

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
MEETING MINUTES
September 9, 2021

The scheduled meeting of the Transylvania County Board of Elections was called to order by Chair Champion at 10 am on Thursday, September 9, 2021, at 150 South Gaston Street, Brevard, NC 28712.

Present

Board Members:

Staff Members:

Chair: Sara Champion
Sandra Watson
Wendy Warwick

Director: Jeff Storey
Deputy Director: Julie Dennis

Visitors: Barb Jackson

Review and Approval of Agenda

Chair Champion asked for review of the agenda. **Member Warwick made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.**

Brevard #4 Polling Site

The director stated Brevard College is not ready to commit to returning the precinct to the college due to the ongoing pandemic and that an alternate location must be decided on by the board. The former polling site Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church has agreed to be the alternate precinct location for the Municipal Election. **Member Watson made a motion to approve the temporary relocation of Brevard #4 precinct to the Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church. The motion carried unanimously.** Chair Champion asked the director to coordinate with the church regarding signage.

East Fork Polling Site

Director Storey gave a review of the discussion from the previous meeting and informed the board that COVID protocols are still in place indefinitely for elections. The fire substation is not adequate to use as a polling site with COVID protocols in place. Staff recommend moving the site to the East Fork Baptist Church for 2022. The director indicated David Thompson had reached out and asked what the requirements would be for a polling site. He is researching the feasibility of building a community center that could be a long-term option. **Member Warwick made a motion to move the East Fork polling site to the East Fork Baptist Church. The motion carried unanimously.**

Appointment of Precinct Assistants

The director presented the board with precinct assistants to appoint for the Municipal Election. Staffing requirements will be increased due to having contested races and risk factors with the

pandemic. Member Warwick asked if assistants were trained along with the previously appointed judges. Director Storey stated several trainings are conducted including electronic pollbook and Election Day administration. While judges are the only ones required to have training each election, assistants are strongly encouraged to attend. The director still has concerns regarding in-person training and is considering augmenting with virtual trainings similar to 2020. Training dates will be released soon.

Member Warwick asked if there has been any discussion regarding MAT teams for the Municipal. The director indicated they are finalizing the roster but anticipate previous workers will be available. Ms. Warwick stated she really enjoyed being on the MAT team and will miss that component now that she is on the board.

Chair Champion made a motion to approve the precinct assistants as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Notary Services Policy

Director Storey informed the Board that county commissioners approved charging a fee for all notary services performed by county personnel. By statute, fees cannot be charged for notary services performed on voting related materials. Member Watson asked about the procedures regarding the return of absentee ballots in the office. The director indicated all 3 staff members are public notaries and can notarize absentee ballot returns done in the presence of the staff member. The director asked for the boards' direction regarding notary fees for non-election related requests. Chair Champion felt it could be confusing for citizens if the office charged for some services, but not others. Ms. Warwick voiced concerns that it could potentially become cumbersome for staff. **After further discussion, Member Warwick made a motion to have the Board of Elections staff only provide election related notary services free of charge as required by statute. The motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration of Outreach / Informational Presentations

Member Warwick had previously asked the director to add an agenda item for the board to consider having a segment with public outreach and / or informational presentations at monthly board meetings. Ms. Warwick provided the director with some suggested topics for consideration and felt it would benefit new board members as well as the general public to begin having snippets of training at the regular meetings. Possibly ten minutes segments on various topics if time allowed. In consideration of this item, Chair Champion felt topics should be relevant to the agenda for a given meeting. For example, when the board was appointing precinct officials, perhaps the director could give a background on how those appointments take place prior to the action. Director Storey stated that relevant instructional and statutory materials are given to the board for each action the board must take at a given meeting. Chair Champion reiterated that rules and procedures can change frequently and felt that the board could incorporate Member Warwick's request with the relevant actions the board will be taking each meeting. There were further discussions on board meeting dates and what topics would be covered. Director Storey suggested absentee by mail procedures should be reviewed at the next meeting since that would be the next course of action for the board. There was further discussion on whether to hold the regular meeting on October 14 or combine it with the scheduled October 12 absentee meeting. Chair Champion suggested cancelling the October

14 meeting since that was the first day of early voting and to add the regular meeting agenda to the absentee meeting on October 12. **Member Watson made a motion to add the October 14 agenda to the October 12 absentee meeting and cancel the regular meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Champion and Director Storey gave new board members a brief overview of various election topics and the role of the board and staff regarding candidate filing, campaign finance, logic and accuracy, absentee by mail, precinct official appointments, and canvass. The chair and director answered follow up questions and gave further examples of previous outreach activities such as director presentations, radio and media coverages, festival informational booths, social media and website content.

