



# *Board of Elections & Registrations*



## *Irwin County Georgia*

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*Waymond Harris, Chairman*

*Ethan Compton, Election Supervisor*

*Patricia Thurman, Democratic Party Representative / Vice-Chair*

*Wyatt Thompson, Republican Party Representative*

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### **Board Meeting Outline**

**Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025 @ 4pm**

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

Approval of Minutes: *Supervisor Compton apologized for only providing the minutes to board members that morning, as he had forgotten to send them before leaving for Auburn for continuing education and then vacation. Motion to approve minutes as presented made by Vice Chair Thurman, seconded by Rep. Thompson, approved 3-0*

Old Business: *Supervisor Compton wanted to provide a small update to topics discussed during board comments at the last meeting pertaining to SB 214 and the potential for Georgia to shift to a hand-marked paper ballot-on-demand voting system. During his National Election Center training courses, Supervisor Compton reached out to elections administrators from various jurisdictions which utilize such a system, and a jurisdiction from Virginia and the Michigan Secretary of State's Office both volunteered to provide data and testimonials outlining the benefits of such a transition, training for elections workers and voters they had materials for and challenges that they had to solve so that we can provide legislators with as informed of a decision as possible and, if implemented, that Georgia will have as smooth and orderly of a transition as possible.*

New Business:

1. Discussion of FY 2026 Department Budget Second Draft
  - a. Attached is the packet drafted by Supervisor Compton to be the second draft of the Board of Election's budget for FY 2026, which runs from September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 until August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026.
    - i. Due to the oversight of failing to account for the probable June 2026 Runoff Elections,

the budget has had no choice but to be increased to account for the 25% increase in the number of expected elections within the 2026 fiscal year.

- ii. Between that discovery and finding that Asst. Supervisor Romans' pay is below the current, still in place threshold for the Fair Labor Standards Act to qualify for overtime exemption, along with Chairman Harris' request that Supervisor Compton ask for a higher raise considering his performance, and Commission Chair Hutchinson's agreement that salaried positions would be more practical for Irwin County taxpayers as long as a log accounting for staff attendance were kept for accountability reasons, this draft is only presenting one proposed budget for salaried employees, which is for a new total of \$164,537.28, or an increase of \$4,584.52 (2.86%) vs FY 2025.
  1. The total increased raise amounts then transferring all staff back to overtime exempt results in net savings for Irwin County taxpayers of \$4,309.33.
- iii. If the best-case scenario of no special elections or runoffs occurring within the period of September 2025 through August 2026 comes to pass, only \$154,437.28 of this budget would be expected to be utilized, which would reflect a decrease of \$5,415.48 (-3.4%) vs FY 2025's budget.
- iv. The additional election to account for resulted in a \$1,772 increase in the poll worker budget, which was greatly mitigated due to needing less staff overall for the lower turnout elections expected in this fiscal year and that this additional election would be a runoff, which will only have 5 days of early voting instead of the full 17.
- v. An additional review of costs to find other savings to mitigate the increases also led to the decision to not renew the Dominion hardware warranty and instead reserving \$4,000 in funds for the potential replacement of one ballot marking device or tabulator plus the cost of one poll pad screen replacement, which results in savings of \$4,100 to offset the additional costs of adding two elections to the budget.
  1. The decision to recommend halting warranty renewal comes considering multiple factors:
    - a. Irwin County has by far had the lowest number of elections equipment damage of any of Georgia's counties since 2020, only having two faulty smart card encoders (not covered under warranty @\$119 ea.), 1 Battery Backup Unit overloaded by the power fluctuations during Hurricane Idalia in September 2023 (not covered under warranty, but replaced at no cost by the Secretary of State's Office as part of an upgrade/safety replacement project approved by the General Assembly), and 1 broken Poll Pad Screen in September 2023 (not covered under warranty @\$180).
    - b. None of the dominion equipment covered under warranty has had any issues, with their contract with Georgia ending in 2028, when a new system would almost certainly be purchased and deployed by the state, so we have gone far beyond the mid-life point of this equipment with no problems due to diligent maintenance being enforced.
  2. The warranty came with a bonus incentive which included 1 toner cartridge per ballot marking device covered, leading to a surplus of toner considering the

lower usage by smaller counties such as ours, with excess toner currently under consideration for the Irwin County Commission to list on GovDeals, with all proceeds going onto our budget as income.

