

# BRUNSWICK COUNTY

## BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Meeting Minutes · Absentee Meeting · April 23, 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 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, and Absentee Assistant Christy Souter

**Bipartisan Duplication Team Present:** Myrtle Stevenson and Christy Souter

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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 approve all minutes for consideration in one motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to approve the minutes for the meetings:

- a. March 4, 2024 – Absentee Meeting
- b. March 5, 2024 – Election Day Meeting
- c. March 7, 2024 – Sample Audit Meeting
- d. March 14, 2024 – Pre-Canvass Meeting
- e. March 15, 2024 – Canvass Meeting
- f. April 16, 2024 – Regular and Absentee Meeting

The motion carried unanimously.

### **Public Comments**

Ms. LaVere read comments submitted to the online portal. There were no public comments from the in-person audience.

### **Old Business**

#### **Consideration of satellite locations for Early Voting for the general election**

Ms. LaVere reviewed the statutory requirements for Early Voting and informed those in attendance that at the previous meeting, the board voted by majority on a schedule for satellite

locations. It is still not recommended that the Brunswick Center at Southport be used for Early Voting in the general election.

The use of St. James Community Center had been discussed at the last meeting. Ms. LaVere reached out to the town of St. James and was able to attend their town council work session meeting on April 18 along with Mr. Lewis and Mr. Childress.

The Council expressed concerns that included traffic control at Highway 211, as it has been a concern during events in the past and there is currently construction to widen 211. Town council also mentioned traffic control in the parking lot, security of the facility, town staff needing to be there outside of their normal working hours when voting is occurring.

Ms. LaVere has actively been looking for solutions to help alleviate the town's concerns. In reaching out to the Sheriff's office, they could provide some traffic control at the stop light during peak times, and they could be called for assistance if an issue arises. Ms. LaVere has also reached out to the Department of Transportation to see if they can adjust the timing of the traffic lights to help accommodate increased traffic. She is hoping to get a call back but had not received word as of the start of the meeting.

Mr. Smith noted he did believe the DOT can adjust traffic lights as needed and would be interested in hearing if they are able to do so.

Mr. Lewis noted a sense of urgency as plans are due to the state on May 7. The board's consensus is they would like to get cooperation of St. James to use their facility. Ms. LaVere clarified the process if the board would like to move forward with trying to obtain the St. James Community Center for use. The board voted by majority at the last meeting on weekend hours, which will have to be decided by the state board at a future meeting.

The matter will be tabled until the April 30, 2024, meeting to gather more information from the DOT.

### **Consideration of Absentee Ballots**

Mr. Johnson verified the seal number on the vDrive seal as 37471390. The current ballot count was verified as 26.

There are 18 absentee ballots for consideration:

Recommended for approval:

#### **Civilian ballots**

- 15 Civilian ballots
- 1 Affidavit Pending Review that have a properly executed Photo ID Exception Form

Board members each reviewed a minimum of two ballots.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve 15 Civilian ballots and one Affidavit Pending Review ballot as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

#### Ballots Pending Board Decision

- One Civilian ballot was returned in a sealed 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 received in a sealed return envelope, this anomaly is not a deficiency.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve the one civilian ballot as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

#### Ballots Recommended for Disapproval

- One Civilian ballot with incomplete witness information. The ballot has been spoiled and re-issued.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to disapprove one ballot as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

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

After scanning was complete, Mr. Johnson announced that 17 ballots were scanned today with no overvotes. Ms. LaVere 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: 43 total
- Ballot bin: 2617056 and 2617053
- vDrive storage container: 37471389

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.