

## Annual Activity Report of the Newport Canvassing Authority 2025

Pursuant to Chapter 2.56.040 of the Newport Code of Ordinances, I respectfully submit the Newport Canvassing Authority's annual report to the Newport City Council. This report summarizes our activities for the calendar year 2025, including a record of attendance for Authority members at each regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

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### Mission

The mission of the Newport Canvassing Authority is to conduct all elections in the City of Newport in a fair and transparent manner, in accordance with:

- The U.S. Constitution
- The Rhode Island Constitution
- The General Laws of the State of Rhode Island
- Rules and regulations promulgated by the Rhode Island Board of Elections and the Rhode Island Secretary of State

Under the direction of the State Board of Elections, in cooperation with the Secretary of State and with assistance from the Canvassing Department, the Authority maintains an accurate list of registered voters. Additionally, it administers elections fairly, efficiently, and equitably in an open and transparent manner.

The Authority's goal is to ensure that the will of the majority of the City's citizens is accurately voiced in each municipal, state, and federal election.

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### Canvassing Board

The Canvassing Authority operates under Rhode Island General Law §17-8-1. The Newport City Council appoints a bipartisan Canvassing Authority composed of three (3) qualified electors of the City, with no more than two (2) members belonging to the same political party. Two alternates, one from each party, are also appointed. Members are nominated by the mayor based on party voter lists submitted by the City's political committee chairpersons.

#### Current Members:

- **Chairwoman:** Sharon Connors (D)
  - **Member:** Donato Andre D'Andrea (R)
  - **Member:** J. Clement "Bud" Cicilline (D)
  - **Alternate:** Mary Moniz (D)
  - **Alternate:** Mary Ann Marin (R)
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### Meetings

The Canvassing Authority meets on the **first Tuesday of each month at 11:30 A.M.** All meetings are posted on the Secretary of State's website at least 48 hours in advance, pursuant to the Open Meetings Act. Unless noted as an Executive Session, all meetings are open to the public.

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## Canvassing Staffing

**Elections Administrator:** Hugh Moren leads the Canvassing Office with exceptional dedication and professionalism, supported by an assistant in the role of **Senior Clerk Typist**.

**Staffing Challenges:** Following similar turnover in 2023 and 2024, our most recent Senior Clerk Typist also transitioned to a position within the Finance team in July 2025. This regular disruption in staffing presents an ongoing challenge for Canvassing and is symptomatic of a broader trend in the field of election administration, where low pay, increase demands, and a tense electoral climate make it difficult to retain people. Additionally, staff typically are not fully trained until they have been through a 2-year election cycle.

Fortunately, we welcomed a new staff member, Sam Bishop, in October 2025.

**Recommendation:** Given the high demands and expertise required, we strongly urged the city manager to re-evaluate this position's classification. In a 26-month period, **three** Senior Clerk Typists have left for higher-paying roles, underscoring the need for a competitive adjustment and a title change to retain qualified staff.

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## 2025 Highlights

### Elections Conducted

There were no regularly scheduled federal, statewide, or local elections in Newport 2025. No special elections were called either, making 2025 the first year with no election since 2019.

### Voter Registration and List Maintenance

As of mid-December, the Canvassing Office processed **880** new voter registrations in Newport, updated records for party affiliations, name changes, and intra-city moves, and processed approximately **1480** cancellations for voters who moved to other RI town, moved out of state, passed away, or were otherwise removed as required by law. As of mid-December, Newport's total registered voter population stands at **15,026**, down 3.6% from the prior year.

In line with 2023 legislation, the Canvassing Office completed four quarterly updates using National Change of Address (NCOA) data, enhancing voter roll accuracy.

Additionally, the state sent two statewide mailings to conduct list maintenance under state and federal law. In March, they sent an update to voters who may have moved out of state or within Rhode Island without updating their registration. In November, the state sent a mailing to all

registered voters asking them to review their information and update them if need be. Each mailing provides an extra opportunity to keep Newport's voter rolls up to date.

### **Federal Changes to Election Administration**

The Canvassing Authority and office has been monitoring federal election policy for how it will affect our responsibilities to maintain the voter rolls and conduct elections in 2026. Two trends are of concern:

First is the defunding of support for election security and, in particular, the defunding of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA). CISA provides real-time security services, information sharing, and technical support for elections. Much of the unclassified information sharing has been picked up by the non-profit Center for Internet Security, but election jurisdictions are missing the other security support available to them in 2024.

