

BRUNSWICK COUNTY

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Meeting Minutes · Absentee Meeting · February 27, 2024 · 4:00 p.m.

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

Board Staff Present: Director Sara LaVere, Deputy Director Adrienne Rushton, Elections Computer Technician Butch Johnson, Election Logistics Technician Ryan Childress, Assistant Computer Technician Walter Norton, 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

Mr. Randall made a motion to approve the minutes for the minutes of the February 27, 2024 Absentee meeting minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

Missing Ballot Sheet Discovered from February 20, 2024 Meeting

Ms. LaVere provided a summary that during the last meeting, as ballots were scanned, the Central Scan alerted that there was a missing sheet to one of the Bald Head Island ballots that was scanned. Staff referred to the procedure provided by the state that if a sheet was missing for a two-sheet absentee ballot, that the ballot should be duplicated with the missing sheet as blank and scanned. This is the procedure that took place during the meeting. After the meeting's conclusion, at the suggestion of a staff member, Ms. LaVere and Ms. Rushton reviewed each envelope and discovered the missing sheet stuck inside the return envelope. To ensure that everything that was marked on the original ballot is counted, staff will retrieve the ballot from last week's meeting, duplicate it and rescan all previously scanned absentee ballots.

Staff will zero out the central scanner, and using a new vDrive, rescan all previously approved absentee ballots.

Mr. Johnson removed the previous task from the central scanner to delete any previous scans and zeroed out the scanner. He then ran a zeros tape for board members to sign.

Mr. Johnson confirmed the seals from last week’s meeting as seals 2617249 and 2617250; the bipartisan team then located the ballot that needs to be duplicated using the CIV identification number. The sheet that was duplicated last week was separated and sealed in an envelope. Sheet one was given to the caller of the duplication team along with the original sheet two that was left behind in the original envelope. The bipartisan team duplicated the ballot onto a new ballot that was amenable for scanning.

Mr. Johnson scanned ballots from previous meetings, one meeting at a time. For each meeting’s ballots, he confirmed the original seal number, scanned ballots, confirmed the number of ballots scanned and re-sealed in a ballot bin with new seals initialed by board members.

Meeting Date	Previous Absentee Ballot Bin Seals	Ballots Previously Scanned	Ballots Scanned February 27	New Absentee Ballot Bin Seal
2.20.2024	2617249 2617250	92	92	2617078 2617077
2.13.2024	2617255 2617246	58	58	2617221 2617035
2.6.2024	2616928 2616946	33	33	2617223 2617222
1.30.2024	2617251 2617061	7	7	2617080 2617079
Total Scanned		190		

Consideration of Absentee Ballots

Ms. LaVere presented 143 ballots for consideration at today’s meeting.

Ballots recommended for approval

124 Civilian ballots with two Bald Head Island ballots that will need to be duplicated once opened. Four are Bald Head Island ballots that will be opened separately to ensure both ballot sheets were received.

One Affidavit Review Pending Civilian ballot with a properly executed Photo ID Exception form.

Each board member reviewed two ballots.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve 125 ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

Ballots requiring board review

Six ballots were recommended for approval; two Civilian ballots with an Accepted Cure, two Overseas ballots received electronically and duplicated by the bipartisan team prior to the

meeting, and two Military ballots received electronically and duplicated by the bipartisan team prior to the meeting.

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve the six reviewed ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

Six Civilian ballots are pending board decision because they were received in a sealed return envelope, but upon opening, 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 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 meeting.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve the six ballots. Motion carried unanimously.

Four Civilian Ballots in which the voter indicated their photo ID documentation is inside the ballot envelope. Ms. Clarity made a motion to open the ballot envelopes to review for acceptable ID. Motion carried unanimously. All four ballots had acceptable identification documentation within the ballot envelope. Mr. Randall made a motion to approve the four ballots. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. LaVere presented two ballots for disapproval due to incomplete witness information. The ballots were spoiled and reissued to the voter. Mr. Pelton made a motion to disapprove the ballot. Motion carried unanimously.

The bipartisan team opened the approved Bald Head Island ballots separately to ensure both sheets are received and appropriately labeled with the CIV identifier. Two ballots were discovered to be missing the identifier on the second sheet. The identifier was added under supervision of the board.

The approved ballots were opened by the bipartisan team and scanned into the Central Scan.

Two Bald Head Island ballots were duplicated by the bipartisan team and scanned.

Two ballots were rejected by the scanner. One ballot was initialed by the voter in the barcode area which made the barcode unreadable; one ballot had damage. These ballots were duplicated by the bipartisan team.

The board adjudicated ballots for overvotes as necessary.

After scanning was complete, Mr. Johnson announced that 141 ballots were scanned as approved at today's meeting, with total scanned of 331 ballots for this election.

The ballots were placed in a bin and sealed, with seals signed by Mr. Smith and Ms. Clarity. 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: 331 total
- Ballot bin: 2617225 and 261 7224
- vDrive storage container: 33118391

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

Mr. Smith commented that it is of high importance to him that we have an environment in which if someone sees a problem, they speak out and look for solutions. Ms. LaVere has created such an environment. Telling people not to make mistakes is not productive, but teamwork to find solutions and grow moving forward is key. Mr. Smith congratulated the team on such efforts.

Mr. Randall noted that he encourages everyone to get a free Voter Photo ID from the Board of Elections office. He felt appropriate to get his and he accompanied his 81-year-old mother to get hers. If they can get theirs, others can get their ID as well.

Mr. Lewis stated that it is important to get it right. This meeting took longer than normal, but it ensures we are getting it right.

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