

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

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

Date & Time: September 4, 2025 3:30 PM

Names of Board Members Attending:

Glenda Weinert, Chairman (R) Mary Ann Braine, Secretary (R)
Jake Quinn, Board Member (D) Sally Stein: Board Member (D)
Courtney Blossman, Board Member (R)

Names of Buncombe Co Staff Attending:

Corinne Duncan, Director; Neggy Fox, Deputy Director; Anna Katherine Moore, Administrative Coordinator and Clerk to the Board; Karen Rae, Recruiting and Outreach Coordinator; Victoria Pickens, Business Administrator; Devin Whitney, Elections Technical Specialist; Ryan Oliver, Elections Technical Specialist
Also attending: Tim Love, Assistant County Manager; Robert Brown, BC General Services Project Manager; Mike Mace, BC General Services Director

Location of Meeting: 59 Woodfin Place, Asheville NC

Observers:

None online. 7 observers in total: 1 Common Cause, 1 Democracy NC, 2 LWVAB, the others unknown

I. Closed session to interview legal counsel

(The firm of Allan Stahl and Killbourne was selected and approved 5/o)

II. Approval of Agenda

Approved without objection

III. Minutes (G.S. § 143-318.10) – for 8/5 and 8/19 were approved without objection

IV. Office Updates – Corinne Duncan, Director

- Devin Whitney got his certification in Salt Lake City and was congratulated.
- Neggy Fox was recognized by the County
- National Voter Registration Day is September 16 and Elections Services is partnering with Buncombe County Libraries to mark the day.
- There are two open positions. Clerk to the Board (have interviewed) and Absentee Coordinator (posted)
- At the new board room at 35 Woodfin the AV system will be installed the week of 9/15. Then training will occur before it is put into use. The old board room will be available as long as needed.

- Ballot proofing for the upcoming election has been completed so Sample Ballots should be available next week.
- ADA Survey – Ryan Oliver:
 - Voting sites must be evaluated for ADA compliance every other year
 - 75 of the 80 sites have been done
 - Some are still pending but the sites needed for the Municipal Election are all OK
 - There is one site that will probably have to be moved out-of-precinct

V: Appointment of Municipal Early Voting Poll Workers Karen Rae (G.S. § 163-166.35(a))

- (This item was actually moved before Office updates since Karen had to be elsewhere).
- Ms. Rae received poll worker nominations from the party chairs (7 D and 7 R)
- She made assignments out of that list and they were approved by the party chairs
- Ms. Rae passed out sheets listing the assignments and the Board approved 5/0

VI. Warehouse Relocation Discussion

- Ms. Duncan introduced the discussion by noting that facilities have been under discussion for years. The ES location at 77 McDowell was not ideal; the Interchange Building was better; 35 Woodfin is challenging
- Mr. Love began by noting that today's discussion will be limited to the plans for the Warehouse (aka the Storage Facility)
- Mr. Brown introduced himself as a registered architect and project manager. He presented a series of slides:
 - Advance Planning, Storage Needs
 - 40 County Associated Departments composed of 45 groups were separately interviewed
 - 28 of the 35 identified needs for storage space
 - 17 groups confirmed they do not need additional storage space
 - Advanced Planning, Storage, Groups Not Needing Space
 - (The 17 groups not needing storage were listed)
 - Advanced Planning, Departments That Need the Most Sq. Ft.

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|---|----------------|
| ▪ Election Services | 28,560 sq. ft. |
| ▪ Training & Mock Elections Multipurpose Area | 3,581 sq. ft. |
| ▪ Sheriff's Dept. | 13,466 sq. ft. |
| ▪ Emergency Mgmt. Services | 9,592 sq. ft. |
| ▪ Libraries | 8,912 sq. ft. |
| ▪ Mobile & Preparedness Teams | 8,852 sq. ft. |
| ▪ Surplus and Records Mgmt. | 7,840 |
 - Advanced Planning, Options to Meet Needs
 - Initial total are requirement identified in Advanced Planning

- Using Standard and High-Density Storage 102,900 sq. ft.
- Options to Meet Needs:
 - Build new building, Buy Existing Building, Lease Existing Building and Renovate
- Footprint:
 - Single Building or Multiple Buildings
- Estimated Cost:
 - New Buildings Estimated Total Project Cost (\$350 - \$400 per sq. ft) Includes building, parking, generator and all soft cost
 - Purchase Building (\$90 per sq. ft. older - \$140 per sq. ft. newer) Plus possible uplift cost \$75 - \$125 per sq. ft.
 - Lease Building (\$8.50 - \$10.00 per sq. ft.) or (approx.. \$850,000 to \$1,000,000 per year)
- Advanced Planning, Next Steps – Complete Advanced Planning
 - Post Advanced Planning Evaluate Best Option to Pursue:
 - Build a New Building as identified in this study
 - Buy an Existing Building and Renovate to accommodate scope identified in this study
 - Lease a Building or Buildings to accommodate scope identified in this study
 - Establish a Project Budget for the Selected Option
 - If New Building
 - Begin Design
 - If Purchase Building
 - Continue to Review Properties
 - If Lease Space
 - Continue to Review Properties
- Total Project Estimated Schedule Key Dates
 - Sep/Oct 2025
 - Storage Facility Advance Planning Complete and Budget Estimate Provided
 - Dec 2026
 - If Project Approved to Move Forward, then include in Submission for FY 2027 Capital Funding for Construction
 - Feb 2027
 - Elections @ 50 Coxe Relocated. ID Bureau @52 Coxe Already Relocated to Interchange / 59 Woodfin
 - Coxe Ave. Affordable Housing Development Site Available to Begin
 - Sept 2027
 - Complete Design and be Ready for September 2027 Bid. Design Fees Already FY24 Funded
 - May 2029

