

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
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Board Meeting Agenda **October 22, 2024 · 4:00 pm · Absentee Meeting**

This meeting will be held in the Commissioners' Chambers of the David R. Sandifer Building, 30 Government Center Drive NE, Bolivia, NC, 28422.

Members of the public may observe the meeting in-person or via live video feed online using [Zoom](#). You will need to have Zoom installed on your computer or mobile device prior to joining the webinar; no registration or passcode is required.

- 1. Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance**
- 2. Approval of Agenda**
- 3. Approval of Meeting Minutes**
 - a. October 15, 2024 – Regular and Absentee Meeting
- 4. Consideration of Absentee Ballots**
- 5. Adjourn**

The next meeting will be a an absentee meeting on Tuesday, October 29, 2024 at 4:00 pm in the Commissioners Chambers of the David R. Sandifer Administration Building.

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Meeting Minutes · Regular & Absentee Meeting · October 15, 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 Melissa Chambers, Deputy Director Adrienne Rushton, Elections Computer Technician Butch Johnson, Election Logistics Technician Ryan Childress, and Absentee Assistant Christy Souter

Bipartisan Duplication Team Present: Julie Paladino, Stefanie Ottolini, Myrtle Stevenson, Gwen Causey, Debra Prew-Deleko, and Pat Vandergrift

Meeting Opening

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

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 1, 2024 and October 8, 2024 Absentee Meetings. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Director's Report

The most recent voter registration statistics were included in the agenda packet.

Ms. LaVere provided the following updates:

- Early Voting begins Thursday
 - Voters can track wait time at all locations using the link on our website. Wait times during early voting are updated every 30 minutes and we encourage voters to use this tool to help them determine what time and what location would best suit their needs.
 - Each day at the close of early voting, turnout statistics will be posted on our website.
- In September, the SBOE issued a press release about the number of voters that have been removed since the start of 2023. See [NC Election Officials Removed Nearly 750,000 Ineligible Registrants Since Start of 2023](#). In Brunswick County, that number

was 11,688. Below is the breakdown of those removals for Brunswick County from **January 2023 to August 2024**.

ADMINISTRATIVE	28
DECEASED	2364
FELONY CONVICTION	249
MERGED DUPLICATE	468
MOVED FROM COUNTY	344
MOVED FROM STATE	763
MOVED WITHIN STATE	3767
REMOVED AFTER 2 FED GENERAL ELECTIONS IN INACTIVE STATUS	3705
Grand Total	11688

- The numbers for **September 2024** are:

ADMINISTRATIVE	5
DECEASED	131
FELONY CONVICTION	3
MERGED DUPLICATE	26
MOVED FROM COUNTY	78
MOVED FROM STATE	229
MOVED WITHIN STATE	539
Grand Total	1011

- **Political Activity by Poll Workers**

- Ms. LaVere summarized that earlier this month poll workers were provided guidance from the state regarding activities they should not participate in once early voting begins.
- Since the presentation to poll workers, we have received inquiries from poll workers, party officials, and elected officials about the restrictions. We sought further clarification from the State Board of Elections to ensure we had adequately relayed the guidance. An attorney at the SBOE responded on October 7, 2024 with the information below. Emphasis added in yellow.
 - So when it comes to restrictions on poll worker political activity, we have generally relied on their oath of office language in GS 163-41(e). Here’s how it is explained in FAQ 9 in [Numbered Memo 2023-07 on early voting poll worker appointments](#) (pg. 11):

“The restrictions on political activity for early voting officials are the same as for Election Day officials. See Section 3 of this memo for a list of qualifications. Elections officials also have a duty of impartiality and honesty and may not engage in any political activity while on duty. They should also refrain from any political activity during the early voting period that could lead someone to question their ability to serve as impartial elections officials. A precinct official may be removed for “incompetency, failure to discharge the

duties of office, failure to qualify within the time prescribed by law, fraud, or for any other satisfactory cause.” Precinct officials should therefore avoid any activity that could lead to their removal under this section.”