- a. With a current count of 86 HP 26A Toner cartridges in surplus, each with a retail value of \$151.99 but an average selling price of \$75 on GovDeals, we estimate an additional \$6,450 of costs to be recuperated by selling our surplus toner.
- b. An additional 37 toner cartridges for 2025's warranty purchase are due for delivery later this year.
  - i. We will use these, and an additional 15 cartridges held for safekeeping, for the remainder of the life of this system then sell the surplus toner in the same manner.
- vi. To illustrate the results of our pursuit of more efficient processes, facilities and equipment benefiting the taxpayers of Irwin County- our General Supplies Budget in 2020 was \$12,800 and is now just \$5,594 6 years later due to wise investment in equipment that is able to serve in a longer-term and/or multi-purpose capacity without needing frequent replacements as opposed to short term thinking and overspending on unitask items to fill immediate needs as they arose as was the case until 2021. In addition, our annual budget increases have reliably been able to remain close to but under the rate of inflation, which if taken into consideration would have meant consistent relative budget decreases each year since 2020.
  1. 2021-2022= 8.5% increase vs. 9.1% inflation, net 0.6% decrease
  2. 2022-2023= 2.7% increase vs. 6.4% inflation, net 3.7% decrease
  3. 2023-2024= 3.05% increase vs. 3.7% inflation, net 0.65% decrease
  4. 2024-2025= 2.21% increase vs. 3.5% inflation, net 1.29% decrease
  5. 2025-2026= 2.86% increase vs. 3.4% inflation, net 0.54% decrease

*After confirming in the budget packets that the stated changes between drafts were the only changes made, in the interest of providing a department budget to the county commission for as much public discussion as possible before final approval, Rep. Thompson motions to approve the FY 2026 budget. Vice Chair Thurman seconds the motion, budget approved for submission to the county commission 3-0.*

## 2. 2025 Election Status Update

- a. The elections project files have been proofread, approved and delivered to our county for the June 2025 Public Service Commissioner Special Primary and sample ballots are available.
- b. Poll Worker Training was held on May 9<sup>th</sup> and Logic and Accuracy Testing was held on the equipment to be used in this election on May 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.
- c. The voter registration deadline for this election, with election day on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025, was May 16<sup>th</sup>.
- d. Early voting will be held from 8am until 5pm Monday through Saturday beginning on May 27<sup>th</sup> and ending on June 7<sup>th</sup>.
- e. Absentee by mail ballots have been available to request since March 31<sup>st</sup> and can continue to be

requested until June 6<sup>th</sup>.

- i. Due to the phrasing of the laws allowing an annual rollover list of absentee ballots for elderly and disabled voters, it has been determined by the Secretary of State's Office that no elections this year qualify for maintaining a rollover list for. Glynn County is currently suing the state over this decision, but we will be informing voters that for each election this year, they will need to fill out a separate absentee by mail ballot application.
- f. Members of this board will need to be at our office by 5pm on June 17<sup>th</sup> in order to perform early processing and tabulation of absentee by mail and early voting ballots.
- g. The Secretary of State's Office has informed us that no third-party candidates have successfully obtained the number of signatures required to qualify for the November Special General Election, so unless one of the contests for Ocilla goes to runoff, we will not have a December Runoff election as was originally expected.
  - i. If so, that runoff would be municipal only instead of countywide, and we will know for certain about the possibilities of it occurring on the afternoon of August 22<sup>nd</sup> when candidate qualifying for Ocilla ends and we know how many people are running for Mayor, City Council District 1 and City Council District 3.

Public Comment: N/A

Board Comment: *Supervisor Compton presented first samples of the Irwin County Informed Citizen's Guide which was approved as a special project in the FY 2025 budget. While initially budgeted for \$4,000, Supervisor Compton stated that less than half the costs were actually needed (later confirmed to be \$875, less than a quarter of the budgeted expense) in order to provide an initial run of roughly 300 voter guides covering election types and election dates for the remainder of the decade. Supervisor Compton expressed plans to have them available for download off the county website, available printed and bound in our office and available in the library, the Chamber of Commerce and other public facing governmental facilities as well as copies being provided to both county parties if desired.*

*Rep. Thompson stated that it was the intentions of the Irwin County Republican Party to look into beginning to provide candidate qualifying services beginning in 2026. Vice Chair Thurman asked if they had the authority to do so, and Supervisor Compton stated that it was within both parties' authorities if they ever wished to do so, but that due to the size of the county it was normally provided by our office instead due to the logistics involved. Supervisor Compton further explained that this is not the first time that party provided qualifying has been considered, but in the past, it was decided by the county parties that it was not financially viable to have staffing available at our office for qualifying for the period of 4 and a half days on elections which have few qualified candidates. Supervisor Compton suggested to both party representatives that will likely also be the case for 2026 as well, but to re-evaluate the circumstances for presidential election years such as 2028 when there were a much larger number of local offices needing to be filled which will likely prove viable, and in either case, our office will remain available to provide support.*

Executive Session: Entered executive session @ \_\_\_\_\_ due to request by \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss:

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~~Exited executive session @~~

Meeting Adjourned:

1. Next Meeting: Friday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025 @ 3pm- Reconciliation of June 17<sup>th</sup> Special Primary Results &

5pm- Certification of June 17<sup>th</sup> Special Primary Results

*Vice Chair Thurman motions to adjourn, Rep. Thompson seconds, meeting adjourned 3-0 at 4:40pm.*