

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

Monitor Name: Elaine Elam, George Elam, Aiden Carson, Linda Kinsinger, and Cheryl Williams in person

Date & Time: June 17, 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; Karen Rae, Recruiting and Outreach Coordinator; Devin Whitney, Elections Technical Specialist, GIS

Location of Meeting: 59 Woodfin Place, Asheville NC

Observers:

Twelve in person observers consisting of: 5 LWV, 1 Common Cause, 2 democrat, and 4 unknown. Two online.

I. Agenda for this meeting approved without objection

II. Minutes (G.S. § 143-318.10) – for 5/13 approved without objection

Mr. Quinn noted that this was the last meeting of the Board in its current configuration. Mr. Aceto and Mr. Shults will not be returning to the Board. The State Board of Elections will make appointments to the new Board who will be sworn in on July 22 at the Courthouse.

Mr. Quinn praised the Board members for their service and commitment to the citizens of Buncombe County.

III. Office Updates – Corrine Duncan, Director

- June 19 is Juneteenth and is a county holiday, so the Election Services Office will be closed.
- On June 20, Ms. Duncan will participate in an Intergovernmental Organization (IGO) conference in Kansas City, MO at a workshop on elections and emergency management. She will attend with Ryan Coles and they will speak about operations during Helene.
- On June 26 the office will host a campaign Treasurer training at 5:30 at 35 Woodfin Street on the main floor.
- The State Board will meet on June 24 to appoint the new members of county boards. Typically, her office will get the information on appointments by email

the following day. Once she has the information she will reach out to the new and returning members.

- Candidate filing for the municipal elections begins at 8:00 am on July 7 and ends at 5:00 pm on July 18. The filing opening was delayed until Monday July 7 because Friday is July 4, a holiday.
- An all-day board orientation will be held on July 8. The event was originally scheduled for July 1 but staff will not have sufficient time to onboard new members following notice of new members on June 24.
- The new board will be sworn in on July 22 at noon in the County Courthouse. It is a public event and all are welcome. Also a new Board secretary will be selected.
- The State Board conference will be July 27-29 in Wilmington. All board members are required to attend. Staff have arranged for all accommodations.
- There will be two Board meetings in August on August 5 and August 19 to talk about various business items, begin developing the early voting plan; and appointment poll workers.
- The budget was approved with no changes.
- Americans with Disabilities Act surveys are where staff visit each of the 80 voting sites to ensure they are still ADA compliant. Staff will also update agreements with the sites, which is done every other year.
- About three-quarters of the sites have been surveyed and agreements updated. Staff began with the sites that will be used for the municipal elections and then the ones that will be used for Early Voting. All the sites surveyed to date comply. If any do not, they will be discussed with the Board in August.
- For about two years, staff have been working on the agreements with municipalities. Under the law, municipalities may either hold their own elections or ask the County to hold them. The project has two major goals. One is to update the agreements with municipalities, which has not been done in a while. The new agreements will highlight such issues as the need for municipalities to notify Election Services when boundaries change or offices are vacated and to better define how Election Services bills the municipalities.
 - In 2020 when the City of Asheville switched its elections to even numbered years, which was a big and unprecedented change, and the pandemic began, Election Services did not bill the City for holding the elections. The office needs to be certain it is being fair to municipalities that hold their elections in both even and odd numbered years. They have a plan that they believe treats everyone fairly and they will present it to the Board and the County. It uses actual data from the past four years. For odd numbered years the costs are 100 percent on the municipalities while in even numbered years the cost is split between the County and any municipalities. It will allow staff to develop more accurate cost data in a shorter time and to bill more promptly.

