

BRUNSWICK COUNTY

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Meeting Minutes · Regular Meeting · July 16, 2024 · 6:00 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, Elections Computer Specialist Butch Johnson, and Election Logistics Technician Ryan Childress

Meeting Opening

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

Approval of Agenda

Ms. Smith then made a motion to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 20, 2024 Regular Meeting with correcting the date error. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments

Ms. LaVere read public comments 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:

- The State Board met today and heard our request to change the early voting plan to use the Moose Lodge for early voting; the State Board approved the change. We will work to get the approved schedule published.

Old Business

Public Comment Policy

Ms. LaVere clarified that the proposed policy would not exclude comments from the portal; it would provide an administrative cut-off at the day before the meeting and those comments would then be added to the public agenda packet.

Live-streaming of meetings was added during the pandemic to provide an additional means of access to meetings, it is not required to be live-streamed or recorded. It has not been a standard practice to post recordings of meetings. The recording is currently used as an administrative item for reference in formalizing minutes. The goal of adopting a policy is to have consistency and uniformity when hearing public comments.

The board discussed the proposed public comment policy.

Ms. Clarity suggested that emails to board members be handled in the same manner as comments submitted through the portal, and that an individual be limited to one platform to make public comments (they could not submit online and make in-person comments).

Mr. Clarity suggested adding a bullet point that board members would have discretion in engaging with questions during the public comment period.

Mr. Smith and Mr. Randall commented they wanted to make sure if there are groups that they are encouraged to use a spokesperson.

Ms. LaVere provided information on the policy that is used by County Commissioners during their meetings; "Each speaker will have a maximum of three minutes to speak. A speaker may not sign up to speak more than once during the same public comment period. No time may be yielded to a speaker by another speaker. To avoid repetitiveness, groups are encouraged to select a spokesperson to speak on their behalf. At the request of the Board, groups of persons supporting or opposing the same positions may be asked to designate a spokesperson to speak, and the designated spokesperson may be allotted up to 8 minutes. Additional time may be allowed at the discretion of the Board"

Mr. Randall suggested the same policy the Commissioners use be included, replacing bullet point 4 in the draft, to allow consistency and continuity.

Mr. Randall made a motion to approve the public comment policy with the changes as discussed. Motion carried unanimously.

New Business

Polling Place Changes

Staff has evaluated polling places following the primary and in consideration of growth in the county, is recommending the following changes to polling places ahead of the November 5, 2024 general election:

<u>Precinct Code</u>	<u>Precinct Name</u>	<u>Current Polling Place</u>	<u>Recommended Polling Place</u>
CB02	Shallotte	The Brunswick Center at Shallotte	West Brunswick High School
CB04	Secession 2	Holden Beach EOC Building	Sabbath Home Baptist Church (out of precinct)
NB01	Hood Creek	Sandy Creek Town Hall	Bethel AME Church
SB02	Boiling Spring Lakes	Boiling Spring Lakes Community Center	South Brunswick High School
WB06	Grissettown	Ocean Isle Beach Town Hall	Seaside United Methodist Church (out of precinct)

Ms. LaVere reviewed precincts as summarized in the executive summary (attached).

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve polling place changes as recommended by staff and summarized in the executive summary. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Pelton commended the staff on tremendous effort to research polling places and make changes to improve efficiencies at polling locations.

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

Executive Summary: Polling Place Relocations and Preparations to Reduce Wait Times for the General Election

FOR CONSIDERATION JULY 16, 2024

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Estimating Voter Wait Times

Staff has worked to predict turnout and wait times for election day in the general election. Turnout in each precinct was estimated based on past presidential election data. These estimates served as the basis for entering data into a [line optimization tool](#) from [MIT's Voting Technology Project Toolkit](#). The tool, which uses simple queueing theory and research data on polling places and elections, generates average, maximum, and minimum wait times throughout the day once the data is entered.

Using this tool, we adjusted the number of pollbooks, voting booths, and ballot scanners to create scenarios where the maximum estimated wait time is 23 minutes, measured from the moment a voter gets in line to when they insert their ballot into a scanner.

