

Office of Public Information
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**June 7, 2018 Tour of Garden City Public Schools:
Locust, Stewart, GCHS, Stratford, Homestead.**

In Attendance -

GCPS:

Bob Martin, Board Trustee, LAC
Dana DiCapua, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance
Pat Mehr, Facilities Director
Dr. Catherine Knight, Coordinator of Public Information, LAC
Michelle Kaiserman, Past PTA President, LAC

Nassau County Board of Elections:

Philip Jordan, Supervisor, Planning Department
Scott Milano, Planning Department
Sijy Sanchez, Planning Department
Richie Hayes, Planning Department
Phil Solages, Assistant Counsel, Democratic Party
Steven Marx, Counsel, Republican Party

Members of GCPS and the NC BoEL met to review the school building spaces used during polling for Primary and General Elections. The purpose of the site visit was to make clear to the BoEL Planning Team how problematic it is to hold any public election in our schools. Our long term goal is to remove all polling from the school district. The short term goal was to work with the BoEL to make polling safer with a plan tailored to each school.

Each Principal welcomed the tour group at their front door and explained what entrance/exit doors and rooms have been used for polling, the issues they have had on these days, including incidents with voters and Election Workers. They explained our concerns regarding the open doors that must occur on election days, and that we cannot ask for any ID from voters – something we do every other day of the year when school is in session. BoEL listened carefully to each Principal's concerns, the challenges inherent to each building, and they very receptive to the requests made for modifications for both short term and long term solutions. The principals were happy to have a voice in the process.

Members of the BoEL Planning Department and counsels to the Republican and Democratic Commissioners were very thorough in their inspections, checking door clearances, room square footages, number of electrical outlets, proximity of bathrooms, least disruptive entrances and exits, exteriors, parking options, and curb cuts.

We shared some of the specific issues we've experienced – the Homestead incident, wandering election workers, election workers smoking on school grounds, lack of any ID for election workers, election workers using student bathrooms and bringing pets with them, etc.

The BoEL representatives were concerned by what they heard, and were genuinely interested in helping us to secure our schools. They assured us they would review all of our concerns. In addition, the BoEL will provide a list of the names and phone numbers of BoEL personnel to receive reports of any improper activity by poll workers.

Moving forward, they will work to provide the modifications we discussed at each building and to provide any needed signage and ramps to implement the agreed upon changes. As a longer range solution, the BoEL agreed to carefully review alternative polling jurisdictions within Garden City to relocate polling places from the schools. Specific alternative polling locations within Garden City could be Nassau BOCES, the County Courthouse, Village Hall, or St. Paul's Field House.

The tour began at 9 a.m. at Locust and ended at 1 p.m. back at Locust. GC Transportation Department provided a mini bus to transport the tour group to Stewart, the High School, Stratford and Homestead schools. The group decided not to visit Hemlock and GCMS as these schools are not used as polling locations.

It became quickly apparent we needed to establish short, intermediate, and long term goals for securing buildings during election days. BoEL understands that schools are not the ideal but are under no obligation to change. Working collaboratively to mitigate the safety concerns over the current polling locations was the first priority.

The following specifics were discussed during the school tours:

Facility Use Forms

GCPS to complete and provide to BoEL use of building instructions for each polling location when completing annual consent forms.

- GCPS to complete and send to BoEL for next school year separately as consent forms have already been completed.
- Documentation outlining the locations both poll workers and voters are allowed to access stating that all other locations are off limits, including hallways, classrooms, bathrooms, other than indicated in the document.
- State clearly the bathrooms available for poll workers use and how to access.
- State current GCPS Policies and Procedures for Facilities Use. For example: no smoking, vaping, pets, etc.

Poll Worker Identification

- BoEL to supply us with a list of poll workers for each location that includes person in charge.
- Supply all poll workers with Board of Election-issued official ID name tags that must be worn at all times. Note: this is currently not in place at the BoE and official ID name tags are not available. Suggestion taken under advisement by BoEL.

Homestead (largest number of registered voters):

Primary Election: Short/Long term:

- Move the current location from the APR to the Art/Music Room.
- Voters would use the exterior door that faces Homestead Avenue.
- Voters would park along Homestead Avenue.
- The BoEL would provide signage and a ramp (there is a single step at the exterior Art/Music Room door).

- Close the interior entrance door to the Art/Music Room.
- Election workers could use the bathroom just outside the Art/Music Room.
- The District would provide one employee to monitor the area.

