

# BRUNSWICK COUNTY

## BOARD OF ELECTIONS

75 Stamp Act Drive NE · Building H  
PO Box 2 · Bolivia · NC · 28422  
www.brunswickcountync.gov/elections

Phone: 910-253-2620  
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### **Board Meeting Agenda** **February 27, 2024 · 4:00 pm · Absentee Meeting**

This meeting will be held in the Commissioners' Chambers of the David R. Sandifer Building, 30 Government Center Drive NE, Bolivia, NC, 28422.

Members of the public may observe the meeting in-person or via live video feed online using [Zoom](#). You will need to have Zoom installed on your computer or mobile device prior to joining the webinar; no registration or passcode is required.

- 1. Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance**
- 2. Approval of Agenda**
- 3. Approval of Minutes for the February 20, 2024 regular and absentee meeting**
- 4. Missing Ballot Sheet Discovered from February 20 Meeting**
- 5. Consideration of Absentee Ballots**
- 6. Adjourn**

The next meeting will be an **Absentee meeting** on Monday, March 4, 2024 at 4:00 pm in the **Board of Elections Office Training Room**, 75 Stamp Act Dr NE, Building H, Bolivia, NC 28422.

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Meeting Minutes · Regular and Absentee Meeting · February 20, 2024 · 4:00 p.m.

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**Board Members Present:** Chair Edward Lewis, Secretary Stuart Smith, Member Paula Clarity, Member Randy Pelton, and Member Timothy Randall

**Board Staff Present:** Director Sara LaVere, Deputy Director Melissa Chambers, Deputy Director Adrienne Rushton, Elections Computer Technician Butch Johnson, Election Logistics Technician Ryan Childress, Assistant Computer Technician Ed Ovsenik, Absentee Assistant Christy Souter, and Absentee Assistant Camdyn Johnson

**Bipartisan Duplication Team Present:** Julie Paladino, Patricia Vandergrift, Myrtle Stevenson, and Gwen Causey

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### **Meeting Opening**

Mr. Lewis called the meeting to order and everyone in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Pelton made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Clarity made a motion to amend the minutes from the January 17, 2024 Regular Meeting to adjust a clerical error on page 2. Motion carried unanimously. Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve the minutes for the minutes of the January 17, 2024 meeting as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to approve absentee meeting minutes from February 13, 2024. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Public Comments**

The board heard public comments from the audience. There were no comments submitted to the online portal.

### **Director's Report**

Voter registration statistics from January were included in the agenda packet.

Ms. LaVere provided the following updates on the 2024 Primary

- Wait time tracker – there is a wait time tracker linked on the website where voters can find information regarding current wait times at early voting locations. To date, no locations have reported wait times more than 5 minutes.

- Daily early voting statistics are available on our website. As of this afternoon, 3,741 voters had cast ballots at early voting.
- Due to statutory changes, early voting tabulators may not be closed until the close of polls on election day (7:30 pm). Formerly, they could be closed and tabulated at 5 PM.

Last month, key staff members participated in a state-wide tabletop exercise on emergency preparedness with officials from across the state with participation from the county's IT and Emergency Management Departments and the Sheriff's Office. This exercise provided three emergency scenarios for brainstorming emergency procedures. The exercises provided valuable insight on possible situations and future contingency plans.

### **Old Business**

#### **Voter ID-Making Policy**

This item was discussed at the previous meeting and the board amended the originally proposed policy to include items:

- 5. Staff shall maintain a record of all events in addition to the state-required Voter Photo Identification Card Request Forms.
- 6. This policy may be changed or amended by the Director, with notification to the Board and consultation with the Board Chair.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to approve the policy as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. LaVere noted that the office is open on the weekends of early voting, with staff available to issue Voter Photo IDs, and it has been publicized on all our social media platforms.

### **New Business**

#### **Public Comment Policy**

The staff recommends revising the current board policy regarding public comment across all platforms (in-person, public comment portal, and live via streaming broadcast).

Suggested procedure changes and verbiage were included in the agenda packet. Ms. Clarity asked for change in terminology in item 1 and is reflected below:

1. Limit public comments to the designated agenda time or online portal submissions.
2. Set a 5:00pm cutoff the day before the meeting for online portal submissions, to be included in the agenda packet.
3. Exclude live stream viewer comments during meetings.
4. Emphasize that public comments are not for impromptu questions, and the board will not engage in dialogue.

Ms. Clarity would also like added that public comments will be limited to one platform per commenter. Meaning, a commenter could submit a comment online or speak in person, but not both.

