

MINUTES of the GREB WorkGroup

November 17, 2016

The GREB WorkGroup met on Thursday, November 17, 2016, at 10:00 a.m. in the Speaker's Conference Room, 6th Floor, General Assembly Building, Richmond.

Present: Co-Chairs Kate Hanley and John Hager, Clara Belle Wheeler, Charlie Judd, Barbara Gunter, Tracy Howard, Renee Andrews, Robin Lind, William Bell.

Mr. Hager called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. and asked Mr. Lind to serve as temporary Recording Secretary.

On a motion by Ms. Hanley, seconded by Mr. Howard, the draft minutes of the September 20, 2016 meeting were unanimously adopted.

In reference to the previous meeting's invitation to the P&E Committees of the General Assembly to meet with the GREB WorkGroup, Mr. Judd reported that the joint meeting of the committees at the Capitol on Oct. 13 had pre-empted the invitation. He described presentations by Directors of Elections Gregg Riddlemoser, Larry Haake, Tracy Howard and Walt Latham as being well-received.

The crash of the VERIS system four days later, said Ms. Hanley, brought the focus back to factual data. Mr. Howard said the Commissioner had told him that VERIS was taking 343 hits per second at the time it crashed.

Discussion ensued on the individual jurisdictions' experience with VERIS. Queries on the possibility of moving data and processing to the "Cloud" brought conflicting answers about whether the Code permitted voting data to be stored outside the Commonwealth.

Mr. Bell explained that the SBE "business model" does not fit the business model of other state agencies and suggested a case should be made for a stand-alone environment that does not need to be tied into anything else in the Commonwealth.

Discussion of labor-intensive processing of duplicate online registrations, especially through DMV, brought criticism of the software coding which did not provide a confirmation screen to applicants and did not prevent multiple re-registrations.

Discussion continued on the origins of VERIS, the initial recommendation against it, and the administration decision to require adoption. Mr. Hager suggested that needed to be taken in perspective to create a recommendation that could be implemented. Ms. Hanley asked if VRAV and VEBA had a compilation of issues that needed to be addressed.

Ms. Gunter suggested that VRAV and ELECT be asked to form a User Committee to identify and resolve IT issues

Dr. Wheeler suggested that a survey might go out but some GRs might be reluctant to respond fully if they were not assured of anonymity; she added that there were concerns with VERIS on election day.

Mr. Howard suggested the possibility of a JLARC study. Mr. Lind responded that JLARC had neither the staff nor time to conduct such an audit; the GREB WorkGroup was created in response to the legislature's refusal to conduct a JLARC study requested by Del. Randall Minchew, he said. Mr. Judd advised against a JLARC study and said the House members would be responsive to proposals with their election coming up next year. Mr. Howard suggested it could be a function of the Associations and Mr. Hager said it would be important to identify the problem and then propose a solution.

Mr. Lind asked if it would be possible to get immediate responses from GRs to produce actionable data which legislators would be ready to support.

He then moved that the GREB WorkGroup ask the VRAV President and VEBA Immediate Past President to seek data as soon as possible and report back with prioritized data at the next meeting with recommendations for action; the motion was seconded by Mr. Howard. After further discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

Discussion ensued on the adequacy of Deputy and Assistant General Registrars who might not be qualified on VERIS. The difference in populations and disparity in compensation across the state drew spirited responses. Mr. Lind suggested that a return to 100% reimbursement by the Commonwealth to localities, to include both GR and a Deputy, would eliminate the resistance in smaller jurisdictions who suffer financial hardships. Mr. Howard expressed warm appreciation for ELECT which offered staffing assistance and advice to several localities who had experienced the loss of, or hospitalization of, their GRs in critical periods leading up to the election.

The board agreed to meet again on December 12. There being no further business, the Workgroup was adjourned at 1:49 p.m

Respectfully submitted, Robin Lind, Temporary Recording Secretary