

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA ELECTIONS COMMISSION

UNAPPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: Thursday, May 15, 2025

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: Via Zoom/In person
San Lorenzo Library Greenhouse Community Room
395 Paseo Grande
San Lorenzo, CA 94580

1. Call To Order / Roll Call

The Elections Commission meeting of May 15, 2025, convened at 4:00 p.m. in the San Lorenzo Library Greenhouse Community Room. The meeting was called to order by President James R. Lindsay.

Present

Commission Members: Judy Belcher, Karen A. Butter, Irene Dieter, Susan R. Henderson, James R. Lindsay, David Wagner, Zabrae Valentine, and Allie Whitehurst (arrived late).

Registrar of Voters (ROV): Tim Dupuis, Cynthia Cornejo, Shaheer Siddiqui, and Charles Smithline.

County Counsel: Jason Allen.

Absent

Commission Members: Alissa Moore, Alexander Ramon, and Karl I. Seabrook. *Ex Officio member:* City Clerk Thai Nam Pham

2. Swearing-In of New Commissioners

There were no new commissioners to swear-in.

3. Approval of Agenda

No modifications were made to the agenda.

4. Approval of Minutes of April 17, 2025

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Vice President Dieter, seconded by Commissioner Butter, and passed unanimously (7-0).

5. Announcements and Communications

(a) From staff

There were no announcements from staff.

(b) From commissioners

- **President Lindsay added to the minutes an email from City of Albany Councilmember Preston Jordan, with his permission, as some of the commissioners had not received the message. (See Attachment B)**

- **Commissioner Valentine noted that it is difficult for the public to find the Elections Commission page on the county's website.**
- **Commissioner Belcher asked for the email address of the clerk.**

6. Public Comment on Agenda Items

Public comments were made on the agenda and non-agenda items.

7. Monthly Update from Registrar of Voters Office

- **Mr. Dupuis reviewed the April 15, 2025, City of Oakland Special Municipal Election, including voter turnout figures, and reiterated the certification timeline.**
- **Commissioner Valentine asked whether the described information of the mandated timeline is published on the website. After Mr. Dupuis responded that it is not, Ms. Valentine requested that it be added to the website. Mr. Dupuis said the ROV can post the canvassing requirements on the website.**

8. Business Items

a. Old Business

(1) April 15 Election Assessment

- **Ms. Dieter reviewed the prior discussion from the last commission meeting, invited further comment, and suggested that commissioners residing in Oakland form a new committee or one commissioner volunteer to bring back a proposed post-April 15 election assessment.**
- **Commissioners Belcher, Whitehurst, Lindsay, and Valentine contributed to the discussion.**
- **Jason Allen clarified that while the ordinance strongly suggests that there be a report on each election, it does not specify the timing, the substance, or the form. Thus, in theory, he explained, the commission could issue one report that captures all the elections in a year as there is nothing in the ordinance that precludes that.**
- **A motion to appoint Ms. Valentine to draft a brief assessment of the April 15 election, to be presented at the June meeting, was made by Ms. Dieter, seconded by Ms. Belcher, and passed unanimously (8-0).**

b. Ongoing Items from Committees

(1) 2024 post-election assessment

Ms. Belcher gave a brief update. A motion to dissolve the 2024 post-election assessment committee was made by Ms. Dieter, seconded by Commissioner Wagner, and passed unanimously by acclamation.

(2) Structure of the ROV position

- **Ms. Valentine gave a brief update. Mr. Lindsay asked for the Registrar's response to the committee's report.**