Polling Place Relocations

A thorough evaluation of precinct boundaries was completed in 2021 and several polling places were relocated, precinct lines redrawn, and new precincts created. Brunswick County continues to grow rapidly, and the changes that are currently being recommended are necessary to ensure voters of Brunswick County have access to polling places of the appropriate size and functionality.

When assessing polling places and precinct boundaries, we must consider the following:

- Census blocks – Precinct lines must coincide with census block boundaries (GS 163-132.3)
 - Because census blocks are only updated once every 10 years, using them to alter precinct lines is challenging given the continuous growth of Brunswick County.
- Public recognition of polling place's facility and location
- Availability of polling places
- Functionality of polling place
 - Parking, including curbside voting availability
 - ADA compliance
 - Voting enclosure's location within the building
 - Size of voting enclosure for number of voters, equipment, supplies, and poll workers
 - Area outside enclosure to allow space to queue voters in line
 - Physical condition of facility including factors such as electrical access, climate control, restrooms, break room access for poll workers
 - Other designated use of facility during the election period

On June 14, 2024, we issued a [news release](#) asking the community for assistance finding suitable polling locations. Our hope is to begin identifying all potential facilities in the county to facilitate the continued growth in the county.

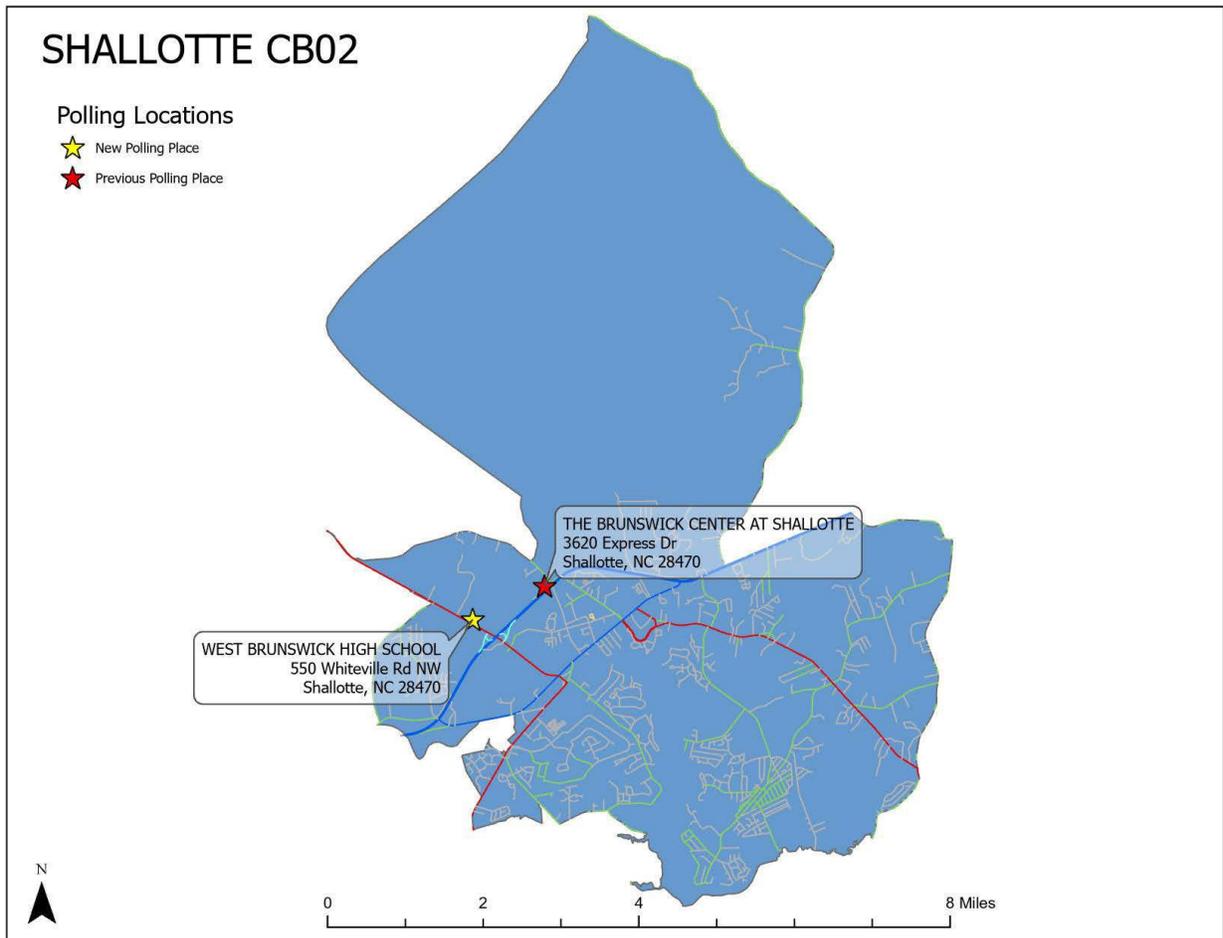
Summary of Proposed Precinct and Polling Place Changes for the General Election