The second trend of concern is the federal government's attempt to encroach on the states' ability to conduct their own elections. In March of 2025, the president signed an executive order requiring documentary proof of citizenship for voter registration transactions and conditioning federal election-related funding on state compliance with the administration's interpretation of election integrity measures. The executive order has faced significant legal challenges that will continue into 2026. When the executive order proved difficult to implement, the administration attempted to pass the SAVE Act, a bill which has similar requirements and issues but was ultimately blocked in the Senate. Most recently, as of mid-December, the Department of Justice sued the State of Rhode Island, along with 21 other states for refusing to provide access to voters' confidential data. The RI Attorney General has indicated he will join the RI Secretary of State in fighting this lawsuit, which is expected to continue into 2026.

### **Election Training and Certification (ETAC) program**

In an effort to further professionalize the RI elections community and provide continuing education, the State Board of Election and the RI Secretary of State's Elections Division have created the Elections Training and Certification (ETAC) program. This twelve-course, in-person program is required for all canvassing office staff and suggested for board members. Topics covered include election law, the central voter registration system, cybersecurity, records retention, open meetings, crisis management/emergency preparedness, candidate declarations and nominations, military & overseas voting and mail ballots, election equipment training, election day paperwork, and post-election processes.

### **U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence**

The Canvassing Office was accepted to the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence's Pathfinder Cohort. The alliance is a nonpartisan collaborative that is bringing together election officials, designers, technologists, and other experts to help local election departments improve operations, develop a set of shared standards and values, and obtain access to best-in-class resources to run successful elections. The Pathfinder Cohort consists of 75 local election offices nationwide working on implementing voluntary nonpartisan standards for election administration and developing a certification process for the field. We are in two sub-cohorts focusing on Culture and Emergency Planning and both have proved useful to the Canvassing Office so far.

### **Continuity of Operations**

Continuity of operations and emergency preparedness were a central theme for our work in 2025. In the spring, the office and the Canvassing Authority developed, revised and adopted our first Continuity of Operations (COOP) document, using a template from the federal U.S. Election Assistance Commission. This is especially important given the continued staff turnover we have experienced. Our work with the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence and the state's ETAC program have helped us refine focusing on our operational priorities and how to resume them with the voter in mind in the event of a disruption. We are continuing to write standard operating procedures and focusing on cross-training to prevent single points of failure.

We have also started preparing a presentation a table-top exercise (TTX) to city staff in the spring of 2026. The presentation and TTX will focus on emergency management when a crisis event occurs in conjunction with or impacts a federal election.

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## Statewide Collaboration

Chairwoman Sharon Connors is the chair of the **RI Canvassers Collaborative (RICC)**, a working group uniting Boards of Canvassers to:

- Collaborate on shared challenges
- Exchange vital election information
- Improve election processes statewide

This initiative has strengthened cooperation between local Boards, the Secretary of State, and the State Board of Elections. RICC is partnering with two national organizations, The Coalition of Election Association Leaders (CEAL) and the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) to undertake a strategic planning process to further shape the future of this association. The Newport Canvassing Authority is an active participant in this statewide effort to find solutions to shared problems, exchange important election information and to work together to improve the voting process, in service to ensuring a strong democratic process.

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## Future Goals

1. Host a TTX for city staff in spring of 2026 focused on emergency management and elections.
  2. Enhance Board Member education and training to improve support during early voting and Election Day.
  3. Address staffing and space challenges to ensure smooth election administration.
  4. Continue outreach programs to increase voter participation and poll worker recruitment.
  5. Strengthen partnerships with local law enforcement and statewide agencies to safeguard elections.
  6. Improve the poll working recruitment and training process.
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## Conclusion

The Newport Canvassing Department, led by Hugh Moren and supported by Sam Bishop, remains a dedicated and cohesive team. Their professionalism benefits the Canvassing Authority, candidates, voters, and the public.

Respectfully submitted,

**Sharon Connors, Chair**  
*Newport Canvassing Authority*

**Newport Canvassing Authority  
2025 Meeting Attendance**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Sharon Connors, Chair</b>	<b>Donato Andre D'Andrea</b>	<b>J. Clement Cicilline</b>	<b>Dem. Alt.* Mary Moniz</b>	<b>Rep. Alt.* Mary Ann Marin</b>
01/07/25	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
02/04/25	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
03/04/25	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
04/01/25	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
05/06/25	Y	N	Y	N	Y
06/03/25	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
07/01/25	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
08/05/25	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
09/02/25	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
10/07/25	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
11/04/25	Y	Y	Y	N	N
12/04/25	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

\*Alternate not required to attend unless one of the regular members is unable to attend