

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

Monitor Name: Elaine and George Elam and Cheryl Williams in person

Date & Time: February 18, 2025 3:30 PM

Names of Board Members Attending:

Jake Quinn, Chairman

Glen Shults, Secretary

Mary Ann Braine, Board Member

Sally Stein: Board Member

Steven Aceto, Board Member

Names of Buncombe Co Staff Attending:

Corrine Duncan, Director; Anna Katherine Moore, Administrative Coordinator and Clerk to the Board; Devin Whitney, Elections Technical Specialist, GIS

Location of Meeting: 59 Woodfin Place, Asheville NC

Observers:

At least 6 in person, including 3 LWVAB, 1 Common Cause, 1 Republican, and 1 unknown. No online.

I. Agenda for this meeting approved without objection

II. Minutes (G.S. § 143-318.10) – Deferred to the next meeting

III. Office Updates – Corrine Duncan, Director

- Ms. Duncan said she had two updates:
 - Regarding the Election Assistance Commission National Clearinghouse Awards, Kate, our communications staff, submitted a proposal for recognizing the “I Voted” sticker contest. The Elections Services office submitted a proposal to recognize our contingency efforts to conduct the election in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. The State Board also submitted a proposal about its contingency efforts. In addition, the Office submitted a proposal for the NC Works Together video the office prepared.
 - Second, three Elections Services staff (A.K. Moore, Morgan Rae, and Justin Tate) are eligible to take the examination to be a Certified Elections Registration Administrator (CERA). All three are eligible based on their experience in Buncombe County Election Services or their experience prior to joining the office. A.K. has already passed the exam. It’s an open book, multiple choice exam.

IV. Election Facilities Discussion

- Mr. Quinn said that at the last meeting they discussed preparing a resolution to present to the County Commissioners and whether to send it to the

Commissioners. Over the weekend, he spoke with Buncombe County Democrats, including 3 sitting Commissioners. He said the Board was unanimous and the concerns were shared by stakeholders including the Democratic and Republican parties, Common Cause, and the League of Women Voters. It's unknown how the resolution would be received. The three Commissioners he spoke with were each surprised by the news. Mr. Quinn also spoke with Curt Euler, the acting County Attorney, who reminded Mr. Quinn that the Board is an independent governmental unit created by the State of NC and governed by NC statute chapter 163. Mr. Euler worked with the Board when they drafted the 2022 Memorandum of Understanding with the County. Mr. Euler said he would speak with County Management about this issue but Mr. Quinn had not heard back regarding any discussion.

- Several people at the weekend meeting indicated they would speak with County Managers to express their concerns.
- Mr. Aceto asked whether Mr. Quinn had any sense about how the Commissioners might receive the resolution.
 - Mr. Quinn said no and reported that the newest Commissioner, Drew Ball, observed the last BOE meeting remotely. On Saturday, he told Mr. Quinn that he's looking forward to receiving the resolution. The Commissioners Mr. Quinn spoke with on Saturday were surprised by the situation. Commissioner Whitesides asked why the Board had not come directly to the Commissioners. Mr. Quinn explained that the Board wanted to work through the County structure and attempt a resolution before elevating the issue to the Commissioners.
 - Mr. Whitesides, Mr. Martin Moore, and Mr. Drew Ball were the three Commissioners at the weekend meeting. Mr. Quinn was glad they were there to hear his description of the situation and to observe the reaction of the assembled group. The meeting was held by Buncombe County Democrats to elect an interim president. Mr. Quinn left when he finished his presentation.
 - Ms. Stein asked whether the central point of the resolution, namely for Elections Services to stay at 59 Woodfin Place, was discussed. Mr. Quinn said not in any detail, the discussion was at a very high level. Mr. Quinn also made the point that the Board asked why the move was necessary but had not received any answer. Mr. Quinn thought that point was the most surprising to the Commissioners.
- Mr. Quinn and Ms. Braine worked on the draft resolution last week. All members had a copy of the current draft. An extended discussion of the draft followed in which all members made constructive observations with much give and take until they all agreed on the draft.
 - Mr. Quinn said it is not certain we will get to talk with the Commissioners. This issue is about operations more than it is policy. Typically, Commissioners tend to remain at arm's length on matters of operations. That's partly why Mr. Quinn is uncertain about how it will be received.