General Election: Short term

- Utilize the APR and the exterior doors to the left of the Main Entrance. Post a monitor/greeter at that entrance to keep voters and election works in that space. The BoEL would provide signage. Election Workers who needed to use a bathroom would exit using the exterior doors, walk around to the main entrance and sign in at the Greeter's Desk as any school visitor does.

Locust: Short/Long term; General and Primary:

Short-term:

- Utilize the APR room and doors immediately to the left of the Main Entrance. Post a monitor/greeter at that entrance to keep voters and election works in that space.
- The BoEL would provide signage. Election Workers who needed to use a bathroom would exit using the exterior doors, walk around to the main entrance and sign in at the Greeter's Desk as any school visitor does.

Intermediate:

- To limit the traffic within the building and contain election activities to a single use room: BoEL strongly suggested and the GCPS team concurred, the APR continued to be used with the rear door (facing Popular) be the point of entry. This would require a small capital improvement by the district by paving a short path to the sidewalk.
- Close all interior doors to the APR room recognizing they can't be locked for fire/safety issues. Not discussed, but to be considered by the district, have the doors with main access to the corridors monitored throughout the day.
- The BoEL would provide signage. Election Workers who needed to use a bathroom would exit using the exterior doors, walk around to the main entrance and sign in at the Greeter's Desk as any school visitor does.

Stewart: One of the most unsatisfactory locations of all the GC buildings. Voting takes place in the hallway outside the auditorium. Two classrooms, a bathroom and the stairway to the second floor all front the voting location.

- BoEL will explore the ability to relocate the two election districts that currently use Stewart. Voters south of Stewart Avenue to use Nassau BOCES George Farber Administrative Center, if made available, or Locust School. If Locust was to be used, the need for the capital improvement to better secure Locust should be made a priority. Voters north of Stewart Avenue would use Nassau County Court building.

Stratford: Short/Long term; General and Primary Elections:

- Move the current polling location from the school lobby to the lunch room. Close the fire doors to the hallway to separate the voting area. The girl's bathroom located near the cafeteria would be used for election workers with a sign: occupied and not occupied.
- GCPS to provide 10 spots in the teachers parking lot on that day.
- GCPS Post a monitor at the fire doors to keep voters and election works in that space.

- BoEL to provide signage for voters direct them to the appropriate location.

High School: Short/Long term; General and Primary Elections:

- Move the current polling location from the school lobby to the gymnasium.
- Voters would use the Rockaway entrance and park along Rockaway. On election days, faculty would be instructed to use the Merillon lot to provide up to 10 parking places for voters.
- Access will be limited to one-third of the gymnasium (the section closest to Rockaway) by gym's folding wall system.
- Poll workers will be given access to bathrooms located in the gym/auditorium lobby.
- GCPS to post two or three monitors to make sure voters stayed in the polling area.

Recommendations to the Board of Election:

1. The BoEL supply us with palm card/pamphlet/flier for each election that contains names and contact information of BoEL officials with authority to correct issues should any arise during voting. In a follow-up phone call, Chief Clerk Essme Benkhokha shared that, in the meantime, we can call: **(516) 571-2365** to report/review any issues.
2. Supply us with a list of poll workers for each location indicating the person who is in charge.
3. Supply all poll workers with Board of Election issued official ID name tags that must be worn at all times.
4. BoEL to provide us with an understanding how poll workers are hired and the vetting process they use internally when reviewing election day poll workers. Based on the information provided, GC may take additional action with the County or State legislators

Next steps for GCPS:

1. GCPS to create poll worker guidelines to be included in consent agreements annually. GCPS to complete and send to BoEL for next school year separately as consent forms have already been completed.
 - a. We will be asking the principals to assist us in creating detailed guidelines for each school as to what we expect of election works i.e., have a sign in sheet, areas that are off limits, what bathrooms can be used, how to get into the building on polling days, etc.
2. We will be reviewing the documentation/forms we complete to be used as a polling place.
3. Put together a list of alternate polling locations in Garden City.
 - a. Work with SED to allow use of BOCES building
 - i. Note the use of BOCES building could provide an alternative location not only to Stewart but to Locust, as well.
 - b. Work with the Village to provide St. Paul's Field House for polling at GCHS
4. Better understand how election day workers are screened and if the lack of screening could be used as another talking point why schools should not be used as polling locations.
 - a. BoEL reviews the election worker application (<https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2410>) to add additional information.
 - b. That the BoEL create a system to identify workers who have created an issue during an election so they are not rehired in the future.