

Buncombe County Board of Elections
Asheville/Buncombe County Board of Elections

Monitor Name: Elaine Elam, George Elam, and Aiden Carson in person

Date & Time: October 29, 2024 3:30 PM

Names of Board Members Attending:

Jake Quinn, Chairman

Mary Ann Braine, Board Member

Steven Aceto, Board Member

Glen Shults, Secretary

Sally Stein, Board Member

Names of Buncombe Co Staff Attending: Corrine Duncan, Director; Anna Katherine Moore, Administrative Coordinator and Clerk to the Board; Justin Tate, Absentee Coordinator; Devin Whitney, Elections Technical Specialist; Bria Bailey, Elections Technical Specialist; Nathaniel Speier, Candidate Coordinator; Joyce Kanavel

Location of Meeting: 59 Woodfin Place, Asheville NC

Observers:

14 in person including 3 LWVAB and 1 Common Cause. 10 online.

Agenda Items

I. Agenda for this meeting approved without objection

II Minutes for 10/15-16/24 and 10/22-23/24 approved by acclamation

III. Office Updates – Corrine Duncan, Director

- Election Day is one week away.
- Early preparation by staff, especially disaster preparedness, contributed to the smooth process we are seeing.
- The storm increased the workload on the 12 permanent staff that put in 2000+hours in a short period of time to catch up.
- There have been almost 6300 Absentee Voters and 85,000 Early Voters, which added together constitute over 40% of registered voters.
- Xpress Vote machines have been useful in turning voters over quickly – more people per hour than in 2020. Some people using the Xpress Vote needed help navigating the machine due to it being their first time using.
- There have been some issues with Early Voting, including long lines and parking issues. Parking issues have been addressed with a parking attendant at Enka-Candler and two attendants at South Asheville Library.
- There have been some Xpress machine issues reported. All poll workers are advised of issues daily. It is important for details to be reported in order to address issues.

- There was one issue at Leicester Community Center where a campaigner and a voter got into a verbal dispute. The matter has been reported to the SBOE.
- We are getting national and international press coverage. Corinne distributed a packet for board members with handy facts and guidance in dealing with media questions. It included numbered memo 2022-12 on maintaining order at the polls.
- Ms. Stein suggested that party chairs be notified of any incidents and Ms. Duncan took note of that.

IV. Early Voting Plan Discussion Corinne Duncan

- The original Early Voting Plan for the General Election was proposed in April, under time pressure from the SBOE.
- Post-Helene, changes were needed. The hurricane challenged the original plan due to limited poll workers and staff limitations. Some poll workers had left the area after the storm. A new plan was proposed and adopted, with 10 voting sites instead of 14, and shorter hours due to limited poll workers .
- Last week, that plan was reconsidered and amended. There was a discussion about the possibility of extending the hours beyond 5 PM.
- Chairman Quinn said that he felt if we extended the hours there would be risks to voters and poll workers, and that election integrity was at risk. Workers might be impacted by too many changes and he feared more demands and changes would impact the integrity and smoothness of the process. For the sake of 50 additional hours of operation, “the juice is not worth the squeeze”.
- Mr. Shults said that people don’t understand all the ramifications of adding an additional hour to the plan.
- Ms. Stein said that the decision was not taken lightly. The Board took time and investigative effort and considered many factors.
- Audience member Rondell Lance stated that in refusing to extend the hours the Board had acted in a partisan fashion and that it constituted voter suppression. He said other counties were open until 7:30 and working people were being denied an opportunity to vote after working hours. He accused the the Board, specifically the Democrats on the Board, of being enemies of the people. His remarks were heated and insulting to the Board and he stormed out of the meeting after Chairman Quinn had gaveled him out of order several times.
- Audience member Kathy Kline expressed appreciation that the decision of the Board was based on consideration for the workers.
- Ms. Braine brought up a question about rides for voters in shelters. Director Duncan said the shelters have taken responsibility to get people to the polls. Justin shared the bus route & schedule for the shuttle that was being provided.
- Justin praised staff members who assisted members of the public seeking help in getting IDs to enable them to vote. He said that getting IDs to people who may have lost everything is important to get people reengaged.

