

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
Fax: 910-253-2618
elections@brunswickcountync.gov

Meeting Minutes · Absentee Meeting · October 22, 2024 · 4:00 p.m.

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

Board Staff Present: Director Sara LaVere, 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 15, 2024 Regular and Absentee Meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of Absentee Ballots

There are 1370 ballots for the board's consideration.

Information only: 31 ballots pending cure.

Ballots recommended for approval:

1203 Ballots recommended for approval for board to spot check

- 1089 Civilian ballots
- 4 Overseas ballots returned by mail or will be duplicated during board meeting
- 5 Military ballots returned by mail or will be duplicated during board meeting
- 105 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. Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

73 Ballots requiring board review

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

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

Ballots requiring board review – pending board decision

61 ballots total requiring board review:

- 42 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
 - 31 have met the necessary requirements. 6 are affidavit review pending. 4 must be spoiled and reissued due to witness or notary issues. One is pending cure because the exception form provided was incomplete.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve 37 ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously. Mr. Pelton made a motion to disapprove 5 ballots, 4 to be spoiled and reissued and one is a pending cure. Motion carried unanimously.

- 12 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. Pelton made a motion to approve and direct staff to open the ballot envelopes to evaluate photo ID requirements. Motion carried unanimously.

Upon opening, 9 had acceptable ID, 1 became affidavit review pending recommended for approval, and 2 did not meet photo identification requirements, could not see the state on the copy of the ID.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve 10 ballots and disapprove 2 ballots (change to pending cure), as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

- 7 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. Lewis inquired as to whether the staff retains a list of unauthorized persons. Ms. Rushton clarified that an overall list is not maintained, the individual log sheets are kept. She further clarified that the number of returns by unauthorized persons remains low and without reason to suspect any irregularities.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to approve the 7 ballots. Motion carried unanimously.

33 Ballots recommended for disapproval

- 33 Civilian ballots with incomplete witness information. Ballots have been spoiled and new ballots issued.

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

Mr. Johnson confirmed the vDrive seal as 36069706 and the ballot count as 1929; Ms. LaVere confirmed this as the seal number and ballot count from the October 15, 2024 meeting.

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

There were 8 sets of CIV mismatch that were identified when ballots were opened. They are acceptable since there were corresponding sets in the same household.

One VIP ballot, one damaged ballot, and one ballot with white out will need to be duplicated by the bipartisan team.

The ballot containing white out has two offices that were unclear; board members reviewed the ballot. Ms. Clarity noted she could not determine the intent of the voter. Three board members determined a vote on the question in contest, with Ms. Clarity dissenting as a clear choice was not discernable by her.

All approved ballots were scanned.

The board adjudicated overvotes as necessary.

After scanning was complete, Mr. Johnson announced that 1330 ballots were scanned today with the total scanned as 3259.

Ms. Rushton confirmed that the number of ballots approved today was 1330 with total to date of 3259.

The ballots were placed in a bin and sealed, with seals signed by Mr. Pelton 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: 3259
- Ballot bin: 37471451 and 37471446
- vDrive storage container: 37471447

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.