- Storage Facility Construction Complete Approx. 18 Months
- July 2029
 - Planned Groups to begin Move to New Storage Facility
- Priorities Discussed for Elections Warehouse Services & Equipment Relocation
 - Location:
 - Proximity to highway / roads
 - Proximity to voting locations
 - Easy to find
 - Commute time between buildings
 - On-site driving pattern (i.e., loop)
 - Systems / Amenities:
 - Parking
 - Facility Security / number of external users
 - Garage Doors / Dock Access
 - Connectivity / internet access
 - Power Redundancy
 - Climate Control
 - Other Considerations:
 - Consolidation with All Port storage & functions
 - Scalability / expansion
 - Training space
 - Term
 - Good lighting in parking and facility
 - Enough restrooms for election night
 - Move dates:
 - Temporary location move February 2027
 - Permanent location move February 2031
- Elections Area Allocations
 - Current Areas for Like Operations, Storage, and Training: 21,981 sq. ft.
 - 50 Coxe Ave. (10,621 SF)
 - Valley Street Allport 3rd Floor (1,960 SF)
 - Valley Street Allport 5th Floor (5,300 SF)
 - Training Space Rotated between 40 Coxe, AB Tech, and other locations (4,100 SF +)
 - Advanced Planning Draft Building Area Allocation Request: Approximately 32,000 Square Feet
 - Full Time Storage and Operations (28,456 SF)
 - Elections Prioritized Training and Multipurpose Areas (3,581 SF)

Area Increase Intended to Resolve Unmet Existing Operational Needs / Space Inadequacies, Training Space Versatility and 10 years of Operational Growth and Storage Increase Projection

- Advanced Planning Parking Allocation Request:
 - 100 to 120 Standard Parking Spaces including Box Truck and Van Parking
 - Loading Dock
 - Covered Supply Pick Up & Drop Off Area

The Entire Facility will be Classified as Secure. Elections' Areas will be Constructed as High Security.

A lengthy discussion followed the presentation. All Board members weighed in with reservations about the plan, many of which were rooted in their disappointment with the way the move to 35 Woodfin was handled by the county. Mr. Quinn recalled a previous strategic plan which would have moved Election Services to a newly built facility of their own. That plan was abandoned and there has been no strategic and comprehensive plan to replace it. There were objections to having to move to a temporary location while the new facility is being built, and objections to Election Services being lumped in, again, with other county departments. They are a State Agency, not a County Department, and are bound by a thick book of State Regulations which dictates how they must operate. Mr. Love reminded the Board that this presentation was limited to the Warehouse move only. The Board made it clear that they really would like to have their own facility as they were promised in the past, and this might be an opportunity to fix the problems with 35 Woodfin. Ms. Duncan said that the 35 Woodfin move would have gone better if ES has been asked for buy-in at every stage of the process. She suggested the need for a formal process this time around to gather buy-in from the Board. Mr. Quinn said that the Board intends to be very hands-on during this new process and that he would like to have a strong relationship with the County but the trust level will have to be improved in order for that to happen. Chairperson Weinert expressed appreciation for all the work that Mr. Brown had put in on the plan and emphasized the need for Board participation in the process.

VII. Present Municipal Billing (G.S. § 163-284) – Victoria Pickens

- Ms. Pickens handed out an update to the Municipal Billing plan.
- Because the statute was written for odd-year Municipal Elections, it is difficult to apply to even-year Municipal Elections.
- The SBOE says that they can only bill for “actual cost” in even years, so the models they have been using will not apply.
- The odd years will be billed the same as always (\$20,000 - \$30,000)
- Even years will now be billed at about \$600.

- Ms. Duncan has spoken with SBOE Chair Sam Hayes about a possible legislative tweak.

VIII. Voter Challenges Hearing (G.S. § 163-85 (d)) – Corinne Duncan

- There was a preliminary hearing at the last meeting on 8/19.
- This one is a quasi-judicial hearing, requiring witnesses to be sworn in.
- The person who brought the challenges, Thomas Neuhauser (?), was sworn in.
- He explained that he had undertaken an audit of the Buncombe County Voter Rolls to look for voters who should be removed. This batch of 10 names consists of voters he says are deceased. All would have been 98 years old or older.
- Ms. Duncan, having been sworn in, said that none of these voters have voted since that date of their death certificates. Notifications were sent to all inviting them (or a family member) to this hearing.
- Most of the names were on the non-matching list.
- 6 were name mismatches, 2 were DOB mismatches, 1 was not on the list, and 1 had been on the list but was missed.
- The names were called and nobody was present representing any of them
- The Board voted 5/0 to sustain all the challenges.

IX. Next Meeting Date

Wednesday, September 24, at 3:30 PM at 59 Woodfin Place.