



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

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COMMISSIONERS

Ethridge A. King, Jr.
Larry W. Ward
Charles J. Marquardt
Thomas J. Stohlman, Jr.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tanya L. Ford

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Lesley A. Waxman

BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS MEETING Minutes of November 14, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm on November 14, 2025, at 689 Massachusetts Avenue 2nd Floor Conference Room, Present were Commissioner King, Commissioner Marquardt, Commissioner Ward, Commissioner Stohlman, Executive Director Ford, Assistant Director Waxman, and Deputy Solicitor Elliott Veloso.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

John Hawkinson provided comments regarding the issues experienced on election night and his concerns therewith. He provided written comments to the Commission (attached).

Robert Winters commented that additional auditing procedures may be needed based on what happened this election.

Patrick Barton commented that procedures need to be tightened to prevent another occurrence.

Motion: To close Public Comment

Moved by Commissioner Ward
Seconded by Commissioner Marquardt

Passed 4-0

II: MINUTES

No minutes review.

III. Reports

1. Executive Director's Report

- Ms. Ford informed the Commissioners that a report on the election night issues would be available at the next meeting.

Assistant Director's Report

- None

Commissioners' Reports

- None

IV. Action Agenda

Old Business

New Business

Review of Provisional Ballots

The following wards and precincts had no Provisional Ballots:

1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 2-1, 2-3, 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 4-1, 4-3, 6-2, 6-3, 8-2, 8-3, 9-1, 9-2, 9-3, 10-1, 11-1, 11-3

The following Provisional Ballots were reviewed using research provided by the staff and voted on by the Commissioners. All votes were unanimous 4-0 votes,

Ward	Precinct	Ballot #	Disposition
2	2	1	Don't Count
4	2	1	Don't Count
4	2	2	Count
4	2	3	Don't Count
5	1	1	Count
5	2	1	Count
5	3	1	Don't Count
6	1	1	Count
7	1	1	Count
7	1	2	Don't Count
7	2	1	Don't Count
7	3	1	Count
7	3	2	Count
8	1	1	Count
10	2	1	Don't Count
10	3	1	Don't Count
11	2	1	Count

Overseas Absentee Ballots

At 5:00pm the office confirmed that no additional overseas absentee ballots had been received.

There was a total of 2 Federal Write-in Absentee Ballots received one each in 3-2 and 4-3. Both were determined to have been received in a timely fashion and were voted to be counted on a vote of 4-0.

The Commission voted 4-0 to recess at 5:33 pm so the tabulation and audit process could be completed.

The Commissioners reconvened at 6:01 pm

Motion: To release final official results for the municipal election.

Moved by Commissioner Marquardt

Seconded by Commissioner Stohlman

Passed 4-0

Next meeting will be November 19, 2025, at 5:30 pm on Zoom.

Motion: To adjourn at 6:05 pm

Moved by Commissioner Marquardt

Seconded by Commissioner Stohlman

Passed 4-0

A True Record

Attested by: 
Charles Marquardt, Secretary

Good afternoon, Commissioners.

My name is John Hawkinson. As you know, I'm a resident of the city and also a reporter.

(My address is on file with you).

Before the anomalies of last week, I had intended to raise two issues at a future meeting of the commission — I'll mention them here so you know they're coming, but it's not my intention to discuss them in depth:

(1) At the Oct. 28 meeting, in the Minutes Approval section of the meeting, the Commissioners had a substantive policy discussion both about what is allowed at public comment as well as about minutes policy. Both of those are issues that you should have heard on the public from before you took action, especially the action you took, which was to ask the Law Dept. for guidance on drafting a policy. You discussed it after the public comment section of the meeting and did not consider whether to reopen public comment in response to a raised

hand. I will send you a letter, but please plan to discuss this at a future meeting.

(2) As you know, in past years polling place access on election night after 8pm has been challenging. This year it reached a new low, and this year someone put hands on me, unprovoked. This is a new low, and it requires your attention and a discussion. But not today.

(3) I would like to COMPLIMENT the commission on the posting of machine tapes at the Senior Center. You doubtless recall that this is a new process from a few elections back, and there were rough edges with it in prior years. This year there were no rough edges. They were posted in a timely fashion, they were posted readably, it wasn't necessary to stand in the cold to read them, and it was just great. Thank you very much for that. A lot of people trying to follow the election from their homes very much appreciated that a few of us were able to transcribe those tapes and give the public a sense of how the preliminary results were coming in. Thank you again.

(4) And now we turn to the problems of tabulation and reporting.

There is a lot to say here, so I hope you will bear with me.

I suspect many people here may have things to say, and the nature of the issues would lend itself to having the Commission and perhaps the Staff present a timeline of their understanding and some objective agreed-upon facts. I think that would make the public comment process more efficient and far more effective.

If you'd agree to that, would hold my comments for later.

Otherwise, here are the facts as I understand them. I believe them to be undisputed.:

- On election night, Tuesday Nov. 4 into Wednesday Nov. 5:
- Elections department staff and/or their contractors noticed discrepancies or anomalies in the data.
- ChoicePlusPro was run to produce the preliminary results at 11:42pm.