Precinct Code	Precinct Name	Old Polling Place	New Polling Place	Registered Voters
CB02	Shallotte	The Brunswick Center at Shallotte	West Brunswick High School	7,314
CB04	Secession 2	Holden Beach EOC Building	Sabbath Home Baptist Church	4,313
NB01	Hood Creek	Sandy Creek Town Hall	Bethel AME Church	2,160
SB02	Boiling Spring Lakes	Boiling Spring Lakes Community Center	South Brunswick High School	5,672
WB06	Grissettown	Ocean Isle Beach Town Hall	Seaside United Methodist Church	7,954

Precinct CB02 Shallotte – change in polling location

The Brunswick Center at Shallotte is not ideal for voting due to limited parking and open space, making it hard to define the voting area. We recommend relocating to West Brunswick High School, 550 Whiteville Rd NW, Shallotte, NC 28470.

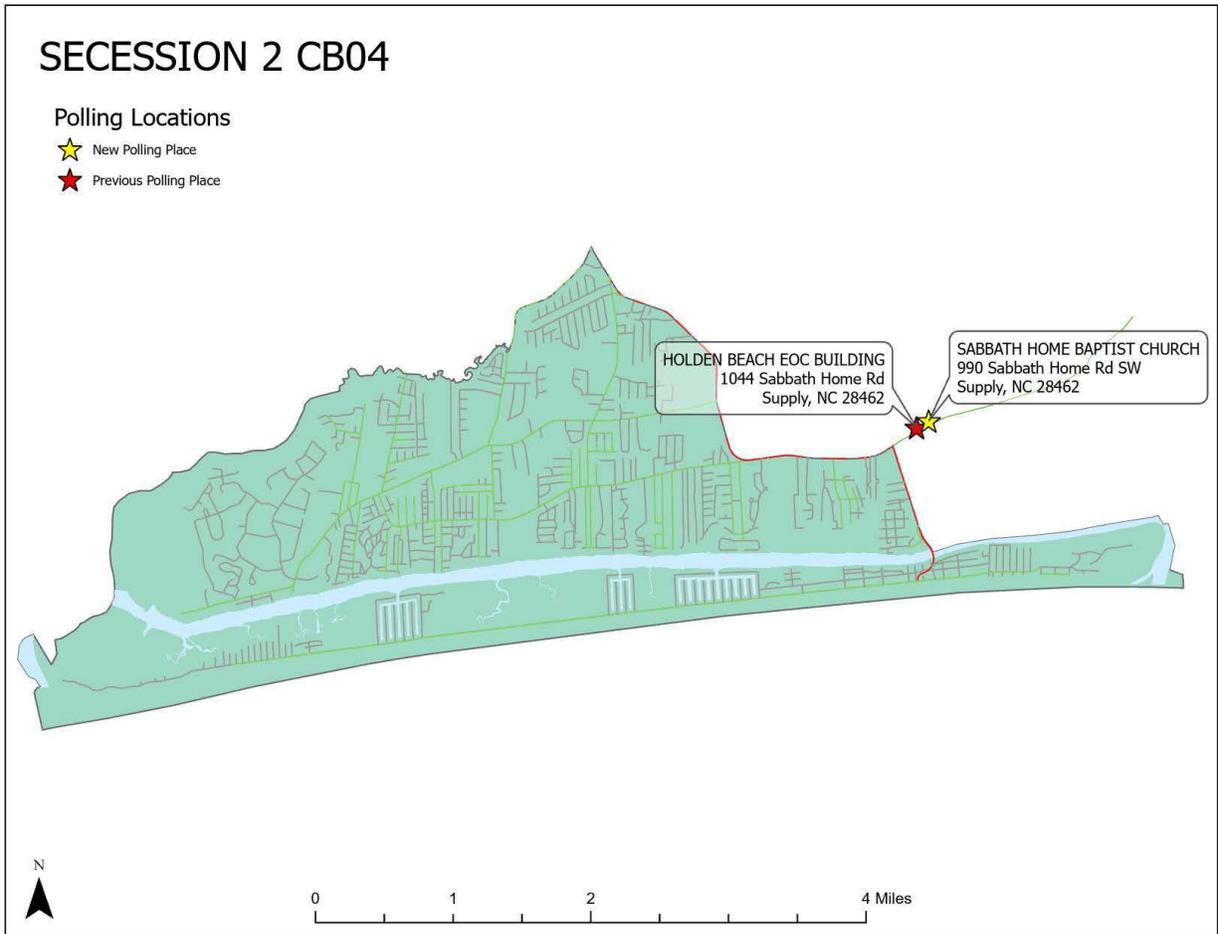
We previously used West Brunswick High School as a polling place in 2020 and 2021. In 2021, school was in session on election day and voting was held in the auxiliary gym which was at the back of campus. Because of these challenges we relocated to The Brunswick Center at Shallotte. The Board of Education has been consistent in providing teacher workdays on election day, making West Brunswick High School a more suitable location. Voting will be held in the cafeteria which is at the front of campus.



