

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
Fax: 910-253-2618
elections@brunswickcountync.gov

Meeting Minutes · Regular Meeting · January 17, 2024 · 6:00 p.m.

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, and Elections Logistics Specialist Ryan Childress

Meeting Opening

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

Approval of Agenda

Ms. Clarity made a motion to amend the agenda to change the order of business. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve the following meeting minutes:

- November 6, 2023 – Absentee Meeting
- November 7, 2023 – Election Day Meeting
- November 9, 2023 – Sample Audit Meeting
- November 16, 2023 – Pre-Canvass Meeting
- November 17, 2023 – Canvass Meeting
- November 28, 2023 – Special Meeting
- December 4, 2023 – Special Meeting

Motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

Judge Carry-Over for WB01 Waccamaw

An appointment to a judge position was not made at the August meeting. It remained tabled because that precinct was not open in the municipal election. Because an appointment was not agreed upon unanimously for an out-of-precinct judge, the matter before the board is to decide which previous judge carries over. John Cox (REP) and Robert Dunn (UNA) were both judges in the precinct last appointment term and both names were put forth by parties.

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve John Cox as the carry-over judge. Motion does not carry, with Mr. Smith and Mr. Pelton voting for the motion and Mr. Lewis, Ms. Clarity, and Mr. Randall dissenting.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve Robert Dunn as the carry-over judge. Motion carried by majority vote with Mr. Smith and Mr. Pelton dissenting.

New Business

Appointment of Early Voting Officials

The board must appoint chief judges and judges to serve during early voting. Staff recommendations were shared with both parties. Neither party submitted lists to the Board of Elections. The recommendations before the board include all chief judges, judges, and specialty role workers that are working election day and during early voting. If this list is approved, staff will assign for each shift a balance of party for judge assignments.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve the list of early voting officials as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

Appointment of Multipartisan Assistance Team members

A Multipartisan Assistance Team, or MAT, is a team of voters who represent different political parties in each county who assist patients and residents in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, and adult care homes (“facilities”) with absentee voting. MATs can help voters in facilities with disabilities or who otherwise require assistance in requesting or casting a mail-in absentee ballot. The team provides a public service to these voters by giving them lawfully-authorized, neutral assistance with absentee voting.

We currently have two members and are recommending approval of Patricia Vandergrift (REP), Myrtle Stevenson (DEM), and Sandra Batson (REP) as MAT members.

Mr. Randall made a motion to approve the additional MAT members as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of Polling Place change for NB05 Woodburn

The current location at The Brunswick Center at Leland is affected by construction of the adjacent Founders Park. This construction has severely limited an already challenging parking situation. Staff recommends moving the polling place to Navassa Community Center.

Mr. Pelton asked that the director work with the county Public Information Officer to assist in publicizing this change.

Mr. Randall made a motion to move the polling place for Precinct NB05 Woodburn to the Navassa Community Center. Motion carried unanimously.

Reevaluation of Out-of-Precinct Polling Places

Currently Out-of-Precinct polling places are used at the following precincts, which must be approved each year:

- Precinct SB04 – Southport 1, The Brunswick Center at Southport
- Precinct CB04 – Secession 2, Holden Beach EOC Building
- Precinct WB02 – Hickman’s Crossroads, Jessie Mae Monroe Elementary School

These locations have been used successfully in previous elections.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve Out-of-Precinct Polling places as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of Off-Site Voter ID Making Policy

G.S. 163-82.8A requires that voter ID-making services are provided at the county board of elections office during regular business hours. Voter ID-making services may also be offered off-site.

Staff recommends the board adopt a policy to ensure consistency when offering voter ID-making services off-site. Ms. LaVere noted that facilities such as senior centers and libraries are available in different areas of the county. Ms. LaVere shared concerns that if the office were to get inundated with requests to participate in events, there should be some guidelines in place, especially if staffing levels did not support attendance for every invited event.

The board discussed logistics of offering this service off-site and reviewed the draft of policy. Mr. Pelton asked the policy to be amended to include the staff shall maintain a record of all events in addition to the form required by the state. Further, that this policy may be changed/amended by the director, notification of the board, and consultation of the chair.

Ms. LaVere clarified that Voter Photo IDs are for registered voters only. A voter has to be a verified voter before they can receive an ID, unless using same day registration. Ms. LaVere read public comments on the matter submitted via the Zoom broadcast.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to accept the policy, as amended. The motion carried by majority 4-0, with Mr. Smith abstaining. Ms. LaVere noted there may be legal guidance from the state regarding board members participating in votes.

Public Comments

The board heard public comments from the audience and submitted through the online portal.

Director's Report

Key staff members will be participating in a statewide tabletop exercise with emergency services, IT, and the Sheriff's office.

The county has launched a new website which allows us additional customization options for our page. We are working to make it as user friendly as possible and Ms. LaVere welcomes comments and suggestions.

Ms. LaVere provided an update on her trip to Washington, DC for Election Assistance Commission Local Leadership Council. There are two representatives from each state in their local association. The Election Assistance Commission offers toolkits to assist us in processes.

2024 Primary Updates:

- Poll Worker Training is underway
- Absentee Ballots begin mailing on Friday
- The first Absentee Meeting is January 30 at 4 PM
- Voting equipment testing begins on Monday
- There are two petitions that are circulating for candidates trying to get on the fall ballot as unaffiliated candidates
- Budget Planning
 - Department Goals and Objectives were shared with the Commissioners this morning
 - Space continues to be a concern
 - Ms. LaVere plans to request two additional full time staff members

Adjournment

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