

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 and Absentee Meeting · February 20, 2024 · 4:00 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, 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

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.