- Mr. Dupuis gave a presentation outlining the ROV's mission and mandated services, associated facilities, vehicular fleet, staff and observer space, and how complex service departments are typically structured and funded. He said the committee's report is missing some key research and suggested including the grand jury report; the ROV's organizational chart with the advantages and disadvantages there are to the current structure and where the support would come from if the departments are separated; the systems the IT department supports; comparisons of local news articles to other counties showing similar stories; and noting the global pandemic period as a factor of managing how elections would be run. Mr. Dupuis added that there is some faulty information that should be corrected. The ROV is exceeding in its election observation law requirements, and the cast vote records issue is not balanced. He said the report does not make the connection between what is called out in the report and how having a single, dedicated ROV is going to change the outcomes. Mr. Dupuis noted the amount of public record requests that were handled, and that special points of contacts have been set up for the public and media. Mr. Dupuis said the ROV office does not oppose a recommendation for a public information officer and engaging with the Elections Center.
- Commissioner Valentine requested that the Registrar send the committee all material/information generated for the presentation so that some of it can be integrated into the analysis or attached as an appendix. All the commissioners provided comments.
- A motion was made to send Mr. Lindsay's handout to the Board of Supervisors by Mr. Lindsay, seconded by Ms. Butter. Discussion continued. (*See Attachment A for motion handed out*).
- Commissioner Wagner requested that the commission vote separately on Items A, B, and C.
- A substitute motion was made by Ms. Dieter to incorporate the input from the Registrar of Voters, including attachments and comments made during the meeting, and to recommend that the Board of Supervisors engage the Elections Center or another qualified organization to assess or evaluate whether the department should be bifurcated. The substitute motion failed for lack of a second. Discussion continued.
- At 6:30 p.m., Mr. Lindsay called a point of order and asked staff if they were available to extend the meeting. A motion to extend the meeting by no more than 30 minutes was made by Ms. Valentine, seconded by Ms. Belcher, and passed unanimously by acclamation.
- As a replacement to Mr. Lindsay's Item A, a substitute motion to recommend that the Board of Supervisors engage the Elections Center or other qualified organization to assess the advantages and disadvantages of whether to bifurcate the department and hire a dedicated County Registrar of Voters was made by Mr. Wagner, seconded by Ms. Dieter. Following discussion, the motion passed 7-0, with one abstention by Ms. Belcher.
- A motion was made by Commissioner Valentine to approve substituting the recommendation in the current report with the language prepared by President Lindsay regarding enhancing public communication and transparency (Item B); to

adopt the language currently described in the report as Recommendation C—engaging the Elections Center or other qualified organization in assessing ROV office productivity and efficiency (including subsections A through F); and to approve the full committee report after accepting amendments submitted by members of the commission. The motion was not seconded.

- Mr. Lindsay moved to approve only item B from his handout dealing with the public information officer, with deleting the word “either.” Ms. Valentine seconded. It passed 5-2, with one abstention by Ms. Henderson. Commissioners Wagner and Dieter voted no.
- Further discussion was deferred to the next meeting.

(3) Voting Participation Moore, Whitehurst, Lindsay

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

(4) Nominations Ramon and Seabrook

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

c. New Business

(5) Website reporting of plurality at-large election results and reporting of participation turnout per contest

Item was deferred to the next meeting.

(6) Speed of Tallying Elections

Item was deferred to the next meeting.

9. Special Report from the ROV

Item was deferred to the next meeting.

10. Public Comment on Agenda or Non-Agenda Items

Public comments were made on the agenda and non-agenda items.

11. Requests for Future Agenda Items

Item was deferred to the next meeting.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, June 18, 2025, at the Alameda County Law Library, Oakland Room, 125 12th Street, Oakland.

ATTACHMENT A

Motion by Jim Lindsay

WHEREAS:

- (a) In almost all large counties in California – defined as populations of 1,500,000 people or more – the ROV Position is a standalone position.
- (b) Alameda County is the only county that is supporting youth voting.
- (c) Alameda County is the only county that is supporting multiple cities using RCV, and one of the cities is using the proportional form for RCV.
- (d) Alameda County has a very large number of contests in general elections – in November 2024 there were over 200 different types of ballots for just that election.
- (e) Alameda County has a large number of special elections – 6 in 2024 alone, and already 1 in 2025.
- (f) Alameda County fully supports 5 languages by law, and virtually everything on the web-site and in writing must be translated into all 5 languages. It also supports more than 10 other languages via written materials and telephone support and interpreters in those other languages
- (g) Alameda County has a smaller staff than all of the other large counties.
- (h) Alameda County does not have a Public Information Officer, as almost all the other large counties have.
- (i) Therefore, we conclude that Alameda County is clearly one of the most complex and difficult counties to administrate elections.

