

# BRUNSWICK COUNTY

## BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Meeting Minutes · Regular Meeting · June 18, 2024 · 2:00 p.m.

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

**Board Staff Present:** Director Sara LaVere, Deputy Director Melissa Chambers, and Election Logistics Technician Ryan Childress

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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**

Ms. LaVere asked to table the Public Comment Policy agenda item, wanting it to be addressed with the participation of all board members. Ms. Clarity made a motion to table the Public Comment Policy item until the next meeting. Motion carried unanimously. Ms. Clarity then made a motion to approve the agenda, as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 24, 2024 Pre-Canvass and Canvass Meeting with correcting the date error. Motion carried unanimously.

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

### **Public Comments**

Ms. LaVere read one public comment submitted through the online portal. There were no public comments from the audience in attendance.

### **Director's Report**

Updated voter registration statistics were included in an addendum to the agenda packet.

Ms. LaVere provided the following updates:

- Backlog of voter registrations have been processed – new registrations and party changes were on hold from February 9 through canvass of the second primary. Current registrations statistics show 134,589 registered voters.
- Staff is looking at solutions to precincts and polling places and will bring recommendations to the July 16 regular meeting.

- Upcoming poll worker orientation sessions
  - In-person
    - Wednesday, July 24, 2024, at 2 PM
    - Thursday, August 8, 2024, at 10AM
    - Tuesday, August 13, 2024, at 2PM
  - Virtual
    - Wednesday, August 14, 2024 at 6 PM
- Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit – Voices and Votes
  - Southwest Brunswick Branch Library through July 13
  - Brunswick County election artifacts are on display
  - Ms. Chambers will host a “Listen and Learn” session at the library on Tuesday, June
- Community Photo ID events scheduled throughout the summer
  - *Wednesday, June 12, 10:30 AM – 1:30 PM*, Carolina Shores Branch - Southwest Brunswick Library, 9400 Ocean Highway W, Carolina Shores
  - *Thursday, June 20, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM*, The Brunswick Center at Leland, 121 Town Hall Drive, Leland
  - *Wednesday, June 26, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM*, Oak Island Library Branch - G.V. Barbee, Sr. Library, 8200 E. Oak Island Drive, Oak Island
  - *Wednesday, July 10, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM*, The Brunswick Center at Shallotte, 3620 Express Drive, Shallotte
  - *Tuesday, July 16, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM*, The Brunswick Center at Supply, 101 Stone Chimney, Supply
  - *Thursday, July 18, 10:00 AM – 1:00PM*, Southport Library Branch - Margaret and James Harper, Jr. Library, 109 W. Moore Street, Southport
  - *Monday, July 22, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM*, Leland Library Branch, 487 Village Road, Leland
  - *Wednesday, July 31, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM*, Shallotte Library Branch - Rourk Library, 5068 Main Street, Shallotte
  - *Tuesday, August 13, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM*, The Brunswick Center at Southport, 1513 N. Howe Street, Southport
  - *Thursday, August 15, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM*, The Brunswick Center at Calabash, 10050 Beach Drive SW, Calabash
- Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Clearie Award for Distinguished Voter Education and Communications Initiatives in Small to Medium Jurisdictions
  - We were one of 32 programs that won a Clearie Award for 2023
  - Recognized for the Voter Education Seminar Series we held in 2023

**New Business**

**Consideration of alternative Early Voting Location in Southport**

The State Board of Elections adopted an Early Voting plan for Brunswick County as the board’s decision on hours was not unanimous. After the last meeting, the official request to use St. James Community Center was sent allowing them 20 days to respond.

St. James responded denying the request to use the space for early voting. The law says we can work in good faith to come to an agreement. Ms. LaVere believes staff has made best efforts to come to agreeable terms with St. James.

Staff have continued to research alternate locations for early voting in Southport.

Oak Island Moose Lodge, 4239 Long Beach Rd SE, Southport is a viable location for early voting:

- The are excited to work with us and very amenable
- Large voting enclosure that will allow use of more voting equipment
- Meets ADA requirements
- Space for parking; some parking spaces are paved and some parking will be in grass. Staff have been in contact with Parks and Recreation about painting/chalking parking spaces in the grass area.
- Central location in the Southport area.

Ms. LaVere recommends using the Moose Lodge instead of trying to negotiate further terms with St. James at this time.

The board members discussed the use of the Moose Lodge.

Mr. Pelton shared that he believes a spirit of cooperation is vital and he hopes the staff can continue to have discussions with the Town of St. James to consider using it in 2026 as an early voting site, especially since most voters in the Southport early voting location have been St. James voters, but that we should proceed with using the Moose Lodge this year if they agree.

Mr. Smith noted he is concerned with traffic flow in and out of the Moose Lodge and it may require law enforcement to provide traffic control. Ms. LaVere noted that the location is under the jurisdiction of Oak Island and believes the Oak Island police would be able to provide traffic control if deemed necessary.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to ask the State Board to reconsider our Early Voting plan to use Oak Island Moose Lodge in lieu of St. James Community Center. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Lewis would like to congratulate staff on the achievement of being recognized with a Clearie Award and all the work that went into the program that won the award.

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