



Board of Elections & Registrations

Irwin County Georgia

Waymond Harris, Chairman

Ethan Compton, Election Supervisor

Patricia Thurman, Democratic Party Representative / Vice-Chair

Wyatt Thompson, Republican Party Representative

Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 14th, 2025 @ 4pm

Call to Order: *Invocation and Pledge led by Chairman Harris.*

Approval of Minutes: *Rep. Thompson motions to approve minutes as presented, Chairman Harris seconds, minutes approved.*

Old Business: *N/A*

New Business:

1. Updates on Preparation and Conduction of November 2025 Election
 - a. Poll Workers have been trained, Logic and Accuracy Testing has been completed and as of today, Early Voting is underway.
 - b. To ensure no crowding nor interference with the post-work rush of voting on Election Day, we are hoping to move early processing of absentee by mail ballots and tabulation of early voting to begin at 10am, at which point the board can leave once completed and return at 7pm as polls close, under the understanding that board members are legally barred from sharing any insights they might have obtained regarding election results they might have seen during these processes.
2. Update on Potential 2026 Changes
 - a. As we all know, Carl Hutchinson has submitted his resignation as Irwin County Commission Chairman to our office, the County Clerk, and the Governor's Office.
 - b. Governor Kemp has yet to accept his resignation to the best of our knowledge, which is the time at which his resignation becomes official.
 - c. After conferring with the Secretary of State's Office and County legal counsel, we are fairly sure but not yet certain that the special election to fill that vacancy will be held on March 17th, 2026.

- i. We have already budgeted for a special election within the 2026 Budget Year out of caution, so this will not bring us over budget.
- ii. The County Charter section outlining the timeline in which to hold a special election for a Commissioner vacancy conflicts with state law, with multiple rulings that the state law in question overrides provisions of local acts.
- iii. The county charter refresh the Irwin County Commission requested at their October 6th meeting will address this incongruity in addition to other modernization and standardizations to bring Irwin County policies in line with the other 158 counties here in Georgia.
- iv. One Charter update which will affect our office is the redistricting of the Commissioner districts to bring them in line with the school board districts, adding a new district and eliminating the at-large Commission Chairman position to do so.
 1. District 1 Commissioner Paul McIntyre would become the new District 3 Commissioner since his residence would be within the new District 3 lines, covering the Northern half of Irwinville as well as the Northwestern and North Central parts of the county.
 2. District 2 Commissioner Don Hickey would become the new District 1 Commissioner, covering the Southern half of Irwinville as well as the Southwestern parts of the county, covering most of the Pleasure Lake community.
 3. District 3 Commissioner and acting Chairman Aldene Tyson would become the new District 5 Commissioner, covering the Northern 2/3rds of Ocilla and surrounding areas.
 4. District 4 Commissioner Chris G Paulk would remain as District 4 Commissioner, losing some areas in the central parts of the county but his district areas remaining somewhat similar to how they are now.
 5. A new District 2 would be created and need to be filled in the 2026 Election Cycle, covering the South-central portion of the county and some of the Pleasure Lake community.
 - a. This special election would be filled by adding the contest to an already planned election's ballot, adding no costs to our budget.
 6. In compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the new District 3 and 5 boundaries both qualify as Majority-Minority Districts according to 2020 Census data.

CORRECTION- According to 2020 Census data, there is not a population large enough to be able to form more than 1 Majority-Minority district within Irwin County. The school board maps currently in place and intended for county commission use under this proposal still do their best to attempt to not dilute populations of concern, so within the boundaries of Districts 4 and 5, the minority populations are at 37 and 65 percent respectively. With a more complete and accurate response on the 2030 census, a second Majority-Minority district would be required if the minority population exceeded 40% countywide, but according to the 2020 census data collected during the pandemic, it is currently at 23.23%.

Chairman Harris asked who made the plans for new districts, and whether proper channels have been followed in the process to allow for public input and the input of the General Assembly's Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Office. Supervisor Compton responded that both Former Chairman Hutchinson and Acting Chairman Tyson came to the same ideas independently and the general proposed structure currently has unanimous bipartisan commissioner support at this phase, of which the general structure was suggested and the county legal counsel was instructed to draft a proposed charter change. That draft, when ready, could impact commissioner opinions, and when that draft is created will be when the public and Reapportionment will be notified and community discussions will be held at meetings. There has been no discussion yet because nothing has been drafted for presentation to discuss yet.

