

BRUNSWICK COUNTY

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Meeting Minutes · Regular Meeting · April 29, 2025 · 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, Deputy Director Melissa Chambers, 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

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

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Clarity made a motion to approve minutes from the meeting on March 18, 2025. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Director's Report

March voter registration statistics were provided in the agenda packet.

Elections Board Appointment

On April 23, a three-judge panel issued a decision in Stein v. Berger. Barring any further court decision, the county board chairs will be appointed by the Governor in June.

Griffin protest updates

On April 11, 2025, the North Carolina Supreme Court issued a decision that narrows a previous Court of Appeals decision to only UOCAVA-No ID and UOCAVA-nonresidents (Brunswick has 1). Registration issues (DL/SSN) no longer part of this case.

Although the registration issue voters are spared from the election protest, the Court of Appeals has still ordered SBE to correct and update registration records missing necessary ID info. SBE staff are reviewing options and will have further guidance on that.

However, on April 22, 2025, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit stopped this decision from going into effect. The stop is in place while the federal courts consider whether the North Carolina Supreme Court's decision complies with federal laws.

Updates on Budget and Space Needs

Budget

Following a meeting with administration, the required reduction to our department's expenditures was **\$125,000** from our budget request. Management agreed to a mid-year hire to manage outreach, education, and public records. Additionally, fully funding our budget request will be presented to the Board of Commissioners for consideration as an increase in the tax rate. The County Manager's Office believes these initiatives are valuable and fully supports our communication with the Board in advocating for the proposed increase.

To meet the \$125,000 reduction, we made several adjustments, most notably removing five Verity Print workstations for ballot-on-demand printing at key Election Day locations, eliminating 15 Brother printers intended to replace phased-out OKI models, and shifting certain temporary staff duties to existing full-time staff during peak election periods.

Finance has placed the Verity Print and Brother printers on a list for possible year-end funding in the current fiscal year. Additionally, in the next fiscal year, they plan to cover the cost of a Hart upgrade. Although the cost was not included in our original budget request, this upgrade has been discussed over the last few years as a necessary expense once the state approved the latest version. Also, logo attire was initially removed to meet the budget reduction target but now re-added into the budget request at the recommendation of management.

Budget workshop scheduled for Monday, May 5.

Space Needs

Brunswick County Schools has purchased warehouse space in Shallotte (the old Summerhome Furniture Building) and the county will be leasing storage space. Once that lease is signed, there will be space for some retention storage for our department and another department will be vacating a cage at the on-campus warehouse for our use.

Development Services, currently located in Building I, will move to new HHS building. Once that happens, we will have nearby storage space in Building I.

Elections is no longer being considered for the new HHS building.

Board of Education Calendar

The school calendar for the 2025–2026 academic year was initially released without designating a teacher workday for the scheduled municipal and primary elections. Following a collaborative meeting, school officials gained a better understanding of our operational needs, and the

challenges associated with relocating polling places during lower-turnout elections. To support long-term planning and prevent future scheduling conflicts, our office provided the district with a 10-year calendar of upcoming elections.

Workload Relating to S382

Staff has been working through the logistics of meeting new deadlines for absentee and provisional voting. We should be prepared to bring a new board meeting schedule to you at the next meeting.

- Have someone from IT come over to pull files from poll books on election night. These would then be imported into SEIMS, meaning we get DMV results a day earlier.
- Have ballots sorted by reason and last name on Tuesday night.
- All hands on deck in a work space in the training room for research.
- Noelle will be trained to scan ballots in Verity Central Scan for absentee meetings – helps on election night.

Executive Order Update

On April 17 there was a hearing/consultation on a preliminary injunction. Currently there is no update or action needed by our office; most items in the executive order provide directives to federal agencies.

Brunswick County Job Fair

Ms. Chambers and Mr. Childress will be representing the board of elections at the Brunswick County Job Fair to be held on campus on May 9, from 10am – 1 pm in the cafeteria. They will be providing information on poll workers and the temporary position of an elections supply rover.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

There was no new business.

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