

**SUMNER COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, December 09, 2025, 4:00 p.m.**

Members present: Chairman M. Allen Ehmling (arrived at 4:51 p.m.), Secretary Denise D. Shepherd, Commissioner Patricia D. Collins, Acting Chairman/Commissioner J. Michael Fussell and Commissioner Jeffery B. Hulsey. Also present: Lori D. Atchley, Administrator of Elections and Annette Haw, Assistant Administrator of Elections.

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Acting Chairman J. Michael Fussell as a quorum was present.

II. APPROVE AGENDA

Commissioner Hulsey made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Collins, and the motion passed 4 - 0.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

IV. APPROVE MINUTES

Commissioner Hulsey moved to group and approve the minutes for the November 12, 2025 Regular Meeting, November 24, 2025 Special Call Meeting, and November 24, 2025 Executive Session. Commissioner Collins seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. INSPECTION – APPEAL PROCESSED VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS

There was one appeal.

Voter TBG marked “Yes” to the “Have you been convicted of a felony?” declaration question. An appeal form was mailed to the voter who clarified with signature that there had been no felony conviction. After the Commissioners reviewed the documentation, a motion was made by Commissioner Shepherd to accept the voter registration application of TBG to appropriately register the voter to vote, seconded by Commissioner Hulsey and the motion passed 4 – 0.

B. INSPECTION – NEWLY PROCESSED VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS

Commissioners inspected 57 voter registration applications out of 568 new registration applications with no discrepancies noted. Commissioners present signed the report to be submitted to the State Division of Elections.

C. REPORT FROM ADMINISTRATOR

- FACILITY UPDATE

AOE stated that according to SCEC Legal Counsel Tom Lee, nothing had been received from the Chancery Court regarding the lawsuit and subsequent motion to resolve the permanent SCEC location at 1019 Union School Rd. The Rotomat card trays (not the machine housing units) had been moved to the 1019 location and placed on shelves in the small conference room.

- BUDGET UPDATE

AOE advised that at their meeting the previous evening on December 8, 2025, the budget committee voted to deny the SCEC request for funding to move the two Rotomat Machines that remain at the 355 N Belvedere Dr Room 106 location to 1019 Union School Rd. The County Commission's budget committee also voted to deny the new account classifications (8000) that had been assigned by the Finance Department (the accounts were changed at the request of the Finance Department from 1100 to 8000) and further voted to remove previously approved budget transfers (just minutes earlier in the same meeting) within the SCEC budget lines. Some transfers were 1100 to 1100, and some were 1100 to 8000. AAOE is unsure what transfers were made, if any, and what transfers were denied. The statements made by the Budget Chairman Shoaf were unclear. AAOE contacted the interim Finance Director Beth Browning on December 9, 2025 for a clarification; however, Ms. Browning was out of the office for the day and could not be reached. AOE will advise the SCEC as soon as clarification is received. AAOE was concerned about negative account line items in the budget.

- VOL STATE CIVIC EDUCATION SERIES

AOE reminded the Commissioners that the filming of the Vol State Civic Programs regarding elections will be conducted on December 16, 2025 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00

p.m. Commissioners Collins, Fussell, Hulsey and Shepherd have committed to attending. AAOE to clarify exact Vol State location entrance and notify the Commissioners prior to December 16.

- **2026 ELECTION CYCLE STATUS**

AOE requested that Commissioners formalize, via vote, the continued use of the existing 29 precincts for the 2026 election cycle and allow those 29 precincts to exceed 6,000 voters per precinct, if necessary.

The AOE suggested the following motion for the Commissioner's consideration:

Due to the lack of funding of the SCEC approved and submitted fiscal year 2025 – 2026 budget by the SCC, and further and continued denial of funding based on recommendations by the County Commission Budget Committee and denied by a majority vote of the full Sumner County Commission, the implementation of Convenient vote centers, and the addition of Nine (9) precincts is not possible for the 2026 Election Cycle. I therefore move to approve the AOE and staff to utilize the 29 existing precincts with overages allowed above the 6,000 voter per precinct (TCA 2-3-103 requirement – with the noted exception of “whenever practicable”) due to said lack of SCEC funding by the SCC.

After discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Collins to approve the motion as presented by the AOE. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hulsey, and the motion passed 4-0-1 with Chairman Ehmling abstaining due to his arrival mid-discussion.

