

November 21, 2022

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a special session on November 21, 2022, in the Lincoln County Election Center, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Letcher, Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Teske, County Administrator Jim Hammons and Clerk and Recorder Robin Benson.

3:00 PM **Official Canvass of the November 8, 2022 General Election:** Present were Election Administrator Paula Buff, Assistant Election Administrator Amanda Eckart, HR Director Dallas Bowe, County Administrator Jim Hammons, and Donna Martin.

The County Canvass Board for the 2022 General Election were Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Letcher and Commissioner Teske.

Paula gave a brief statement noting this would be the last Canvass with Commissioner Bennett. Paula expressed a heartfelt thanks and gratitude for Commissioner Bennett's support helping with the construction of the election center, his interest in learning processes and spending a significant amount of time with her and election staff since she was hired as the Election Administrator. Paula stated, "You are a rock star and will be missed".

Paula provided statistical data: Total registered voters in Lincoln County is 15,202, approximately 2,000 more than when she was first hired in spring of 2021. Total ballots cast were 9433 (6420 absentee / 2917 poll / 96 provisional). Absentee voter turnout 76%. Poll voter turnout 43%. Total voter turnout was 62%. There were 8 rejected ballots for signature mismatch.

Paula explained checks/balances, statutes, and security measures regarding provisional ballot process, signature verification, early ballot prep and late registration.

Commissioner Letcher asked about a form he had to fill out regarding assisting his mother at the polling place. Mandy commented that it was a voter assistance form and noted that election judge training will be more extensive and longer in duration to help election judges provide more direction and information in the future.

Election Administrator Paula Buff presented the Canvass Board with the Abstract of Votes from the 2022 General Election held November 8, 2022. The Abstract of Votes are compared to the individual precinct reports printed from the tabulator on election night and after provisional ballots were included. Robin clarified that the Abstract of Votes comes from the Secretary of State's Office (SOS), therefore it is a security measure to ensure SOS reporting of Lincoln County election results are the same as the individual precinct reports without error. Paula explained the ESERS system of election reporting hosted by the SOS and further clarified that it is also a direct scrutiny of her manual data entry skills.

Commissioners compared every race, constitutional amendment, and legislative referendum from 14 individual precinct reports and compared those with the Abstract of Votes provided by the SOS. There were zero discrepancies.

Motion by Commissioner Teske to approve the Official Canvass of the November 8, 2022 General Election, Lincoln County. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried unanimously. The Canvass Board signed and certified the results of the Lincoln County 2022 General Election.

Paula provided a copy of the Post-Election Audit Report of Precinct 6-McCormick, as directed by the Secretary of State's Office. Audit included a hand count of Constitutional Amendment No. 48, US Representative 1st District, and Supreme Court Justice #2. Total ballots counted by tabulator were 234. Total ballots counted by hand were 234. There were zero discrepancies. The audit also included overvotes, undervotes and number of write in votes.

Robin commented that she is a firm believer in giving honor where honor is due and commended Paula and Mandy for their diligence and hard work administering the general election. Even during the Primary, you both had to roll up your sleeves and conducted the best hand count this side of the Mississippi. Robin thanked Commissioner Bennett for the support and significant amount of time spent with election staff, especially in mentoring how to deal with today's climate, which several county departments are experiencing.

Robin invited and encouraged Jim Hammons, Commissioner Letcher and Commissioner Teske to spend time with election staff, saying Paula and Mandy are always open to answer questions and have a conversation; it is encouraged to invest time with election staff directly. Robin talked about the audit confusion but knowing Paula and Mandy's work ethics and taking all comments into consideration, she is 100% sure there will be a clear and precise process moving forward. Similarly, ballot boxes were provided around the county in prior elections to accommodate electors in rural areas, one was accidentally left in Eureka on election night. Those ballots were counted and it is a positive in the sense that issue has been mitigated directly by the elections department.

Commissioner Teske said he did not spend time at the election center because he was on the ballot and did not want to give the wrong perspective.

Commissioner Letcher commended election staff saying the canvass was very well organized.

4:15 PM **Meeting Adjourned**

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Jerry Bennett, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Robin A. Benson, Clerk of the Board