

WISCONSIN ELECTIONS COMMISSION

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DATE: July 1, 2016

TO: Wisconsin County Clerks
Wisconsin Municipal Clerks
City of Milwaukee Elections Commission
Milwaukee County Elections Commission

FROM: Michael Haas
Elections Commission Administrator

SUBJECT: Agency Transition Update

As you are probably aware, yesterday was the first day of business for the Wisconsin Elections Commission and the Wisconsin Ethics Commission. The Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) was dissolved as of June 29, 2016. This transition was the culmination of months of planning and coordination between staff of the G.A.B. and the Department of Administration. I would like to provide some brief updates regarding the transition and our plans going forward.

1. Most importantly, all of the G.A.B. staff transferred to either the Elections Commission or the Ethics Commission, with the exception of Director and General Counsel Kevin Kennedy. Kevin retired on Wednesday after 37 years in election administration, most of those years as Wisconsin's chief election official. We appreciate all of the well wishes that Kevin received and you can let me know if you need to reach him or would like me to pass along any message. Kevin's expertise and leadership will certainly be missed but we will continue to build on the foundation of professional and unbiased public service and election administration which he established. The program staff of the Elections Division has transferred to the Elections Commission and the program staff of the Ethics and Accountability Division has transferred to the Ethics Commission. Except for the changes noted below, you will be able to continue to reach the same staff at the same email addresses and phone numbers.
2. The Ethics Commission is in the process of hiring its Administrator and that decision will be finalized in the coming weeks. In other staffing news, David Buerger was recently named to fill the vacancy in one of the Staff Counsel positions and he will serve as legal counsel for the Ethics Commission. Nate Judnic will serve as legal counsel for the Elections Commission. Richard Rydecki will transfer to David's previous position on the Elections Administration team. Finally, today is Marianne Griffin's last day with the agency as she is taking a position affiliated with the UW-Madison's Fluno Center. We appreciate Marianne's contributions and work over the past couple of years and wish her well, and we

also thank David for his lengthy service and impressive list of accomplishments as an Elections Specialist. His legal expertise will be an asset to the Ethics Commission. We will be working to fill three vacant Elections Specialists positions as soon as we can, but in the meantime Richard will continue as the lead contact regarding voting equipment and accessibility issues.

3. The Elections Commission and the Ethics Commission will continue in our current location, at least until the end of our office lease in 2018. We are working out the designation of main telephone numbers for each agency, but for the time being both Commissions can be reached at the main reception desk and Help Desk numbers used by the G.A.B.
4. We are developing separate websites for the two Commissions which can be found at <http://elections.wi.gov/> and <http://ethics.wi.gov/>. The websites will take some time to be fully developed and for now they largely direct users back to the G.A.B. website.
5. The Wisconsin Elections Commission held its first meeting yesterday and selected its Chair and other officers. Mark Thomsen of Milwaukee will serve as Chair for the next two years and Ann Jacobs of Milwaukee will serve as Vice Chair. Beverly Gill, former Burlington City Clerk, was selected as Secretary. Other members of the Elections Commission are Don Millis of Sun Prairie, Steve King of Janesville, and Julie Glancey of Sheboygan Falls, former Sheboygan County Clerk. The next regular meeting of the Elections Commission will be on August 30, 2016, beginning at 10:00 a.m., in our offices.

There have been many moving parts and details related to winding down one agency and creating two new agencies. These tasks have been completed while agency staff members have attended to their regular program duties. As we prepare for the upcoming August and November elections, our goal is to continue to maintain high standards of expertise, teamwork and public service, and to minimize any disruption in our daily operations.

The success of election administration in Wisconsin depends on our strong partnership with local election officials. I want to thank you for that and to encourage our continued open and consistent communication and cooperation. It is always nice to hear positive feedback about our staff and initiatives but it is equally important that we receive your feedback about challenges you are facing or how we could serve you more effectively. Thank you for your continued hard work on behalf of Wisconsin voters, and I hope you enjoy the long holiday weekend.