.

Ms. St Germain said further discussion on that would be needed.

Senator Becky Whitley from Concord, D-15, spoke about SB3 and SB418, and suggested modernizing the system so voters have easier registration. She mentioned the program ERIC (Electronic Registration Information Center).

Al Brandano, of Kensington and representing Hand Count NH LLC, discussed chain of custody issues regarding voting machines. He raised concerns about election training and risk limiting audits, and questioned who was responsible for printing ballots.

Secretary Scanlan clarified that the state prints ballots.

Representative Dianne Schuett of Pembroke, D-20, gave testimony on the issue of gerrymandering and redistricting.

Kristi St. Laurent, Windham, discussed the 2020 Windham election audit. She suggested better communication with voters on ballot markings. Ms. St Laurent asked that the findings of the Committee be sent to all elected officials.

Senator Donna Soucy of Manchester, D-18, spoke about voter participation and registration, and the ballot counting process. She recommended voter education, public service announcements, e-poll books, and more transparency in the recount process.

Tom Murray of Windham, co-founder of the Government Integrity Project, discussed the SB 43 audit. He also mentioned ballot reading issues. He expanded on ballot issues in Sandown and requested the Committee recount the town's votes.

Co-Chair Cook responded the Committee does not have the authority or the time to complete such requests. He asked Mr. Murray to send the Committee the conclusions and recommendations of his work.

Betty Dunn, Windham, suggested that the validity of the recount process be publicized and offered her help as someone with experience as a moderator and select board member.

Co-Chair Cook suggested the verification of the recount process be specified by the Secretary of State.

Co-Chair Swett announced the Committee's next meeting scheduled for May 24th at 1 p.m. at the Derry Town Hall.

Co-Chair Cook requested the Attorney General's team's presence at one of the Committee meetings.

Committee member Andrew Georgevits made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Co-Chair Cook seconded it. All voted in favor. None opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m.