THE ALAMEDA COUNTY ELECTIONS COMMISSION RESPECTFULLY RECOMMENDS:

Reconsider and Reallocate ROV Leadership Duties

- A. Restore the ROV position to that of a single, dedicated County Registrar of Voters with no additional commitments.
In addition, give the CAO and BOS some leeway in how the ROV salary is calculated. It would be unfortunate, but fairly likely, that it will be very hard to find someone qualified to be the ROV in Alameda County – an extremely difficult job – for a relatively low salary. For example, using the average pay of the ROVs of the 8 large counties (population over 1,500,000) is one possibility.
- B. Enhance Public Communication and Transparency
 - a. Allocate resources to hire either a Public Information Officer
 - b. Designate a team of subject-matter professionals to improve public and media access to election-relevant information and ROV decision making of public interest/relevance.
 - b. Establish a policy requiring acknowledgment of public and press inquiries within 48 hours and substantive responses within a reasonable timeframe.
- C. Engage the Elections Center, or other qualified organization, in an assessment of ROV Office process and resource use to identify and implement additional improvements and efficiencies for the ROV Office.

Attachment B

May 13, 2025 email correspondence from Preston Jordan, Albany City Councilmember
Re: Item 8(c)(1) Results reporting

Hello-

Following are comments on your voter participation and plurality at large result reporting agenda items. While I write to you as a City Councilmember, my history with each of these goes back to my time on the Board of the League of Women Voters of Berkeley Albany Emeryville in the latter part of last decade. I presented these matters to the Board. It resolved they should be addressed. As county-wide matters, the Board directed me to bring them to the County Council of Leagues. The Council voted unanimously in support of each of these reporting improvements.

Thank you for taking them up. Please recommend posting voter participation in the results for each contest on the web and reporting the share of participating voters supporting each candidate in the results of plurality at large contests on the web. More information on each below.

Preston Jordan
Albany City Councilmember

Voter Participation

The County's website reports countywide turnout. It does not report turnout per jurisdiction.

Turnout per electoral district is reported in the statement of vote. While important to having a complete record of election results, almost no one looks at the statement.

Further, "turnout," as used, refers to the share of registered voters that submit a ballot. However, a voter does not have to mark the ballot for any specific election. For instance, in the 2024 election, voter turnout in Albany was 81.15%. Not much room for improvement. However only 67.47% of voters marked their ballot in Albany's Council election, and so participated in the election. Substantial room for improvement.

In order to provide an accurate understanding of democratic engagement in each jurisdiction, the share of voters participating in each contest on the ballot should be posted in the results for that contest on the web.

Plurality At Large Reporting

One of the types of elections held in our county is plurality at large. Also referred to as vote for N and block voting. In this method, each voter can vote for up to as many candidates as seats to be filled. Last election this method was used to elect members to five of the fourteen city councils in the county, seven of the school districts, three special district boards, and one city's rent stabilization board (listed below).

Plurality at large results reported on the web include the percent of total votes received by each candidate. However, because each voter has more than one vote available to them in these elections, this percent is not the percent of voters that supported each candidate. The percent of all votes received by a candidate is not as meaningful as the percent of voters that supported a candidate. For instance, was a winning candidate supported by a majority of voters or only a small fraction? This informs everyone of the strength of mandate for their positions for instance. It informs potential future candidates about what the electorate desires.

The difference between these two is the value by which the number of votes a candidate receives is divided. In that case of what is currently reported, the value is all votes. To rather calculate the percent of voters that supported a candidate, the votes they received needs to be divided by the number of ballots marked by voters in their election. The Registrar's office can calculate this value. Such as from unredacted CVRs.

Here is the list of bodies in our County with members elected by plurality at large last election.

Alameda City Council
Emeryville City Council
Hayward City Council
Newark City Council
Piedmont City Council
Alameda Unified School District Board
Berkeley Unified School District Board
Emery Unified School District Board
Hayward Unified School District Board
Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District Board
Newark Unified School District Board
Piedmont Unified School District Board
Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board
Hayward Area Recreation and Park District Board
Livermore Area Recreation and Park District Board
Oro Loma Sanitary District Board