

# BRUNSWICK COUNTY

## BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Meeting Minutes · Absentee Meeting · October 29, 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, and Absentee Assistant Christy Souter

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

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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.

### **Consideration of Absentee Ballots**

There are 1872 ballots for the board's consideration.

Information only: 69 ballots pending cure.

### **Ballots recommended for approval:**

#### **1621 Ballots recommended for approval for board to spot check**

- 1454 Civilian ballots
- 2 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
- 160 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. Smith made a motion to approve ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **93 Ballots requiring board review**

- 34 Accepted Cure

- 33 Overseas (received electronically, duplicated by the bipartisan team prior to the meeting)
- 26 Military (received electronically, duplicated by the bipartisan team prior to the meeting)

Board members reviewed ballots. Mr. Pelton made a motion to approve 93 ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Rushton noted that there were 10 ballots (5 sets) of CIV mismatch from the same household.

There is one ballot that is a CIV mismatch within the same voter. The voter had asked for a new ballot, a packet was spoiled and reissued. The voter returned the original ballot and the replacement envelope.

There were two ballots that need duplication, one ballot was damaged and one has white out.

There are three envelopes that did not have ballots. Mr. Randall made a motion to disapprove the 3 envelopes that did not contain ballots. The motion carried unanimously. These ballots will be spoiled and reissued.

*Ballots requiring board review – pending board decision*

97 ballots total requiring board review:

- 78 Civilian ballots received in a sealed return envelope, but the ballot envelope was unsealed or the ballot was loose in the return envelope
  - 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.
  - 61 of these ballots met all requirements and were recommended to be approved.
  - Three ballots were changed to pending cure.
  - 14 ballots were recommended to be disapproved to be spoiled and reissued.

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve 61 ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to disapprove 14 ballots as recommended by staff. Motioned carried unanimously.

- 10 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.

- 9 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 made a motion to approve the 9 ballots. Motion carried unanimously.

61 Ballots recommended for disapproval

- 59 Civilian ballots with incomplete witness information. Ballots have been spoiled and new ballots issued.
- One Civilian ballot not properly notarized. Ballot has been spoiled and a new ballot issued.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to disapprove 60 ballots as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

- One Civilian ballot, voter registration denied, board to enter challenge to ballot. The voter is no longer registered. After the voter registered, the verification card, and its second attempt, were returned undeliverable. The returned card indicates there is no mail receptable at the address registered address.
- Guidance from the state is the ballot be disapproved and the ballot challenged at canvass.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to disapprove the ballot. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Pelton made a motion to challenge the ballot as recommended by staff. Ms. LaVere noted that the challenge process will afford the voter the opportunity to provide testimony, if desired, about their ballot or registration status. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Johnson confirmed the vDrive seal as 34741447 and the ballot count as 3259; Ms. LaVere confirmed this as the seal number and ballot count from the October 22, 2024 meeting.

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

All approved ballots were scanned.

The board adjudicated overvotes as necessary.

After scanning was complete, Mr. Johnson announced that 1791 ballots were scanned today with the total scanned as 5050.

Ms. Rushton confirmed that the number of ballots approved today was 1791 with total to date of 5050.

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: 5050
- Ballot bin: 37471453 and 34741460
- vDrive storage container: 37471452

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.