

LINN COUNTY COMMITTEE OF COUNTY OFFICERS
DESIGNATED TO FILL A BOARD OF SUPERVISORS VACANCY
CEDAR RAPIDS, LINN COUNTY, IOWA
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025 1:30 P.M.

The Committee met in the formal boardroom of the Linn County Jean Oxley Public Service Center. Present: Auditor Todd Taylor, Recorder Carolyn Siebrecht, and Treasurer Brent Oleson. Committee members voting "AYE" unless otherwise noted.

Auditor Taylor called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Motion by Siebrecht, seconded by Oleson, to nominate Auditor Taylor as Chairperson. Motion by Oleson, seconded by Taylor, to nominate Recorder Siebrecht as Vice Chairperson. Motion by Siebrecht, seconded by Oleson, to nominate Jessica Black as Recording Secretary.

Assistant Linn County Attorney Lisa Epp led a discussion about the process and procedures to fill a vacancy on the Board of Supervisors. Epp explained that the Committee is statutorily organized by Iowa Code to fill a vacancy on the Board of Supervisors and to also determine the method in which it's done: appointment or special election. Should the Committee choose to appoint, eligible electors have the opportunity to petition for a special election, either at the time of the announcement of intent to appoint, or at the time of appointment. Epp said whichever method the committee chooses; Iowa Code prescribes the steps to follow.

Recorder Siebrecht asked for clarification on code language regarding the public's right to petition for a special election. Epp explained that the public has two opportunities to petition the Committee's decision: within 14 days from the announcement of intent to appoint, or within 14 days from the time the appointment has been made.

Linn County Director of Policy and Administration Darrin Gage advised the Committee that once the appointment has been made, it is good until the next pending election for the position. The Committee has 40 days after the vacancy occurs, or until May 10, to make the appointment. Gage supported Epp's previous comment regarding the 14-day period to petition, adding that the 14 days begin at the time in which the Notice of Intent to Appoint is published in the newspaper.

Gage presented a sample schedule to the committee members in the event they choose to fill the vacancy by appointment:

- February 26: Notice of Intent to Appoint gets published in The Gazette
- March 13 or 14: Committee meets again and decides to take applications
- March 21: Application deadline
- March 24: Committee meets again to decide on next steps
- March 24-28: Conduct interviews, if necessary
- March 31: Formal appointment

Linn County Deputy Commissioner of Elections Matt Warfield explained that should the Committee choose to hold a special election; notice must be given to the Auditor, serving as a call for election. The election would be scheduled for at least 32 days after the call for election, but not before the vacancy. Warfield said the political parties represented in Linn County have requested two weeks for their nomination process, which would push the election to 39 days after the call for election. This period would also serve as the candidate filing period for anyone outside of the two parties who is interested in running. Warfield explained that 100 signatures would be required to file an additional nomination with the Auditor's Office, prior to 25 days before the election date that's been set. Warfield said any public petition filed would need to be audited to ensure there are at least 4,125 signatures of eligible electors.

Warfield estimated costs for a special election to be around \$100,000.

Oleson asked if anyone outside of the two political parties could be on the ballot. Warfield said yes, special elections do not require candidates to have a party listed next to their name.

Auditor Taylor asked for public comment.

Heidi Barnhart, 570 Chestnut Drive, Robins, asked the Committee to consider individuals qualified for the position and not focus on party lines. She spoke in favor of having a special election.

Bernie Hayes, 327 30th Street SE, Cedar Rapids, echoed previous comments and spoke in support of a special election. Hayes added, in jest, that Linn County Deputy Commissioner of Elections Matt Warfield needed more work to do.

Susan Benya, 533 Forest Drive SE, Cedar Rapids, also spoke in support of a special election, regardless of additional costs and labor.

Randy Walker, 7706 Pin Tail Drive NE, Cedar Rapids, commended the Board of Supervisors for providing warming centers and work for veterans in Linn County. Walker spoke in favor of a special election, insisting this would make the public feel better about how tax dollars are being spent.

Circe Stumbo, 3839 Cottage Grove Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, thanked Supervisor Rogers for his service to the people of Linn County. Stumbo spoke in support of filling the vacancy by appointment for reasons related to cost, length of process, practicality, and trust in transparency of the process.

Bret Niles, 6090 Stags Leap Lane, Marion, spoke in favor of filling the vacancy by appointment. Niles said the timeline and cost associated with a special election, and potential for another special election, should be taken into consideration when deciding how to proceed. Niles supported his comments by adding that voter turnout for a special election has historically been very low.

Mark Banowetz, 2188 Ivanhoe Road, Ely, spoke in favor of a special election to allow the public to voice their opinion and give them an opportunity to discuss concerns. Banowetz insisted the costs of a special election were merely a drop in the bucket compared to the overall county budget.

Kathleen Banowetz, 2188 Ivanhoe Road, Ely, asked the Committee to consider appointing someone who is knowledgeable and will perform the job with dignity. Banowetz thanked Supervisor Rogers for his years of service.

Matt Warfield, 4128 Lexington Drive NE, Cedar Rapids, argued in jest, that he did not need additional work, as previously mentioned by Hayes.

Auditor Taylor opened the discussion on the procedure the Committee will use to fill the vacancy on the Board of Supervisors. Taylor spoke in favor of filling the vacancy by way of appointment rather than special election. Taylor insisted all parts of the process would be performed with transparency and in accordance with Iowa Code.

Recorder Siebrecht thanked everyone for attending and offering public comment. Siebrecht echoed Taylor's comments in support of filling the vacancy by way of appointment. She expressed concerns about the length of time a special election would require, adding that a two-person Board would not be capable of accomplishing much in the meantime. Siebrecht vowed to take all applicant qualifications into account. She insisted the process would be a transparent one and suggested holding open interviews to the public.

Treasurer Oleson thanked everyone for attending. He also spoke in favor of filling the vacancy by way of appointment, rather than special election. Oleson expressed concerns about low voter turnout in a special election, and turnout that wouldn't necessarily represent everyone in Linn County. Oleson vowed to take all applicant qualifications into consideration, rather than political party. He listed several attributes and qualifications he would like the newly-elected official to possess: an understanding of commitment – this

would be a full-time position, a desire to serve in this position for at least five years, a passion for certain issues, an understanding of and desire to empower department heads and elected officials, a demonstrated history of collaboration and partnership, a commitment to preserving existing working relationships between management and collective bargaining unit, a deep and varied resume, confidence in oneself, independence, excellent communication skills, prior Board of Directors experience, and a legal resident with established roots in District 2.

Auditor Taylor agreed with Treasurer Oleson, adding that he wanted to fill the seat expeditiously and be cost conservative. Taylor strongly supported filling the vacancy by way of appointment, rather than special election.

Motion by Taylor, seconded by Oleson, to declare intent to fill the Board of Supervisors vacancy by appointment.

The Committee discussed the course of action for the next Committee of County Officers Meeting; all agreed to discuss applicant qualifications and additional required application information.

Motion by Oleson, seconded by Siebrecht, to schedule the next Committee of County Officers Meeting for March 13, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

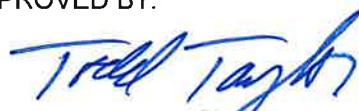
Chairperson Taylor adjourned the meeting at 2:16 p.m. for lack of further business.

Respectfully submitted,



JESSIE BLACK, Recording Secretary

APPROVED BY:



TODD E. TAYLOR, Chairperson
Committee of County Officers
Designated to Fill a Board of Supervisors Vacancy