

Birmingham Real-Time News

Brighton Mayor Brandon Dean ordered to vacate office, run-off election ordered

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Brighton could have a new mayor after a judge ordered Brandon Dean to vacate that office.

Retired Jefferson County Bessemer Cutoff Circuit Judge Eugene Verin issued an order Monday morning, stating "a vacancy exists" as Brighton's mayor, because Dean did not receive the required number of votes to win the 2016 election. Verin ordered a run-off election, but no date has been set.

In the civil lawsuit filed by former mayoral candidate Eddie Cooper against Dean, Cooper claimed Dean was not eligible as the city's mayor because Dean did not have a permanent residence in Brighton within the required 90 days prior to the election, and because illegal absentee votes were cast for Dean and Dean did not have the majority of valid votes.

The court ruled Monday Dean's primary residence was in Brighton within the required time frame, and was located in the 4500 block of Letson Street. He was eligible to run for office, the order states.

While Dean said during testimony last month that he entered a short-term lease on a condominium in Atlanta to "facilitate his work there," court records show he lives at his Brighton address for 10-15 days per month.

The judge denied Cooper's allegations regarding Dean's residence in the order; however, the court ruled a total of 46 absentee votes were fraudulently cast for Dean during the 2016 election.

Of those, Verin ruled 21 ballots were not signed by the voter; 22 were sent to Dean's address instead of the voters' home addresses or where they regularly received mail; 2 ballots were submitted by voters who were actually present at city hall on election day; and one did not live in Brighton city limits. Those 46 vote deductions leave Dean with a total of 330 votes. To avoid a run-off, Dean would have needed 336.

"Of course Mayor Dean is disappointed, but nevertheless we must respect the process. Dean intends to ask for a review of those ballots that were considered in the courts decision," Dean's lawyer Arthur Lee said.

Dean was sworn into office in November 2016 at the age of 24, becoming Brighton's youngest mayor.

Allegations against Dean erupted after the election last year, when the secretary of state's office and the Jefferson County district attorney's office began investigating claims Dean had absentee ballots mailed to addresses where homes were abandoned.

The order Monday cited testimony from a hearing last month in the case, where Dean, his family members, absentee voters, and a forensic document and handwriting analysis expert testified.

This post will was updated at 7:40 p.m. with comments from Dean's lawyer.

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