There was a brief interruption of the meeting as Supervisor Compton left to assist a voter needing to spoil a ballot to correct their selections before casting their vote and to ensure it was properly documented for accurate reconciliation.

- v. The Charter changes would also have the 5-member Commission designate the Chairman by either a rotating role or by a vote of the Commissioners. The Chairman's role would be greatly reduced, mostly given to a dedicated county manager who is hired at the discretion of the entire Commission, and the Chairman would be a normal voting member of the Commission, with their additional duties being currently speculated as mostly ceremonial around representing the county as a whole, and possibly being the one who conducts County Commission meetings.
- vi. Due to advance warning of the potential for this type of change to occur, we have already planned out most of the redistricting work needed to implement this if the County Commission, the Legislative Delegation, the General Assembly and the Governor all decide to pass the proposed changes.
 1. Once signed by the Governor, it will take our office 1 day of work to implement all map changes with the state voter registration system and send the General Assembly and South Georgia Regional Commission updated maps to reflect the changes.
 - a. This will likely as a best-case scenario only take effect in March or April if passed along all phases of government required.
 - i. This means that, if these changes pass, that the special election for Commission Chairman will almost certainly need to still be held, for the winning candidate to only hold office for a few weeks or possibly up to 2 months, then leave office as their position is dissolved in the charter.
 2. That said, it will be a 1-time cost of roughly \$3,000 in additional postage mailing precinct cards to all affected voters to notify them of their new combo numbers and Commission districts, which we did not budget for.
 3. After the changes are implemented, the complexity of our combos and ballot styles will be reduced roughly 60%, reducing the slight risk of

voters receiving the incorrect ballot dramatically, and will make future redistricting processes far simpler and more efficient, as well as slightly lowering our pre-printed emergency/absentee/provisional ballot costs by a few hundred dollars per election in perpetuity.

4. This change will also reinforce the constitutional right of the voters of Irwin County to a private ballot as enshrined in the Georgia Constitution, as the current lines left multiple precinct-combo numbers assigned with 25 voters or less, which could potentially expose them to their votes being matched to them if a particularly motivated and educated person or group chose to open records request the correct series of legally-required-to-be-public documents, especially in low turnout elections.

Public Comment: *N/A*

Board Comment:

Rep. Thompson asked Chairman Harris if the suggested Board of Elections Charter changes suggested in February 2025 to expand the membership would be more acceptable to the majority of the Board if nominations were solely made by the County Commission or a Grand Jury as is the case in some other counties. Rep. Thompson expressed his concerns at the risks of failing to meet quorum with a board of only three members, which Supervisor Compton responded that while we have occasionally met with the minimum number of members required for a quorum, that only 1 meeting in the last 5 years has been postponed due to failure to meet quorum. Rep. Thompson also stated a desire to ensure that our board structure conforms with both state legal requirements and the board structures of other counties. Supervisor Compton then informed the board of a recent survey of County Election Boards by the Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Elections Officials, where replies were currently showing that most smaller counties near our size had 3 member boards structured like ours currently was, and that the 5 member boards, especially those appointed by outside bodies, were more prevalent within medium and large jurisdictions, and that we do meet the legal requirements of a board structure according to current state laws. Chairman Harris responded that he still would not approve of such changes due to a concern of too many board members increasing the likelihood of discourse and disfunction on our board and a risk of conflicting board intentions interfering with the work of the board and the elections office. Chairman Harris stressed his understanding and appreciation of Rep. Thompson's concerns, but that at this time, he did not view them as substantial enough to change his vote due to his own concerns about expanding board membership.

Rep. Thompson also asked Supervisor Compton to ask the Secretary of State's Office to confirm what statutes exist concerning conflicts of interest for board members in case family members decide to run for office, and whether resignation or recusal would be required if that were to come to pass.

Executive Session: ~~Entered executive session @ _____ due to request by _____ to discuss:~~

~~Exited executive session @ _____~~

Meeting Adjourned:

1. Next Meeting: Friday, November 7th @ 3pm & 5pm – Reconciliation and Certification of November 5th, 2025 Election

Rep. Thompson motions to adjourn, Chairman Harris seconds, meeting adjourned @ 5:14pm.