

Annual Activity Report of the Newport Canvassing Authority 2022

Pursuant to Chapter 2.56.040 of the Newport Code of Ordinances, I respectfully submit the Newport Canvassing Authority's annual report to the Newport City Council setting forth a summary of our annual activities for the calendar year 2022, including a record of attendance for the members of the authority for each regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

Mission:

The Mission of the Newport Canvassing Authority is to conduct all elections in the City of Newport in a fair and transparent manner, in accordance with the U.S. Constitution, R.I. Constitution, the General Laws of the State of Rhode, and Rules and Regulations promulgated by the R.I. Board of Elections and the R.I. Secretary of State.

Under direction of the State Board of Elections, in cooperation with the Secretary of State, and with the assistance of the Canvassing Department, the Canvassing Authority is responsible for maintaining an accurate list of registered voters and is responsible for administering elections fairly and efficiently in an open, transparent, and equitable manner.

It is the goal of the Canvassing Authority to ensure the will of the majority of the City's citizens are accurately voiced in each municipal, state, and federal election.

Staff:

The Canvassing Authority is authorized under Rhode Island General Law §17-8-1. The Newport City Council appoints a bipartisan canvassing authority of three (3) qualified electors of the City, not more than two (2) of whom shall belong to the same political party, along with two (2) alternates, one (1) from each party. The Mayor nominates the members of the canvassing authority from lists of party voters submitted by the respective chairpersons of the City's political committees.

The 2022 Canvassing Department staff included Canvassing Clerk Tracy Nelson and Caitlin Springer, Senior Clerk Typist. Rolland Everitt and Michael Kelley were hired as temporary personnel to assist with each of the twenty (20) day early voting periods leading up to the September 13, 2022 Statewide Primary and the November 3, 2022 General Election.

The Canvassing Authority was comprised of: Chairwoman Sharon Connors (D), Donato Andre D'Andrea (R), and Maxine Shavers (D). Mary Moniz was appointed as the Democratic alternate in June, 2022. The Republican alternate seat remains vacant.

Meetings:

The Canvassing Authority is scheduled to meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 11:30 A.M. All meetings are posted on the Secretary of State's website at least 48 hours in advance, pursuant to the *Open Meetings Act*. Unless otherwise noted as a legally advertised Executive Session, all meetings are open to the public.

2022 Highlights:

Re-districting was conducted in 2022, as required by the U.S. Constitution, following the 2020 Decennial Census. Newport saw minimal change to the Senate and Representative lines redrawn by the Rhode Island General Assembly. Newport remained solely in the first Congressional District.

Through an open bid process, the City contracted with ARC Bridge Consulting Inc. to prepare proposals for the redrawing of Newport's ward and precinct lines. Three plans were presented at two public meetings, as required by the City Council. Participation was low. The majority expressed support in favor of the plan that did not make any changes to the city ward lines, while making only minimal changes to the precinct lines, as necessary for consistency with the new Senate and Representative lines. The Canvassing Authority voted to recommend Plan A to the City Council. The City Council approved the new ward and precinct lines on their meeting of April 13, 2022. The lines were then submitted to the Secretary of State by the April 15, 2022 deadline.

There was no change in the number of precincts in the city; however, the numbers assigned to each of the nine precincts were updated based on the formula provided by the RI Board of Elections.

With demolition at Rogers High School, the Canvassing Authority requested relocation of the voting area from the hall outside the auditorium to the gymnasium.

All polling locations (including early voting) were inspected by the Rhode Island Board of Elections and the Governor's Commission on Disabilities. After completion of the inspections, a report was generated by the Board of Elections outlining remediation, as well as temporary "Election Day fixes" needed to comply with the *Americans with Disabilities Act* and the U.S. Department of Justice requirements.

The Canvassing Authority submitted the list of polling locations to the Board of Elections for approval. Due to the minor shift in precinct lines, it was also necessary for the Canvassing Authority to request approval from the Board to locate a polling location (St. Peter's) outside the precinct.

Upon the approvals from the Board of Elections, a mass mailing was sent to all active voters in the City of Newport providing them with their updated voter information, including their polling location.

There were two elections conducted in Newport in 2022; the Statewide Primary on September 13, 2022 and the General Election on November 8, 2022. There were no local primaries on the ballot September 13th. There were seven candidates for the four at-large Council seats, eight candidates for the seven school committee seats, and each Council Ward candidate ran unopposed. There were also seven local questions on the ballot (#4 - #10). Question 4 related to the issuance of cannabis licenses in the City of Newport, Question 5 was to approve formation of a Newport/Middletown regional school district, and questions 6 through 10 were Charter amendments. All local questions were approved with the exception of Question 5, regionalization.

2022 Overview:

Preparations for the 2022 elections began in the Spring, with a mailing sent to previous poll workers and anyone indicating on their voter registration that they were interested in being a poll worker.

In 2020, during the pandemic, the Secretary of State sent mail ballot applications to all active voters. This increased interest in the convenience of voting by mail. The Canvassing Department processed near 1,000 mail ballot applications for the November General Election.

Early voting was also introduced in 2020, allowing voters to cast ballots, in person, at city hall, in the twenty days preceding an election. Early voting was codified into law by the General Assembly in 2022 with passage of the *Let RI Vote Act*. Interest in early voting has increased with awareness, and as the health risks of voting in person have decreased. Accordingly, a search for two temporary employees to assist the Canvassing Department staff with the early voting was conducted. Rolland Everitt returned in this capacity and Mike Kelley, previously a City Greeter, was hired.

As the popularity of mail ballots and early voting has increased, so has the Canvassing Authority's concern for the space and staff needed in order to continue the effective administration of elections. These needs must be addressed in advance of the 2024 Presidential Election.

The members of the Canvassing Authority have taken a more active role on Election Day so that the staff may remain at the office to focus on assisting voters and poll workers; to remotely monitor turnout and equipment function and deploy resources as needed; to oversee transmission of results; and to prepare for the return of supplies, equipment, and ballots on Election Night.

The Canvassing Department staff (Tracy & Caitlin) are a dedicated team who work together cohesively. This is a benefit to the Canvassing Authority, candidates, voters, and the general public. Candidates have remarked on the responsiveness and friendliness of the staff.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Connors, Chair
Newport Canvassing Authority

**Newport Canvassing Authority
2022 Meeting Attendance**

Meeting Date	Sharon Connors, Chair	Donato Andre D'Andrea	Maxine Shavers	Dem. Alt. Mary Moniz	Rep. Alt.***
01/04/22	Y	Y	Y	n/a	
02/01/22	Y	Y	Y	n/a	
3/3/2022 AM	Y	Y	Y	n/a	
3/3/2022 PM	Y	Y	Y	n/a	
03/17/22	Y	Y	Y	n/a	
04/12/22	Y	Y	Y	n/a	
05/03/22	Y	Y	Y	n/a	
06/07/22	Y	Y	Y	n/a	
07/19/22	Y	Y	Y	Y	
08/02/22	Y	Y	Y	N	
08/23/22	Y	Y	Y	N	
09/13/22	Y	Y	Y	N	
09/16/22	Y	Y	Y	N	
10/18/22	Y	Y	Y	N	
11/08/22	Y	Y	Y	Y	
11/10/22	Y	Y	Y	N	
12/06/22	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	

* Appointed 6/2022

**Alternate not required to attend unless one of the regular Dem. members is unable to attend

*** Rep. Alt. = VACANT