Precinct CB04 Secession 2 – change in polling location

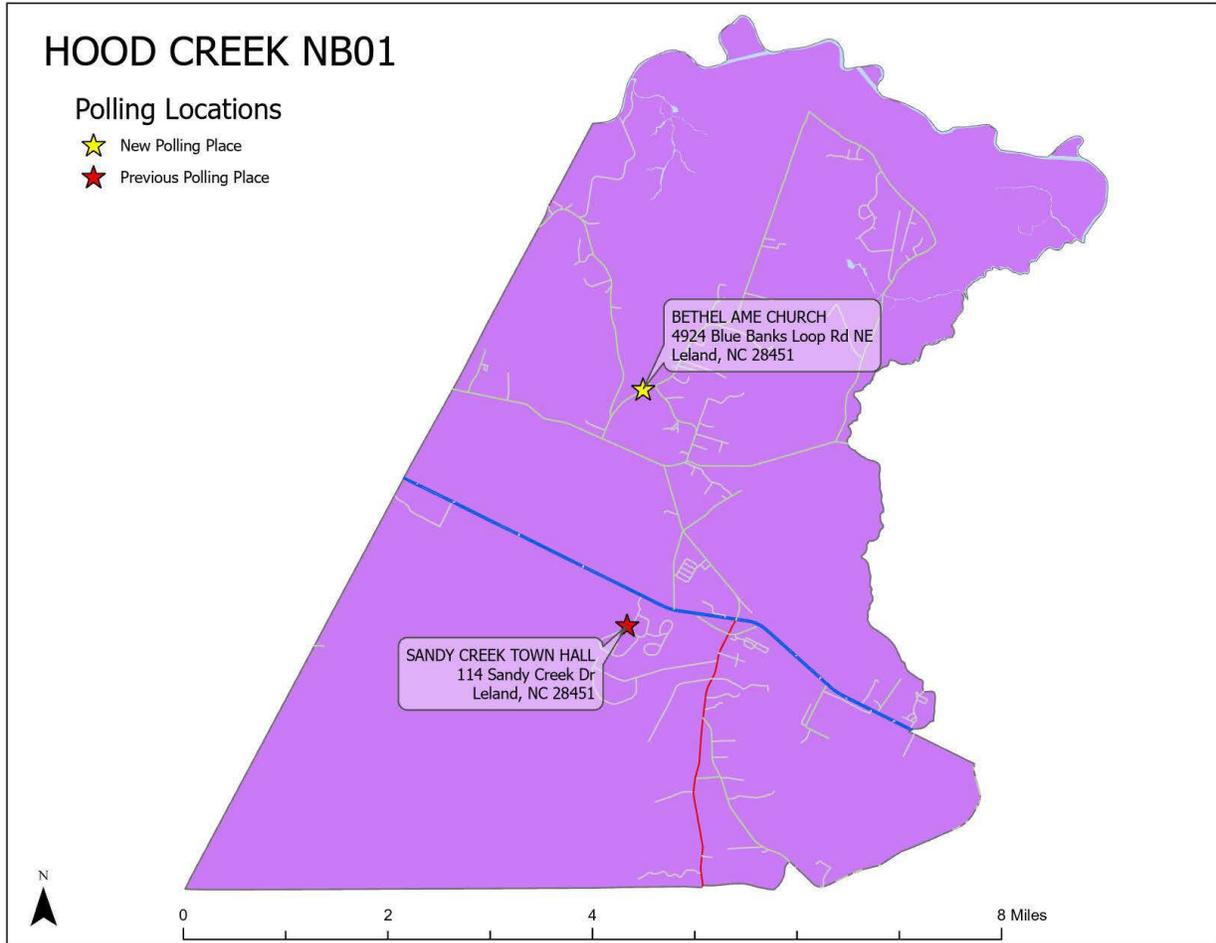
The Holden Beach EOC is not ideal for voting due to its limited parking. We recommend relocating to Sabbath Home Baptist Church, 990 Sabbath Home Rd SW, Supply, NC 28462.

This polling place would be out of precinct. The church has requested that electioneering be restricted, and we would ask the state to approve the restriction.



Precinct NB01 Hood Creek – change in polling location

Sandy Creek Town Hall is not ideal for voting due to space and parking limitations. We recommend relocating to Bethel AME Church, 4924 Blue Banks Loop Rd NE, Leland, NC 28451.



Precinct NB06 Brunswick Forest – adding additional equipment to facilitate election day turnout