So, we interpret the oath requirement to “not in any manner request or seek to persuade or induce any voter to vote for or against any particular candidate or proposition” to apply strictly when the worker is on duty. But we also advise that the worker should be cautious, especially after the in-person voting period has begun, to give the impression of favoring any candidate or ballot item, even if they’re off duty. If they engage in activities that substantially undermine confidence in the fair administration of elections in the county, the board would be justified in hearing and acting on a complaint to remove the worker. There’s no bright line on this second category of activity; it’s really more of a caution that it could lead to a complaint/removal, where warranted by the specific circumstances.

Specifically on having a bumper sticker on their car, those aren’t as easily removed as a sign so I don’t think they would need to remove it. But if they have such a sticker on their car then they should not park at the voting site where they will be working—otherwise they would be stepping much closer to, if not over, the line.

- This additional information from the State has also been disseminated to poll workers.

Mr. Pelton noted that when provided this information by Ms. LaVere he provided a response and would be interested in the responses of any of the other board members.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

There was no new business.

Consideration of Absentee Ballots

There are 935 ballots for the board’s consideration.

Information only: 30 ballots pending cure.

Ballots recommended for approval:

2 Ballots to be Considered Together

- One civilian ballot is currently in **pending status** because it was discovered at the October 8 meeting that the CIV number on the ballot does not match the CIV number on the envelope.
- A second ballot issued to the same household had not been received by our office yet as that meeting, so it could not be considered in conjunction with the CIV mismatch.

- The other ballot from the household has been received and is recommended for approval.
- If the ballot recommended for approved is approved, once opened it should be reviewed for a CIV mismatch.
- If it has the CIV mismatch, then **both ballots** from the household should be approved.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to approve the ballot for opening to check for CIV mismatch to correspond with the ballot placed in pending status at the previous meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

The ballot was opened and CIV mismatch confirmed. Mr. Pelton made a motion to approve the ballot that was placed in pending status at the last meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

40 Ballots requiring board review

- 14 Accepted Cure
- 1 Accepted Cure – VIP (Visually Impaired Portal) ballot, will be duplicated by bipartisan team during the meeting
- 22 Overseas (received electronically, duplicated by the bipartisan team prior to the meeting)
- 3 Military (received electronically, duplicated by the bipartisan team prior to the meeting)

Board members reviewed ballots. Mr. Randall made a motion to approve 40 ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

Ballots requiring board review – pending board decision

39 ballots total requiring board review:

- 29 Civilian ballots received in a sealed 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 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 absentee meeting.
 - Staff opened the envelopes under board supervision and evaluated the ballots; 2 had incomplete witness information and one the Photo ID expiration date was unreadable.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to approve 26 ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

- 2 Civilian ballots were returned by an unauthorized person.
 - Numbered Memo 2020-23 states that delivery of an absentee ballot by a person other than the voter, the voter’s near relative, the voter’s legal guardian, or a person of the voter’s choice when the voter needs assistance due to disability, is not sufficient evidence in and of itself to establish that the voter did not lawfully vote their ballot. A county board shall not disapprove an absentee ballot solely because it was delivered by someone who was not authorized to possess the ballot.

Mr. Pelton noted that the intent of the law was to prevent any instances of ‘ballot harvesting’ and did not see this as any instance of such. Mr. Pelton further made a motion to approve the two ballots. Motion carried unanimously.

- 8 Civilian ballots where the voter indicated their photo ID documentation was inside the ballot envelope.
 - Numbered Memo 2021-03 states “A voter may respond to a notification that their ballot is missing photo ID documentation by stating that it is in the ballot envelope. If this occurs, staff must defer the review of the photo ID documentation to the next absentee board meeting, when the county board can review the application and, if approved, open the ballot envelope and confirm photo ID compliance.”

Mr. Randall made a motion to approve the 8 ballots. Motion carried unanimously. Staff opened the ballots and verified photo ID documentation.

831 Ballots recommended for approval for board to spot check

- 781 Civilian ballots
- 4 Military ballot returned by mail
- 46 Affidavit review pending (returned with a properly executed Photo ID Exception Form)

Board members spot-checked at least two ballots from the ballots recommended for approval. Mr. Pelton made a motion to approve ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

23 Ballots recommended for disapproval

- 22 Civilian ballots with incomplete witness information. Ballots have been spoiled and new ballots issued.
- 1 Civilian ballot with incomplete assistant information. Ballot has been spoiled new ballot issued.

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

Mr. Johnson confirmed the vDrive seal as 37471386 and the ballot count as 1020; Ms. LaVere confirmed this as the seal number and ballot count from the October 8, 2024 meeting.

