

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

April 13, 2023

The regular meeting of the Transylvania County Board of Elections was called to order by Chair Champion at 10 a.m. on Thursday, April 13, 2023, at 150 South Gaston Street, Brevard, NC 28712.

Present

Board Members:

Staff Members:

Chair: Sara Champion
Secretary: Lee McMinn
Sandra Watson
Wendy Warwick
Judith West

Director: Jeff Storey
Deputy Director: Julie Dennis

Visitors: Jeff Brewer, Deda Edney, Sam Edney, Barb Jackson, Herschel Johnson

Review and Approval of Agenda

Chair Champion asked for a review of the agenda. Secretary McMinn asked if discussion on the proposed North Carolina House Bill 303 -- Reduce Early One-Stop Voting Days (H303) would be added to the agenda. Chair Champion stated it would be included in the early voting site discussion agenda item. **Member Warwick made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.**

Review and Approval of Previous Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes for the February 9, 2023 board meeting. **Member West made a motion to approve the minutes for February 9, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.**

Early Voting Site Discussion

Director Storey provided a brief overview of H303 which would reduce the number of early voting days from seventeen to eight. The director indicated the State Board of Elections (SBOE) asked for an assessment of how the county board of elections operations would be affected by the proposed law. Director Storey indicated historical data showed that a condensed early voting period would increase the daily turnout numbers. The board would need to consider additional equipment and early voting sites to accommodate the higher volume for an eight-day voting period. In board discussions, it was agreed that early voting demand would continue with a condensed voting period. There was further discussion regarding equipment options needed to accommodate a condensed early voting period along with staffing, sites, and hours. Member Warwick asked about budgetary support from the county if the law was passed. Chair Champion believed any request for additional funding would be concerning to county administration, but the Board has to assume voters would still prefer the early voting method. Member West restated if the bill passed, additional machines would be needed based on the

data presented for a shortened early voting period. Member Warwick indicated if passed, the Board would need to emphasize educating voters on the changes to early voting. Chair Champion summarized by stating the discussion was to inform the Board of the director's response to the State Board of Elections inquiry to be shared with the state legislature regarding the impact of the proposed bill (H303) to the county. Chair Champion asked the board to move to a separate discussion that focused on the original agenda item of considering additional early voting sites in Transylvania County.

Director Storey presented the board with maps for current, past, and potential early voting sites with driving distances, previous early voting hours and dates, and voter turnout by precinct. The director had previously been asked by the public and board to collect data regarding current and alternative locations. Director Storey is still collecting additional data since the board does not have to decide until the end of the year. The request was irrespective of the proposed H303 bill.

DIRECTOR UPDATES

The board was informed a budget meeting took place with Chair Champion, Director Storey, and county administration with no significant issues to share. Questions and concerns were raised regarding turnout and costs for a second early voting site for the primary. Director Storey and Deputy Director Owen attended the North Carolina Association of Directors of Elections (NCADE) conference where it was determined 48 of 100 county elections directors are new since 2020. Following up on the Mary C. Jenkins Community Center as a possible polling site, the parking area was completed, but sidewalks looked unfinished. The director is awaiting completion before setting up a site visit and ADA assessment. Member Warwick asked if there could be a public meeting to ascertain if voters wished to move the Brevard #2 precinct. The director noted that could be an option for a future date once the board performed the site visit and approved the measure. Director Storey stated 87 of 130 existing and previous precinct workers have indicated an interest in being appointed for the 2023 to 2025 term. The remaining needs will be identified and given to the political party chairs along with those who have confirmed. The director will have a party chair orientation with both parties next week and provide additional information. Director Storey updated the board on other proposed legislation and court rulings.

BOARD AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Champion reviewed the board meeting calendar and proposed moving the June 8 meeting to June 1 since several members and staff may be out of town. **On a motion by the chair, the board unanimously agreed to move the meeting to June 1.**

Member West suggested reaching out to the City of Brevard's communications specialist regarding putting election related information on the city's social media platforms for the 2023 Municipal Election. Director Storey added that the Buncombe County Board of Elections' public relations specialist has also agreed to help the surrounding counties with a media project for voter outreach.

Herschel Johnson indicated a belief that there will be a large push for Republicans towards early voting in 2024 versus traditionally waiting until Election Day and the board should take that into consideration. Chair Champion added that the early voting process is less susceptible to

mistakes since experienced workers are providing the service continually across 17 days while Election Day workers, despite training, only work for one or two days a year.

Jeff Brewer asked for clarification about the number of voting machines used for early voting and Election Day in 2020. Mr. Brewer commented that trend lines are very difficult to predict with so many variables to previous early voting schedules and advocated for consistency. Member West appreciated Mr. Brewer's comments and agreed it is difficult to predict trends when legislative changes and a pandemic brought a lack of consistency with dates, times, and locations. Member West felt the frequency of change may not be reduced in future elections. Mr. Brewer asked about the cost of additional equipment. The director reiterated that to provide the same level of service voters were accustomed to in a shorter period would necessitate additional equipment. Chair Champion stated that the current rules in place for early voting provide consistency but is problematic in terms of cost by requiring any additional sites to be manned the exact same hours. With the current requirements in place, the board could not justify additional sites based on the turnout data over a 17-day period. A shorter time period would likely mean additional early voting sites. There was no further discussion.

On a motion by Secretary McMinn, the meeting adjourned at 11:31 a.m. The next scheduled meeting will be at 10 a.m. on May 11, 2023, at 150 South Gaston Street, Brevard, NC 28712.

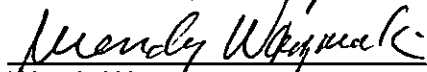
Respectfully submitted,



Lee McMinn, Secretary



Sara G. Champion, Chair



Wendy Warwick, Member

Sandra E. Watson, Member



Judith West, Member

Approved by Board on: MAY 11, 2023