



**WASHTENAW COUNTY  
BOARD OF CANVASSERS  
January 12, 2026**

**MINUTES**

A meeting of the Washtenaw County Board of Canvassers was held in the Lower Level Large Conference Room located at 200 N. Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mary Hall-Thiam (D), Chair  
Ed Clarke (R), Vice Chair  
Denise Pettis (D)  
Sharon Giuffre (R)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Lawrence Kestenbaum, Washtenaw County Clerk  
Rena Basch, Director of Elections  
James N. Allen, Deputy Clerk/Elections  
Cheryl Depner, League of Women Voters

**Call to Order and Roll Call**

Board Chair Hall-Thiam called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, January 12, 2026.

**Public Participation**

Cheryl Depner, on behalf of the League of Women Voters, spoke about processes to make the canvass move more efficiently.

**Approval of the Agenda**

The Board unanimously agreed to approve the agenda to include discussions of online visibility of materials, Chain of Custody of poll books, and process for out-of-balance precincts.

**Yeas:** Clarke, Giuffre, Hall-Thiam, Pettis  
**Nays:** None  
**Absent:** None  
**Motion carried**

**Approval of Minutes of November 2025 Canvass**

Vice Chair Clarke presented the Board with a list of recommended additions to the Minutes of the November 2025 Canvass. (See attached)

**Motion by Giuffre, supported by Pettis, to include titles of Chair and Vice Chair to Board Members.**

**Yeas: Clarke, Giuffre, Hall-Thiam, Pettis**  
**Nays: None**  
**Absent: None**  
**Motion carried**

The Board discussed pay with Clerk Kestenbaum. The Board was advised their pay is decided by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners. (See attached Board of Commissioners resolution.)The Board discussed possibly revisiting the issue.

The Board decided to discuss each bolded item from Clarke's suggested edits to the Minutes.

**Motion by Clarke, supported by Hall-Thiam, to include a suggested paragraph regarding the "Approval of the Agenda" from Clarke into the Minutes.**

**Yeas: Clarke, Giuffre**  
**Nays: Hall-Thiam, Pettis**  
**Absent: None**  
**Motion failed**

**Motion by Clarke, to modify the Approval of Minutes section to include his edits offered in writing.**

Mr. Kestenbaum noted a typographical error in the minutes under "the majority."

**There was no second, motion failed.**

**Motion by Clarke, seconded by Giuffre, to accept Clarke's suggested edits to "review of canvass processes."**

**Yeas: Clarke, Giuffre**  
**Nays: Hall-Thiam, Pettis**  
**Absent: None**  
**Motion failed**

**Motion by Clarke, supported by Giuffre, to accept Clarke's suggested edits to "Canvass of the November general election" section.**

**Yeas: Clarke, Giuffre**  
**Nays: Hall-Thiam, Pettis**  
**Absent: None**  
**Motion failed**

**Motion by Clarke, supported by Giuffre, to accept Mr. Clarke's suggested edits to "Approvals."**

Discussion was held regarding signatures at the end of the Minutes. Mr. Kestenbaum explained his signature on the minutes does not mean he approves what the Board has done, but that the process was followed. Elections Director Rena Basch explained past practices.

**Motion by Pettis, supported by Hall-Thiam, to have Clerk Kestenbaum continue to sign the Minutes.**

**Yeas: Giuffre, Hall-Thiam, Pettis**  
**Nays: Clarke**  
**Absent: None**  
**Motion carried**

**Motion by Pettis, supported by Hall-Thiam, to require the County Clerk's designee, Recording Secretary, to sign the minutes.**

**Yeas: Clarke, Giuffre, Hall-Thiam, Pettis**  
**Nays: None**  
**Absent: None**  
**Motion carried**

**Motion by Pettis, supported by Hall-Thiam, to approve the minutes of meeting on November 6, 2025, as amended.**

**Yeas: Giuffre, Hall-Thiam, Pettis**  
**Nays: Clarke**  
**Absent: None**  
**Motion carried**

### **Elect Chair/Vice**

**Motion by Giuffre, supported by Clarke, to nominate Ed Clarke as Chair and Mary Hall-Thiam as Vice Chair of the Washtenaw County Board of Canvassers.**

Hall-Thiam declined the Vice Chair nomination. Giuffre amended her motion.

**Motion by Giuffre, supported by Clarke, to nominate Ed Clarke as Chair and Denise Pettis as Vice Chair of the Washtenaw County Board of Canvassers.**

**Yeas: Clarke, Giuffre, Hall-Thiam, Pettis**  
**Nays: None**  
**Absent: None**  
**Motion carried**

### **Set 2026 Meeting Schedule**

**Motion by Pettis, supported by Clarke to Set the 2026 Meeting Schedule.**  
**Approved schedule below.**

**Thursday**, May 7, 2026 starting at 9:00 a.m. (if election occurs) followed by May 8, 11, and 12.

**Thursday**, August 6, 2026 starting at 9:00 a.m. followed by August 7, 10, and 11.

**Thursday**, November 5, 2026 starting at 9:00 a.m. followed by November 6, 9, and 10.

**Yeas:** Clarke, Giuffre, Hall-Thiam, Pettis

**Nays:** None

**Absent:** None

**Motion carried**

### **Set Dates/Locations for the Certification of Election Bags**

The Board unanimously selected the dates of May 13 – 15 and May 18 – 20 (as backup dates) at various locations within Washtenaw County to certify election bags.

Basch advised among the locations to hold bag certifications included Ann Arbor's Election Headquarters and the County's Learning Resource Center. The Board may want to include a site for the east and west ends of the County and Basch advised she would speak to some of the Clerk's Offices on that side.

### **Other Business**

#### **Online Visibility**

Basch showed the Board the County Clerk's website on the projector and where to access documents pertaining to the Canvassers.

#### **Chain of Custody**

Basch answered questions from Clarke regarding chain of custody of the pollbooks, and confirmed that either Canvassers or Clerk staff should have custody during the canvass, including breaks.

#### **Out of balance precincts**

Basch reviewed what happened with three out of balance precincts at the November 2025 election, explained the Board's responsibility to bring those precincts into balance, and answered questions. Board discussed the policy of asking for re-tabulation when it is obvious not every ballot was counted.

#### **Checklists**

Clarke requested that checklists be discussed as he wants everyone to use the Board of Canvassers Manual sheets, or that the County's sheets be updated to include a checkbox for reviewing the tabulator tape. Board agreed new checklists are needed. Basch agreed to revise the County's checksheets.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm.

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Member, Board of Canvassers (D)

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Member, Board of Canvassers (R)

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Member, Board of Canvassers (D)

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Member, Board of Canvassers (R)

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Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register

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Recording Secretary

Approved on: \_\_\_\_\_