Approved ballots were opened by the bipartisan team and prepared for scanning.

One VIP ballot and 11 ballots damaged upon opening were duplicated by the bipartisan team. Once duplicated, 10 ballots were found to have smudged ink during the duplication process. Those ballots were duplicated again.

All approved ballots were scanned.

The board adjudicated overvotes as necessary.

After scanning was complete, Mr. Johnson announced that 909 ballots were scanned today with the total scanned as 1929.

Ms. Rushton confirmed that the number of ballots approved today was 909 with total to date of 1020.

The ballots were placed in a bin and sealed, with seals signed by Mr. Pelton 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: 1929
- Ballot bin: 36069705 and 36069707
- vDrive storage container: 36069706

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

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

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Date 10/22/2024

Time: 4:00 pm

Location: Commissioners' Chambers

Agenda Item: Consideration of Absentee Ballots

Absentee Seal Numbers and Ballot Counts:

These numbers are logged on an audit sheet and signed by the board at each meeting.

Meeting	Absentee Bin Seals	vDrive Seals	Ballots Approved at Meeting	Ballots Scanned at Meeting	Total Ballots Scanned this Election Recorded at end of meeting
10/1/24	37471384 37471385	37471387	215	215	215
10/8/24	36069708 36069703	37471386	805	805	1020
10/15/24	36069705 36069707	36069706	909	909	1929

Summary:

There are 1370 ballots being considered at today's meeting.

Information Only:

31 Pending Cure

1203 Ballots recommended for approval – board to spot check¹

1089	Civilian
4	Overseas returned by mail or will be duplicated during board meeting
5	Military returned by mail or will be duplicated during board meeting
105	Affidavit Review Pending (returned with properly executed Photo ID Exception Form) ²

¹The Resolution to Delegate Administrative Duties Relating to Absentee Voting to the Director and Staff approved by the board on 10/17/23 states that "The board will not review individual ballot envelopes that have been recommended by staff for approval and will accept staff's recommendation for those ballot envelopes and photo ID documentation. The board will spot-check a minimum of two envelopes and accompanying photo ID documentation to ensure accuracy and consistency. The board reserves the right to review all ballot envelopes that have been recommended by staff for approval."

² Per Numbered Memo 2020-25, these ballots should be approved by the board if the board does not unanimously conclude that the exception form is false.

73 Ballots requiring board review - recommended for approval

23	Accepted Cure
41	Overseas (received electronically, duplicated by bipartisan team prior to the meeting)
9	Military (received electronically, duplicated by bipartisan team prior to the meeting)

61 Ballots requiring board review - pending board decision

42	Civilian ballots received in a sealed return envelope, but the ballot envelope was unsealed ³
12	Civilian ballots where the voter indicated that their photo ID documentation is inside the ballot envelope ⁴
7	Civilian ballots that were returned by an unauthorized person ⁵

33 Ballots requiring board review - recommended for disapproval⁶:

33	Civilian ballot with incomplete witness information. Ballot has been spoiled and a new ballot issued
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³ 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 absentee meeting.

⁴ Numbered Memo 2021-03 states “A voter may respond to a notification that their ballot is missing photo ID documentation by stating that it is in the ballot envelope. If this occurs, staff must defer the review of the photo ID documentation to the next absentee board meeting, when the county board can review the application and, if approved, open the ballot envelope and confirm photo ID compliance.”

⁵ Numbered Memo 2020-23 states that delivery of an absentee ballot by a person other than the voter, the voter’s near relative, the voter’s legal guardian, or a person of the voter’s choice when the voter needs assistance due to disability, is not sufficient evidence in and of itself to establish that the voter did not lawfully vote their ballot. A county board shall not disapprove an absentee ballot solely because it was delivered by someone who was not authorized to possess the ballot.

⁶ Numbered Memo 2020-25 states “Whether the county board delegates the initial review of absentee envelopes to staff or chooses to have a bipartisan team of board members review envelopes during the meeting, all board members present at the meeting must approve or disapprove the ballots.”

The Resolution to Delegate Administrative Duties delegated the task of “Inspecting ballot envelopes and return envelopes for deficiencies and contacting voters as required by Numbered Memo 2021-03.”