- **OTHER**

AOE advised the Commissioners that the Tennessee Republican Party (TRP) held a by-law meeting on Saturday December 6, 2025, and changes were made to their by-laws regarding the process for qualifying Republican Candidates as bona-fide. The Republican Party of Sumner County (RPSC) State Executive Committeewoman, Maria Stewart, had reached out to AOE regarding informing potential candidates of the by-law changes as they related to the TRP qualification of candidates. AOE requested that Ms. Stewart reach out to the TRP to inquire if the organization would like to provide an insert or preferred language to be placed into candidate's packages provided at the time of petition pick-up. Ms. Stewart agreed to pursue that inquiry. Additionally, AOE extended the same invitation to Commissioners Collins and Shepherd on behalf of the Democratic Party.

AOE also reminded Commissioners that new Legislation was passed in the 2025 session regarding Bona-Fide wording that was to replace existing wording on Applications for Ballot. The old language and new language were provided to the Commissioners for comparison. AOE also presented and provided a copy of the bona-fide signs that will be placed at all voting locations. The sign language and color were provided by the State of Tennessee Division of Elections.

VI. REPORT FROM ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

A. CHAIRMAN

Acting Chairman Fussell stated that he would like to see continued discussions of the SCC and SCEC litigation matter at future budget and legislative meetings, as the Judge had instructed all such discussions be held in public.

Chairman Ehmling stated that he had spoken to SCEC Attorney Tom Lee earlier in the day and no word had been received from the Chancery Court. Mr. Lee intended to file a "notice of hearing" requesting the Judge to set a hearing date on the lawsuit and motion. Chairman Ehmling stated the Judge could set the case on the docket as requested or choose not to place the item on the document. It is at the Judge's sole discretion.

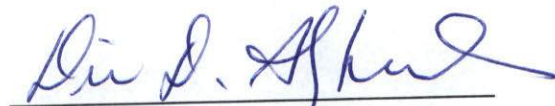
ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

No comments.

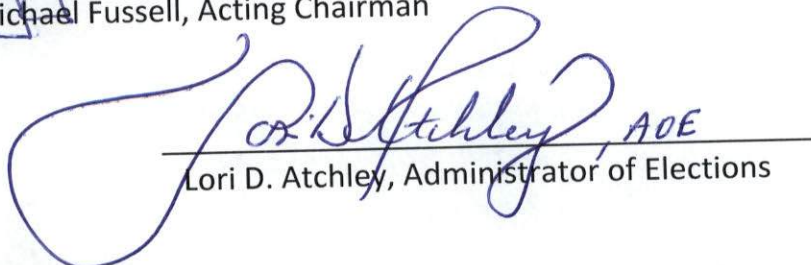
VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Hulsey, seconded by Commissioner Collins to adjourn the meeting and the motion passed 5 – 0. The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.


M. Allen Ehmling, Chairman


Denise D. Shepherd, Secretary


J. Michael Fussell, Acting Chairman


Lori D. Atchley, Administrator of Elections

ABBREVIATION LEGEND:

SCEC: Sumner County Election Commission
AOE: Administrator of Elections
AAOE: Assistant Administrator of Elections
TCA: Tennessee Code Annotated
1019: 1019 Union School Rd
RPSC: Republican Party of Sumner County

SCC: Sumner County Commission
SCM: Sumner County Mayor
CVCs: Convenient Vote Centers
355: County Administration Building
TRP: Tennessee Republican Party

ATTACHMENTS: Correspondence from the RPSC
New vs Old Language Comparison
Bona-Fide Sign to be displayed

Previous Language:

(Circle One Option Below)

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I reside at this address and that I **(have not)** **(have)** changed my address since the last election in which I voted; I request a ballot for the elections I have marked; I have not previously voted, nor previously been issued a ballot; and I am a registered and qualified voter at this precinct.

SIGNATURE
OF VOTER

X

New Language (2026):

PLEASE READ AND SIGN BELOW:

I request a ballot to vote in this election and declare, under penalty of perjury, that I reside at the above address and am a registered and qualified voter in the precinct in which I am offering to vote. I also declare that I have not previously voted in this election, nor will I attempt to vote again in this election. If this is a primary election, I am a bona fide member of and affiliated with the political party in whose primary I seek to vote; or I declare allegiance to the political party in whose primary I seek to vote and state that I intend to affiliate with that party.

X

Signature of Voter

Date

Please mail my absentee ballot(s) to:

Street Address

City

State

Zip

Assistance Signatures:(Required if voter cannot sign or make a mark).