Mr. Smith would prefer time to review suggested revisions to the policy. The item was tabled until the next regular meeting.

## Consideration of Absentee Ballots

Mr. Johnson verified the seal number on the vDrive seal as 37471515 and 40 ballots have been scanned to date.

### Ballots Approved at February 13, 2024 Meeting

Ballots approved at the February 13, 2024 meeting were opened by the bipartisan team. The seals on the ballot bin were verified as 2616989 and 2616988.

Four Bald Head Island ballots were duplicated as necessary and ballots scanned into Central Scan. 58 ballots were scanned and verified as 58 approved at the February 13, 2024 Meeting. Ballots were then sealed into a bin.

- Ballot count: 98 total
- Ballot bin: 2617255 and 2617246

### Ballots for Today's consideration

#### *Ballots recommended for approval*

87 ballots were presented for approval those included 83 Civilian, of those Civilian, 6 needed duplication as they were Bald Head Island Ballots; One ballot is a military ballot returned by mail; three are Affidavit Review Pending Civilian ballots that have properly executed Photo ID Exception Forms.

Each board member reviewed two ballots to confirm they were properly executed. Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve 87 ballots as recommended by staff. The motion carried unanimously.

#### *Ballots requiring board review – recommended for approval*

The board reviewed one Civilian ballot with an accepted cure and two Overseas ballots that were received electronically and duplicated by the bipartisan team prior to the meeting.

Mr. Randall made a motion to approve the Accepted Cure ballot and the two overseas ballots. Motion carried unanimously.

#### *Ballots pending board decision*

Four civilian ballots were received in a return envelope, but the ballot envelope was unsealed. Numbered Memo 2021-03 provides that when the ballot is inside the executed ballot envelope which is not sealed but the ballot envelope is sealed in a return envelope, this anomaly is not a deficiency.

Of these four ballots, one was missing a witness signature. Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve three ballots that had all required elements and spoil and reissue the one ballot deficient a witness signature. Motion carried unanimously.

*Ballots recommended for disapproval*

Three Civilian ballots had incomplete witness information and have been spoiled and reissued. Mr. Pelton made a motion to disapprove these three ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

The bipartisan team opened the approved ballots and removed ballots to be scanned.

One envelope was discovered to be empty upon opening. Ms. Clarity made a motion to disapprove and spoil and reissue the ballot. Motion carried unanimously.

Bald Head Island ballots were duplicated as necessary, as well as one ballot that was damaged upon opening.

After scanning occurred, an error alerted Mr. Johnson that only one sheet of a Bald Head Island ballot was scanned. To resolve the issue, the ballot was duplicated onto a new ballot, leaving the missing sheet blank.

The board adjudicated overvotes as necessary.

After scanning was complete, Mr. Johnson announced that 92 ballots were scanned today with no overvotes. Ms. Rushton confirmed that was the number of ballots approved.

The ballots were placed in a bin and sealed, with seals signed by Mr. Smith and Mr. Randall. The secure vDrive was placed in a storage container and sealed. The following vote count and seal numbers were logged and will be confirmed at the start of the next meeting.

- Ballot count: 190
- Ballot bin: 2617249 and 2617250
- vDrive storage container: 37471514

The board signed an audit sheet confirming the number of ballots scanned today and seal numbers.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

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Date: 2/27/2024

Time: 4:00 pm

Location: Commissioners' Chambers

### **Agenda Item:** Missing Ballot Sheet Discovered from February 20 Meeting

#### **Summary:**

At the February 20 absentee meeting, we identified that only one sheet of a two-sheet Bald Head Island ballot was scanned. The Verity Central system alerted staff of the missing sheet. To resolve the issue, we followed the guidance provided by the NCSBE by duplicating the ballot onto a new one, leaving the missing sheet empty.

After the meeting, staff wondered if the missing sheet could still be in the return envelope. Two staff members checked all envelopes from the meeting and found the second ballot sheet still inside.

To address this, we will use the ballot number to identify the ballot in the ballot bin from February 20. Sheet 1 of the ballot will be combined with the found sheet 2 and duplicated onto a new ballot.

After the duplication, all absentee ballots will be scanned into a new absentee task in Verity using a new vDrive. All previously scanned ballots will be cleared, and we will be starting from zero.