DIRECTOR UPDATES

Director Storey informed the board that SEIMS (State Elections Information Management System) was migrated to the cloud on August 26. The registration data for all 100 counties in North Carolina are now hosted in the cloud and our local servers have been retired. It was emphasized that voting equipment and tabulation software are still stand alone and was not involved in the migration.

The director indicated the State Board of Elections personnel performed a wellness check for each county and will provide feedback and best practices after consolidating and reviewing the data. Director Storey felt it went well and received positive comments from state staff. The director explained the various processes involved in the review and informed the board he will release any feedback given by the state when it becomes available.

Director Storey stated that Kelly Tornow, the assistant general counsel for the State Board of Elections is leaving the agency in October and that Paul Cox has been hired to fill that position. Mr. Cox has experience in election law and most recently was handling the lawsuit with the ExpressVote.

The director provided the board with the latest legal updates regarding the lawsuit over voter registration eligibility for felons.

Director Storey expressed an interest in implementing a chat bot similar to a presentation Lee County had shared in a webinar. The chat bot would allow voters to text questions to a number and receive answers supplied by the Board of Elections. The director stated it is inexpensive and will research the feasibility for Transylvania County.

The director informed the board logic and accuracy testing will commence on September 23 at 9 am. It is open to the public and will be noticed to the media and distribution list. Director Storey explained the procedures used to test the equipment with a bipartisan team and the processes for the state wide mock election.

The layout for early voting will resemble layouts used with the former voting equipment due to COVID protocols to include 6 foot spacing between machines. PPE supplies will be available again for the near future.

Director Storey indicated orders have been placed for absentee ballot return envelopes, pre-printed ballots, and supplies for the Municipal.

BOARD COMMENTS

The board asked the director to give an overview of the MAT team process. Director Storey explained that bi-partisan teams are sent to assisted living facilities after receiving training from election staff. Member Warwick provided her experiences while working on the MAT team and expressed what a great service it was for the public. Member Watson revealed her observations while a member of the MAT team and suggested tweaking the script given to MAT teams to ensure uniformity from each team.

Ms. Warwick asked about the residency rule change for sheriff. Director Storey stated there is no longer a 1 year requirement for candidates filing for sheriff and the rule will be in effect when filing starts in December.

Ms. Warwick asked the director if he was comfortable with the current budget for this fiscal year. Director Storey confirmed the budget is currently adequate even though a prolonged pandemic was not taken into account. Worst case, postage and labor issues were the only areas where that could be a concern, but the director felt it was negligible at this time.

Chair Champion asked what the alternate site would be for early voting if the conference room was contaminated. Director Storey said it would revert back to the office lobby while the conference room was cleaned.

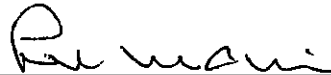
PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Jackson stated she worked as a poll worker last election and agreed that while not exciting, it was very insightful and is encouraging her friends to participate. She felt so much better about the election process after seeing how it worked. Ms. Jackson also asked about the qualifications to be on the MAT teams. Director Storey provided her with the information and welcomed her to apply for the team.

There were no further comments.

On a motion by Ms. Warwick, the meeting adjourned at 11:44 AM. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be at 5 pm on Tuesday, October 12, 2021, at 150 South Gaston Street, Brevard, NC 28712.

Respectfully submitted,



Lee McMinn, Secretary

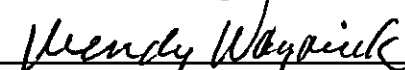


Sara G. Champion, Chair



Sandra E. Watson, Member

Michael Wainwright, Member



Wendy Warwick, Member

Approved by Board on: 10/12/2021