I don't know if that was before or after the discrepancies

- Around 12:20am, staff presented the preliminary unofficial results to the Board of Election Commissioners
- The staff did not discuss or highlight the anomalies to the Board
- The Board of Election Commissioners voted to release the preliminary unofficial results to the public.
- Notably, there were at least two obvious anomalies in the published results:

- In both the school committee and city council elections, there were 33 write-in votes, one for each precinct. Because write-in votes are not tabulated on Election Night, this is a red flag and suggests improper ballot data was tabulated.
- In the ballot question contest, software reported the results as

Precincts Reported: 33 of 33 (100.00%)

Voters Cast: 70,971 of 1,573 (4511.82%)

I don't know what this means, but it is clearly incorrect, and perhaps it is a mauve flag.

- In the School Committee election, on the 13th round, Jane Hirschi went out and Eugenia Schraa Huh defeated David Weinstein by 2744-2629, or 115 votes. 115 votes out of 23,299 valid ballot is a 0.494% margin.
- During the day on Wednesday, Nov. 5, the department staff examined the anomalies.
- Staff determined that compilation of ballots from the precincts with the advance-processed mail-in ballots was improperly done. This compilation is done with a software package known as RTR. That's Results, Tally, Report — it is known as an Election Management System (or EMS).

- Staff re-ran the RTR compilation process and re-ran ChoicePlusPro at 11:18am.
- In the School Committee election, on the 14th round, Jane Hirschi went out, Caitlin Dube made quota, and David Weinstein defeated Eugenia Schraa Huh by 2619-2549, or 70 votes. 70 votes out of 21,955 valid ballots is a 0.319%. margin.
- Staff was aware that they had publicly announced preliminary results that gave the wrong winner.
- Staff did not raise the issue to the full Board of Election Commission all day Wednesday.

- On Friday Nov. 7, staff completed counting of auxillary ballots.
- At about 5:56pm, staff announced to the Board of Election Commissioners that the preliminary results from Tuesday were tainted with improper ballot data.
- Staff presented the Board with “unofficial” results including auxillary ballots.
- The Board voted to release those results to the public.

- In the School Committee election, on the 14th round, Jane Hirschi went out, Caitlin Dube made quota, and David Weinstein defeated Eugenia Schraa Huh by 2761-2666, or 95 votes. 90 votes out of 23,104 valid ballots is a 0.390% margin. *math problem*
- The City published a statement on its website accompanying the preliminary results saying that "ballots used for testing were not fully cleared from the Election Management System." That statement is still there today.
- The City's statement mentioned only that test ballots were included, it did not mention that advance ballots were missing that were supposed to be there.
- The City's statement alleged that "the test ballots" "produced 2,158 additional records (632 for the City Council, 1,370 for the School Committee, and 156 for the Ballot Question)." Those numbers were wrong.
- The City's statement credited "its proactive auditing process" with detecting the process.
- In response to an inquiry for the documentation of the election auditing procedures, the city says there is no documentation. Or in the language of

the Law Dept., "the City has no responsive records."

Those are the facts as I understand them. I have some thoughts on them, and I have some questions about them.

- The public understands that election night results are not final.
- The public expects that election night results reflect the department and board's best understanding of the results so far. That they will include the advance-processed ballots and the ballots from the precincts. If the results are inaccurate, it is inaccurate because they are not counting all the auxiliary ballots, not because advance and precinct ballots are miscounted.
- There is now a crisis of confidence in the process. As we have learned in our national government, confidence and faith once lost are very very hard to replace. This will be an uphill and difficult battle for the commission — the board and the staff both — and it's going to be a lot of work.

Questions:

- Why did the staff not tell the board about the problems on Tuesday night?
- Why did the staff not tell the board about the problems on Wednesday night?
- If the board's oversight capacity of the department is to have meaning, it cannot work like this. Either the board needs to be asking more questions, or the staff needs to be more forthcoming. I don't understand how this can happen.
- When did the individual commissioners actually learn about the problem?
- On Friday Nov. 7, the staff indicated that "the plan" was to disclose the results in advance to a candidate, but that did not happen because someone else in the City Manager's office disclosed the results in advance to a candidate.
- It was always my understanding that results are only released outside of the election commission by vote of the Board, and when they are released, they are released fairly without favor. Friends of the City Manager do not get results first. Even the

City Manager does not get results first. Results stay within the department until they go to the board and the board releases them. Was I wrong? Is that not how things should work? Can I not rely on this in the future?

Observations:

- The results should not have been released Tuesday night, with obvious red flags.
- Once the problem was understood on Wednesday, the results should have been withdrawn.
- Although candidates should not have received preferential notice, candidates and the public should have been informed that the Commission would be making an announcement about the problems and that announcement should have been made in a way that everyone who needed to could observe it — like over Zoom, just as the Commission announced results over Zoom on Tuesday night.
- The explanation the City released on Friday, after three days to investigate, was incorrect.
- The city has still not published a clear explanation. I received an email from the

Assistant Director on Wednesday speculating as to the true nature of the problem: “The only precincts with positive numbers were those with advanced processing, implying that in some cases, test deck batches were uploaded instead of the advanced processing batches. “

I call this speculation because it uses the word “implying.”

A narrative explaining what happened that uses the word “implying” suggests there is not full confidence in that narrative.

it is not a definitive statement of what happened.

Thank you.