- Mr. Shults asked whether detailed support would accompany the resolution. Mr. Quinn said the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the County as well as the resolution the Board would be sent to County Management.
- Mr. Aceto said the resolution is equivalent to a jury letter which contains a succinct summary of the situation. He also asked whether any progress had been made on the comparison of floor plans to statutory requirements. Mr. Quinn said no. Mr. Aceto said it was quite a lot of work but that it would be helpful if we could have such a document in our back pocket. He specifically said the need to mention that the statute requires Elections Services to maintain a polling location.
- Key points in the resolution are references to statutes and the MOU, both of which will be attached to the resolution.
- Ms. Braine said we need to be clear that our request is not merely a preference but is necessary to provide staff adequate space to carry out the statutory obligations.
- Mr. Shults asked about the procedures to get on the Commissioner's agenda for their March 4 meeting. Mr. Quinn said he would simply speak with Amanda Edwards, the Chair of the Commissioners and she can decide whether it merits being on the agenda.
 - Ms. Duncan said that all you need to do is to write in the resolution that it is to be sent to the Commissioners, then Ms. Duncan can send it directly to the Clerk of the Commissioners.
- Ms. Stein asked whether, once County Management sees the resolution, will the process be delayed if they ask for another meeting. Mr. Quinn said that if the resolution gets on the agenda and the County wants to meet before the Commissioners' meeting, it would be fine.
- The Board members agreed that the resolution should be sent to each Commissioner individually with an explanatory email and attachments as well as to the stakeholder community. Ms. Duncan said they could post the resolution package on the website with the documents from this meeting. Note: following the meeting, Elections Services staff sent a link to the agenda and package to the mailing list for notices of Board of Elections meetings.
 - Mr. Aceto said that the stakeholder community may very well contact Commissioners or County staff on their own. We also hope they will follow up with the Commissioners to determine what action was taken.
 - Mr. Quinn said that he would like to avoid the awkwardness of going to the Commissioners but it may not be possible. He also noted that the Board may not get the outcome it wants but it must try.
 - We are asking the Commissioners to direct the County Manager to let Elections Services stay where they are.

- Ms. Duncan said she keeps the State Board in the loop on all matters, including this one.
- Once the draft had been agreed upon, a motion to pass Resolution 2025-02 was approved 5/0.
- The Commissioners will meet on March 4, so the BOE will meet on March 5.

Public Comment:

- Mr. Black asked whether a cover letter asking to meet with the Commissioners would accompany the resolution. Mr. Quinn said that the last time the Board elevated an issue to the Commissioners, the case for increasing Ms. Duncan’s salary, no one met with them. Instead, following a meeting with the County Manager and a Department Head, the County Manager said she would put it on the Commissioners’ agenda.
 - Mr. Quinn said that he wants the County Manager to see this resolution and will mention it to Mr. Love. He wants to be certain that no one is surprised although he suspects that the Commissioners would alert her when they receive the resolution.
 - He also asked whether the resolution would be shared with other County Boards of Elections as a best practice.
 - Mr. Quinn said it would be shared and that Buncombe County received help from Guilford County on the resolution regarding the Director’s salary.
 - Ms. Duncan noted that the NC Association of County Elections Directors was created to help information sharing among directors and they are scheduled to meet soon.
- An LWVAB observer asked how the stakeholder community would know whether and when Commissioners will discuss the resolution because many might want to be there.
 - Mr. Quinn and Ms. Duncan said they would send emails to stakeholders and look for other ways to get this information to the public, and specifically mentioned sending it to Ron Katz because of his strong connections to the network on civil society organizations.
 - Mr. Aceto brought up the name of Mr. Patrick Williamson, an attorney, who has attended past meetings. Mr. Quinn said that was a good idea.
 - Mr. Shults asked whether we should send the package to the media. Mr. Quinn said they did not do that the last time but it appeared in the news based on reporting by people who attended the meeting, including a former Elections Services staffer.

Meeting adjourned 5:22 pm

V. Next Meetings: Tuesday, March 5, 2025 at 3:30 (the day after the Commissioner’s meeting)

- **Location 59 Woodfin Place**