V. Consideration of Additional Absentee Ballot Review Meeting

An additional meeting was scheduled for Friday November 1 at 3:30 in order to keep up with Absentee Ballot processing. The Board approved 5/0.

VI. Absentee Ballot Review (G.S. § 163-230.1(f)) Justin Tate

- Justin presented 91 pending ballots to 2 bipartisan teams made up of Board members. Most were cases where the ballot had been put in the wrong envelope. 2 ballots were not approved (1 with no signature and 1 with a witness signature that was not recognizable). Voters will be contacted to try to cure those 2. 1 ballot had a CID mismatch whose counterpart was found among the non-pending ballots. Ms. Braine opened the other ballot to make sure the CIDs were a match and that ballot was approved. The remaining 89 Absentee Ballots were approved 5/0.
- He presented 29 Military Absentee Ballots. Duplication had already been done. The Board approved the 29 ballots 5/0.
- 5 bipartisan teams were assembled from Board Members and MAT Team members. Justin presented 226 Overseas Ballots for review. They were approved 5/0.
- Justin presented 450 ID Exception Forms for the same 5 bipartisan teams. The envelopes were reviewed and passed to the staff teams to open.
 - One ballot had a CID mismatch with no corresponding ballot in today's batch. That one was disapproved 5/0..
 - One ballot had no name on the top of the exception form and the signature does not match the one on the ballot. Disapproved 5/0.
 - One ballot with a witness signature issue, not complete or in the wrong location. Approved 4/1, with Mr. Shults voting no.
- 448 ballots with ID Exception forms were approved 5/0.
- Board members decided to begin working on 2285 civilian ballots for another half hour. They went through 352 ballots in 34 minutes, and it took 20 minutes to duplicate 9 ballots.

The meeting was recessed at 9:35 PM, to be resumed the following day.

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Anna Katherine Moore, Administrative Coordinator and Clerk to the Board; Justin Tate, Absentee Coordinator; Devin Whitney, Elections Technical Specialist; Bria Bailey, Elections Technical Specialist; Nathaniel Speier, Candidate Coordinator; Joyce Kanavel. There were 11 extra staff including 5 MAT team members to assist with ballots.

Location of Meeting: 59 Woodfin Place, Asheville NC

Observers:

8 in person including 3 LWVAB. There was one sheriff's deputy present who did not stay for the whole meeting. 2 online.

Brief Office Update:

- Ms. Duncan said there have been over 90,000 Early Voters so far.
- She said the flash drives were being replaced with larger capacity ones to avoid maxing out.

**V. Absentee Ballot Review continued from Tuesday (G.S. § 163-230.1(f))
Justin Tate**

- Justin went over the procedure for processing ballots for the audience, several of whom were new observers.
- 1933 civilian ballots of the 2285 need processing today, using the same procedure as yesterday.
- One ballot was reviewed with a UNCA ID with no expiration date. Ms. Duncan explained that it was an old form of ID that had been approved. The ballot was approved 5/0.
- One ballot had a CID mismatch with no corresponding ballot. It was disapproved 5/0.
- Two ballots with similar signatures were reviewed. Records show similar signatures on file from the same family. The ballots were approved 5/0.
- One ballot included a temporary license receipt as the ID. Per **NCGS 20-7(f)(5)** it is valid for driving but not for ID. Disapproved 5/0.
- One ballot was examined for voter intent. The Board voted 5/0 to consider it an undervote.
- Duplicators completed their task and were dismissed after being queried by Chairman Quinn as to their confidence in the procedure.
- Ballots had to be rescanned after the total was accidentally cleared. The rescan created additional ballots to be duplicated. Since the duplicating team had already been dismissed, Board members made up a 4 member duplicating team to get the job done.
- After scanning there was one more envelope than ballots. An envelope was found that still contained a ballot. After processing that ballot the numbers tallied.
- 2283 Civilian Ballots were approved 5/0.

Monitors left the meeting a little after 10 PM, before final processing of the security envelopes and boxes.

VII. Next Meeting: Friday, November 1 at 3:30 pm (Absentee Ballot Review)

Location: 59 Woodfin Place