Signature of Person Assisting

Address

Date

Signature of Witness

Address

Date

Notice to Political Party Candidates

Republican and Democratic Party Candidates

- Tenn. Code Ann. § 2-13-104 permits the statewide political parties to require bona fide membership status for its candidates.
- Both the Republican and Democratic Parties have adopted criteria that defines bona fide membership in their respective party.
- To learn more about how the political parties define bona fide status, you must consult with your political party.
- Contact information for the Republican and Democratic Parties is as follows:

Tennessee State Republican Party
95 White Bridge Road, Suite 414
Nashville, TN 37205
(615) 269-4260

Tennessee State Democratic Party
4900 Centennial Blvd., Suite 300
Nashville, TN 37209
(615) 327-9779

Republican Party Candidates

- The Tennessee Republican Party State Executive Committee has adopted a fee schedule for candidates wanting to participate in the Republican primaries. The collection of the fees will be handled and enforced by the Republican Party.
- Any questions about the fees must be directed to the Tennessee Republican Party using the contact information above.

**TENNESSEE REPUBLICAN PARTY BYLAWS
PROPOSED BYLAW LANGUAGE FOR ARTICLE IX, PARTY MEMBERSHIP FOR
CANDIDACY TO PUBLIC OFFICE, SECTION 2**

Section 2. The TRP, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to disqualify any individual from running as a Republican candidate if it determines the individual does not meet the standards or requirements set forth in this Article IX.

Upon receiving a prospective candidate's nominating petition and appropriate filing fee, the TRP will endeavor to verify the prospective candidate's voting record. If the TRP is unable to verify that the prospective candidate meets the voting requirements set forth in Article IX, Section 1, Paragraph A(1) or is considered ineligible under Article IX, Section 1, Paragraphs B or C, an automatic challenge to the candidate's bona fide Republican status will arise. In addition, individual Republican voters may challenge an individual's bona fide Republican status for purposes of seeking public office as detailed in Article IX, Section 2, Paragraph A below.

A. Any challenge of an individual's bona fide Republican status must be made to the State Chairman by at least five (5) individual registered voters (excluding SEC members), each of whom must 1) live in the district in which the challenged candidate has filed to run, and 2) have voted in at least three (3) of the four (4) most recent statewide Republican primary elections. Challenges must be made no later than five (5) days before the deadline for removal of a candidate's name from a ballot under TCA Section 2-5-204 or other applicable statute, rule or regulation, or any other applicable deadline.

B. In the event of any dispute about a prospective candidate's qualification to seek office as a Republican or request for a waiver of TRP requirements, the final decision is within the TRP's sole discretion. Any prospective candidate who is disqualified or challenged will be notified by the TRP and may respond to the decision and/or challenge provided that the response is provided to the TRP by its applicable deadlines. In the event that a prospective candidate submits the required filing fee, late fee, and/or the nominating petition to the TRP within the 48-hour grace period referenced in Article IX, Section 1, Paragraph D(1), the prospective candidate is taking the risk that there will be insufficient time to respond by the applicable TRP deadline and/or have such response considered.

C. Any challenge to, or request for a waiver of, an individual's qualification to seek public office as a Republican will be determined by a majority vote of the State Chairman and each SEC member who represents any portion of the district covered by the individual's proposed candidacy. Neither the SEC nor any portion or subcommittee thereof is required to follow the Tennessee Rules of Evidence, Tennessee Rules of Civil Procedure, or any other standards required in American courts of law or equity in considering and determining any challenge or request for a waiver.

D. The State Chairman shall communicate to the appropriate election officials all TRP decisions regarding a Republican candidate's qualifications as determined pursuant to this Article.

Rationale

The primary change has been to have the TRP be more proactive in ensuring that those running

in Republican primaries have a solid Republican voting record. That is accomplished by having

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the TRP check prospective candidates' voting record upon receiving nominating petitions to determine if they at least meet the current voting requirements. If the TRP is unable to verify a prospective candidate's voting record or finds that the person is ineligible under other sections of the bylaws, the person will be sent a challenge letter and given the opportunity to respond to the Party's decision and/or challenge just as challenges are currently handled. An additional benefit of this approach is that these situations can be handled earlier and, in some cases, should help cut down on the doxxing of challengers' private information such as names, addresses, and other identifying details, without their consent, for the purpose of harassing them.

It's the Law! Please Read...

It is a violation of Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 2-7-115(b), and punishable as a crime under Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 2-19-102 or Section 2-19-107, if a person votes in a political party's primary without being a bona fide member of or affiliated with that political party, or to declare allegiance to that party without the intent to affiliate with that party.

*required to be posted in all polling locations as directed by T.C.A. § 2-7-115