Meeting Date	Previous Absentee Bin Seals	Absentee Bin Seals	Ballots Previously Scanned	Ballots Scanned February 27
February 20, 2024	2617249		92	
	2617250			
February 13, 2024	2617255		58	
	2617246			
February 6, 2024	2616928		33	
	2616946			
January 30, 2024	2617251		7	
	2617061			
			TOTAL SCANNED 190	TOTAL SCANNED

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Date: 2/27/2024

Time: 4:00 pm

Location: Commissioners' Chambers

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**Agenda Item:** Consideration of Absentee Ballots

**Summary:**

There are 143 ballots being considered at today's meeting.

**Order of Ballot Consideration:**

Ballots recommended for approval – board to spot-check<sup>1</sup>

1. 124 Civilian ballots
  - a. 2 of these are Bald Head Island ballots that will need duplication once opened<sup>2</sup>
  - b. 4 of these are Bald Head Island ballots that will be opened separately to ensure both ballot sheets were received
2. 1 Affidavit Review Pending Civilian ballot (properly executed Photo ID Exception Form<sup>3</sup>)

Ballots requiring board review<sup>4</sup>

1. Ballots recommended for approval
  - a. 2 Civilian ballots with an Accepted Cure
  - b. 2 Overseas ballots (received electronically, duplicated by bipartisan team prior to meeting)
  - c. 2 Military ballots ((received electronically, duplicated by bipartisan team prior to meeting)
2. Pending board decision:
  - a. 6 Civilian ballots received in a return envelope, but the ballot envelope was unsealed<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Resolution to Delegate Administrative Duties Relating to Absentee Voting to the Director and Staff approved by the board on 10/17/23 states that "The board will not review individual ballot envelopes that have been recommended by staff for approval and will accept staff's recommendation for those ballot envelopes and photo ID documentation. The board will spot-check a minimum of two envelopes and accompanying photo ID documentation to ensure accuracy and consistency. The board reserves the right to review all ballot envelopes that have been recommended by staff for approval."

<sup>2</sup> Republican ballots for Bald Head Island voters consist of two sheets with unique barcode identifiers, indicating they belong together. In the first batch of mailed ballots, some sheets may have separated during the folding machine process.

<sup>3</sup> Per Numbered Memo 2020-25, these ballots should be approved by the board if the board does not unanimously conclude that the exception form is false.

<sup>4</sup> Numbered Memo 2020-25 states "the board must individually review all ballot envelopes that: (1) have been recommended for disapproval by staff, (2) have a cure certification associated with that ballot envelope, or (3) where staff need further guidance from the board as to whether the envelope was properly executed or the photo ID documentation meets all legal requirements.

<sup>5</sup> Numbered Memo 2021-03 provides that when the ballot is inside the executed ballot envelope which is not sealed but the ballot envelope is received in a sealed return envelope, this anomaly is not a deficiency. Staff is instructed to re-seal the return envelope with a notation of "sealed in return envelope" and the county board should open the return envelope and address the ballot at its next absentee meeting.

- b. 4 Civilian ballots where the voter indicated that their photo ID documentation is inside the ballot envelope. Once the application is approved by the board, the envelope can be opened to check the photo ID documentation.<sup>6</sup>
- 3. Recommended for disapproval:
  - a. 2 Civilian ballots with incomplete witness information – ballots have been spoiled and a new ballot issued <sup>7</sup>

**Information Only:**

- 1. 3 Pending Cure: photo ID provided was not acceptable.

**Absentee Seal Numbers and Ballot Counts**

*These numbers are logged on an audit sheet and signed by the board at each meeting.*

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Absentee Bin Seals</b>	<b>vDrive Seal</b>	<b>Ballots Approved at Meeting</b>	<b>Ballots Scanned at Meeting</b>	<b>Total Ballots Scanned this Election</b> <small>Recorded at end of meeting</small>
2/27/2024					

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<sup>6</sup> Numbered Memo 2021-03 states “A voter may respond to a notification that their ballot is missing photo ID documentation by stating that it is in the ballot envelope. If this occurs, staff must defer the review of the photo ID documentation to the next absentee board meeting, when the county board can review the application and, if approved, open the ballot envelope and confirm photo ID compliance.”

<sup>7</sup> Numbered Memo 2020-25 states “Whether the county board delegates the initial review of absentee envelopes to staff or chooses to have a bipartisan team of board members review envelopes during the meeting, all board members present at the meeting must approve or disapprove the ballots.”

*The Resolution to Delegate Administrative Duties delegated the task of “Inspecting ballot envelopes and return envelopes for deficiencies and contacting voters as required by Numbered Memo 2021-03.”*