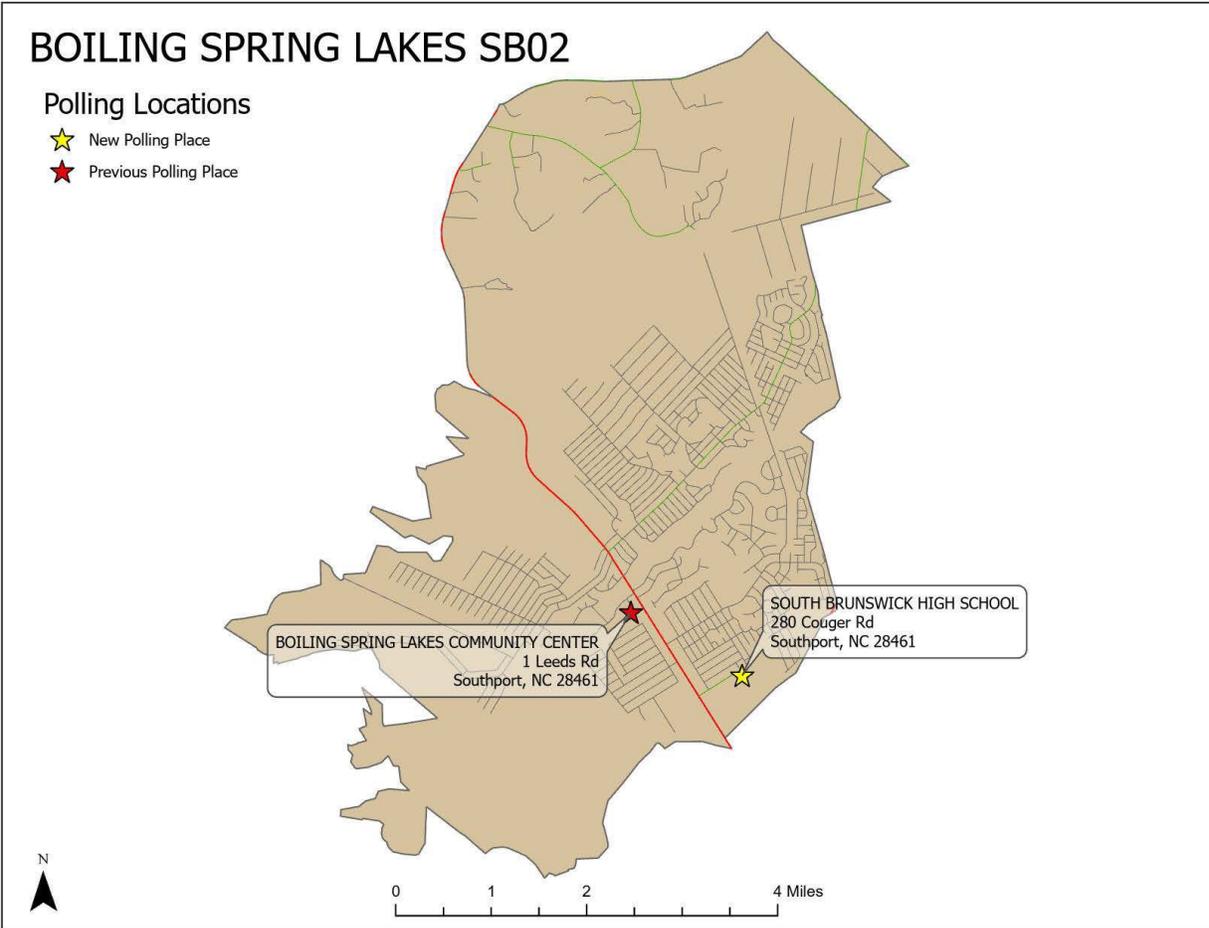
The Brunswick Forest precinct experienced significant lines on election day during the primary. We have explored solutions to address these long lines and believe that adding additional equipment will prevent them in the general election.

Election	Election Day Turnout	Pollbooks	Voting Booths	Wait Time
March 5 Primary Election	1,306	3 check-in, 1 help desk	9, delivered an additional 2 later in the day	Reports of hour plus wait times
November 5 General Election	1,674 Projected	5 check-in, 2 help desk	15	Max wait time estimated 7 minutes

Following the general election, an assessment will be conducted to determine if this precinct should be split and how best to do so.

Precinct SB02 Boiling Spring Lakes – change in polling location

The current polling place is the Boiling Spring Lakes Community Center. We recommend moving to South Brunswick High School, 280 Cougar Rd, Southport, NC 28461. South Brunswick High School can accommodate higher voter turnout in this precinct.



Precinct WB06 Grissettown – change in polling location

In 2021, this precinct was redrawn to accommodate the use of the new Ocean Isle Beach Town Hall. Since that time, there have been several instances of there not being sufficient parking available for voters. Despite arranging off-site parking for precinct officials, parking availability remains problematic.

We recommend relocating to Seaside United Methodist Church, 1300 Seaside Rd SW, Sunset Beach, NC 28468. This polling place would be out of precinct. Seaside UMC is a 9-minute drive from the current polling place of Ocean Isle Beach Town Hall.

The church has requested that electioneering be restricted, and we would ask the state to approve the restriction.

