

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

Monitor Name: Aiden Carson, Elain and George Elam, and Cheryl Williams in person

Date & Time: January 28, 2025 3:30 PM

Names of Board Members Attending:

Jake Quinn, Chairman

Glen Shults, Secretary

Mary Ann Braine, Board Member

Sally Stein: Board Member

Not Attending:

Steven Aceto, Board Member

Names of Buncombe Co Staff Attending:

Corrine Duncan, Director; Anna Katherine Moore, Administrative Coordinator and Clerk to the Board; Victoria Pickens, Accounting Technician and Campaign Finance; Devin Whitney, Elections Technical Specialist, GIS

Location of Meeting: 59 Woodfin Place, Asheville NC

Observers:

At least 6 in person, including 4 LWVAB, 1 Common Cause, and 2 likely Republican. One Republican arrived just as the meeting adjourned. Three online.

I. Agenda for this meeting approved without objection

II. Minutes (G.S. § 143-318.10) deferred until next meeting when Mr. Aceto will be present

III. Office Updates – Corrine Duncan, Director

- Ms. Duncan said she had two updates:
 - The office is developing a submission for the Elections Assistance Commission (EAC), an independent federal agency created by the Help America Vote Act of 2002, in the category of Emergency Preparedness. The EAC recognizes outstanding innovations by state and local elections offices with Clearing House Awards.
 - Elections Services staff including Ms. Duncan, Ms. Moore, Ms. Fox, and Ms. Rae toured 35 Woodfin.

IV. Budget Approval – ((G.S. § 163-33(11), (G.S. § 163-37)) Victoria Pickens

- Ms. Duncan said she has had an initial meeting with County Officials and she or staff will present the proposed budget to Ms. Pindar, County Manager, on 2/28, as part of a group of agencies comprising General Government.

- She expects to learn by February 18 whether staff will present of whether the presentation needs to be stand alone.
- She also said that she and staff had decided to leave the request for training and travel untouched to stimulate further discussion.
- Ms. Pickens outlined changes to the proposed budget as presented on January 21 as follows and stressed that the County faces at significant shortfall:
 - Thanks to Ms. Stein’s observation that the amount dedicated to replacing ballot bags seemed too high, \$44,800 was deleted from the budget request. The true replacement figure is \$5,200, not \$50,000.
 - Another \$50,000 was eliminated from the budget allocated for a school consolidation mailing because it does not appear that the consolidation will occur.
 - The County suggested adding in \$1,500 in related expenses for the proposed Deputy Department Head distributed across several line items including subscriptions, phone, office supplies, etc that would be needed should the position be approved but not included in salary.
 - Ms. Stein asked whether the County was directing the distribution and Ms. Duncan said yes.
 - Ms. Stein also asked how many times Elections Services had requested this position. Ms. Duncan said this was the second request.
 - Mr. Shults asked where in the organization chart the position would be listed. Ms. Duncan said the position would be under Ms. Fox, Deputy Director.
 - Ms. Stein asked whether these funds would be eliminated if the position was not approved. Ms. Duncan said yes.
 - These changes reduced the overall budget request which was about 1 percent over the FY 2024 request to about 1 percent below the amount requested for FY 2024.
 - Ms. Braine stressed that Broad Members and staff need to attend the State Board conferences because critical information related to legislative and judicial actions resulting from the 2024 elections will be covered.
 - Ms. Duncan said that new members were required to attend but she also said the case was strong for all members to attend and that she had stressed this repeatedly to County managers.
- Mr. Quinn asked for a motion to approve the proposed budget. A motion was made and seconded. It passed 4/0.

Facilities

- Mr. Quinn said he had sent the resolution enumerating the six critical points to Mr. Love with a cc to Ms. Pindar and requested a meeting. Both will meet with Mr. Quinn and Mr. Aceto on Friday, February 7. At the meeting, he will present the detailed concerns prepared by the Board.

- Mr. Shults asked whether anyone had heard the plans for the building at 59 Woodfin Place if/when Elections Services moves. Ms. Duncan said she had not.
- Mr. Shults asked whether all staff currently in 50 Woodfin Place would move. Ms. Duncan said no because the plan is for IT to stay at 59 Woodfin.
 - Ms. Braine said that many IT staff work remotely, so maybe not all the space would be needed.
- Mr. Shults asked why Elections Services was being asked to move but not IT. Ms. Duncan said she had asked that repeatedly and was told each time that the County wanted to consolidate staff in office space it owned.

Public Comment:

- Cheryl Williams, an LWV observer, asked what feedback Mr. Quinn received from his consultation with Mr. Euler, the County Attorney. Mr. Quinn said that Mr. Euler said it would not be a good idea for all the Board Members to tour 35 Woodfin Street together. So, he and Ms. Braine toured the facility last week and talked about it in the last public meeting. In addition, Mr. Euler said the resolution was fine as written. Stakeholders should share their concerns.
- Ms. Williams also asked how Mr. Quinn intended to get input from stakeholders. He said that he and Mr. Aceto planned to let Mr. Love and Ms. Pindar know of the strong interest, participation, and support stakeholders have for preserving the status quo of letting the Elections Services Office stay at 59 Woodfin Place.

Meeting adjourned 4:10 pm

VI. Next Meetings: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 3:30

- **Location 59 Woodfin Place**