- The resolution is currently being reviewed by Legal and will be presented to the Board in August.
 - Mr. Quinn asked what is the plan to bring everyone else along since he thinks some people believe that switching to even numbered years meant no more bills from Election Services. The proposal is not a change in the law but on the heels of budget problems related to Helene the prospect of a bill may not be welcomed.
 - Ms. Duncan agreed it is an excellent question and the reason to hold the discussions in public meetings is to help ensure there are no surprises. Once they have a draft, they will share it with the municipalities and invite them to the public meetings so that they can participate in the process. The plan is to be implemented beginning the next budget cycle they are preparing for since they have already developed budgets for the current fiscal year.
 - Mr. Aceto suggested that once a draft is prepared to have the outside counsel review it which allows Election Services to go on the record as having consulted independent and objective advice.
 - He also suggested that Board meetings begin with the pledge of allegiance to remind everyone of their oaths to the Constitution and the law.
 - Also prior to each meeting the Director and the Chair meet to consult on the agenda. He suggests that going forward, you invite a second Board Member of the opposing party to also review the agenda. It underscores that Election Services is an independent and transparent organization.
 - Mr. Quinn said Director Duncan briefed him 10 days ago on the billing of municipalities and he when he talked with Mr. Colin Shive of Tharrington Smith, he mentioned that billing municipalities is the type of issue the Board would expect to consult him about. In this case, because the flow of money is from the municipalities to the County, he does not want the County attorney, who is now Curt Euler, to be the only attorney to review the process. The money will flow from the municipalities to the County. The proposal protects the County and the County Attorney as independent parties.
 - Mr. Shultz said that as an attorney being asked about a conversation they did not participate in, he would expect some sort of summary to be prepared. He is not certain how the open meetings laws apply to attorney-client privileged communications.
 - Mr. Aceto said having the attorney prepare a summary of the document gets around the privileged communications issue because it is the opinion of the attorney about the document, which can then be used to begin the meeting and it would then be part of the public record. If the attorney sees a problem, then they can suggest a private meeting.

- Ms. Duncan said she imagines they will proceed as they have in the past when they consulted Mr. Euler.

IV. Resolution Recognizing Karen Brinson Bell

- The draft was circulated among the members. Mr. Aceto moved to adopt the letter as written and to ask the Director to forward it to Ms. Brinson Bell. The motion passed 5/0
- Mr. Quinn read the letter to the observers.
- Ms. Duncan said that she had invited Ms. Brinson Bell to attend the meeting but she could not. However, she was flattered and grateful for the kind thoughts of the Board and staff.
- Ms. Duncan said that Board appointments occur next week and not everyone will be returning. She wanted to take the opportunity to thank the Board for serving this term especially. The challenges everyone faced after Helene were unprecedented. The Board made the elections happen even with the devastation. The citizens appreciated their efforts because they turned out in record numbers. She noted specific contributions of each member as she presented each with a Dumpster Fire Dog award, which the staff present each year to someone who steps into a disaster to help above and beyond to keep the mission moving forward. The pin shows a dog holding a cup of coffee in the midst of a fire saying “everything is fine”. The members were very appreciative.

V. Update on Retention of Outside Legal Counsel

- Mr. Quinn said the agreement drafted to date is boilerplate retention agreement. One of the questions is what is in the details. At the last meeting the Board discussed details such as travel funds to visit Asheville and pay rates for other types of professionals in the firm. In talking with Mr. Shive, Mr. Quinn learned that at present, Mr. Shive does not plan to come to Asheville, preferring to have all communications through phone and email. Also, he does not envision using other professionals, largely because he is the only person in the firm who works on issues of this sort. His rate is \$285/hour. However, if an issue, such as potential litigation, developed that required more or different services, the agreement would need to be revisited.
- Mr. Quinn further noted that he did not want to sign the agreement prior to involving the new Board which might make them feel as if they have been painted into a corner. However, staff are nearing the point where they want to meet with the municipalities.
 - Ms. Stein asked whether the current budget had a line item for legal.
 - Ms. Duncan said it is in the budget as a contingency rather than a line item because they missed the deadline to submit additional line items. However, money can be moved around to meet any needs they have. Moreover, the County knows the Board is looking into retaining outside counsel. The goal is no surprises.

Meeting adjourned 4:20 pm

V. Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 22, 2025 at noon

- **County Courthouse**
- **The conference room at 35 Woodfin Street is not finished so meetings will continue to be at 59 Woodfin Place until further notice.**