

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

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

**Date & Time:** October 14, 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; Gabrielle Corey, Administrative Coordinator and Clerk to the Board; Karen Rae, Recruiting and Outreach Coordinator and; Devin Whitney, Elections Technical Specialist; Bria Bailey, Elections Technical Specialist

**Location of Meeting:** 59 Woodfin Place, Asheville NC

**Observers:**

No number cited for online observers. 7 observers in total: 1 Common Cause, 2 Democrats, 2 LWVAB; the others unknown.

**I. Approval of Agenda**

Approved without objection.

**II. Minutes (G.S. § 143-318.10)**

Approved without objection.

**III. Office Updates –Corinne Duncan, Director**

- Today is Absentee meeting number 2 and there are 2 ballots to be reviewed.
- Early voting begins this coming Thursday, October 16.
- Tomorrow will do our first Face Book live event which will bring press coverage to the municipal elections.
- The Board room at 35 Woodfin Street is looking good and should be available for the October 21 Board meeting.
- Training for begins this Friday which should be a good test of the audio quality.
- Tomorrow staff will set up 50 Coxe Avenue for early voting on Thursday.
- Staff have been coordinating with Emergency Services and have that lined up. Ryan Oliver has been transferred to head up that operation.

- Later in the meeting, Ms. Duncan mentioned another update. Specifically, following the second round of interviews, she said an offer had been made to a candidate for the position of Absentee Coordinator.
- She also reinforced Ms. Fox's instruction (below) to remain silent when thinking of a voter's name to protect privacy.
- Ms. Duncan reminded the Members that when voters who share a household return completed absentee ballots in the same ballot style but swap the return envelopes resulting in mismatched CID numbers, the Board has previously decided to review the ballots at the same meeting.

#### **IV. Absentee Ballot Review (G.S. § 163-230.1(f))– Neggy Fox**

- Ms. Fox said there are two absentee ballots to review.
- Ms. Fox passed out copies of the Absentee Ballot Review checklist to all the Board Members. The checklist was developed a couple of years ago and has been updated since then.
- The ballots to be reviewed today are local. Therefore, Ms. Fox said she will wait to review with the Board the checklist sections on Overseas Civilian and Military ballots.
- In addition to the checklist, Ms. Fox distributed a list with the names of the voters with their completed ballots attached.
- She instructed the Board to compare the name on the ballots to the name and the list and to do so silently to protect the privacy of the voter. If the names match, the Member is to mark it checked on the checklist.
  - Next Board Members are to review the ballot return envelope for signs of tampering and to ensure that all required information is provided, such as the signatures of the voter, the 2 witnesses or 1 notary, and anyone who assisted the voter in completing their ballot.
  - After that, the reviewing Member should look for a copy of the voter's ID or a completed exception form in the clear envelope.
- If all required information is on the return envelope and the clear plastic pocket, the Member should tap the envelope on the table to move it to the bottom so that the envelope can be opened without cutting the ballot.
- To review the ballot, the Member needs to compare the voter ID numbers on the ballot and list to determine whether they match.
  - Next the Member can unfold the ballot and lay it flat on the table.
  - Ballots need to be kept in order by precinct and should be kept with other ballots from the same precinct.
- To date the staff have sent out 29 locally requested ballots; 44 Civilian Overseas ballots; and 7 Military ballots.
- A new procedure for 2025 is that for voters who checked on their 2024 Absentee Ballot request form that they have never lived in the United States, reviewers are to ensure that the voter cast a decision only on federal races, not for any state or local races.

- This provision is part of the resolution to a legal challenge for the US Department of Justice.
- Staff have sent letters developed by the State Board of Elections to 3 individuals who checked the box for never having lived in the United States to provide the voters the opportunity to change the checkmark if it were made in error. These 3 voters, like almost all the Absentee ballot requests, were completed in 2024.
  - Mr. Quinn asked whether the staff maintained a list of voters who had checked the box. Ms. Fox said no, but that staff review the completed form before they send a ballot to help ensure that voters who checked the box are given the opportunity to correct any error before they are sent a ballot.
  - Ms. Stein asked whether a list of voters who checked the box could be made public.
    - Ms. Duncan said there were many rules around such a release but she will check on whether such information could be released.
  - Ms. Stein then asked whether citizens have a resource to determine which other states have enacted such a prohibition on voters who have never lived in the U.S.
    - Ms. Duncan said, not that she was aware of but that resources such as Election line have comparative information about state voting procedures.
  - An observer asked about her grandchildren who were born in North Carolina and lived here until they were about a month old but who are now of voting age are eligible to vote in national offices in North Carolina.
    - Ms. Fox said the law reads as though you are ineligible to vote in state and local elections if you have never set foot in the state of North Carolina. But she said a direct answer to her question would require speculation on her part.
  - Ms. Fox said that another new procedure in its second year is that absentee ballots need to be returned to the Board of Elections by 7:30 p.m. on election night. The request date for an absentee ballot has been moved back by a week, which means that a request must be made 1 week before Election Day instead of 2 weeks before.
  - Ms. Fox divided the Board Members into 2 bipartisan teams to review the ballots. Each team consisted of a member who had reviewed Absentee Ballots in the past with one who had not.
  - When the Members had completed their review and returned the ballots with documentation to her, Ms. Fox gave the ballots to Ms. Baily to scan into the DS 200.
  - An observer asked for an overview of the review process.
    - Ms. Duncan said that is part of why the Board has so many meetings to review absentee ballots as they come in to ensure that all the steps are completed correctly. If anything needs to be corrected with the ballot, staff will reach out the following day by phone or email or email to try

to get it corrected by the day after the election although legislation has changed how the process works.

- A follow up question from the same observer asked whether a list of the names of voters whose absentee ballots needed correction was made available to the public and the parties.
- Ms. Duncan said that each day of Early Voting staff prepare and make public, a list of names of voters whose absentee ballots had been received, but she did not think that names were flagged because of problems that arose during the review.
- Ms. Bailly returned the successfully scanned ballots and documentation to Ms. Fox who circulated it among the Board Members for their review to confirm that all documentation and the correct number of ballots were in the envelope.
  - Ms. Braine asked whether the flash drive was also in the envelope. Ms. Fox said that the DS 200 does not use a flash drive like the DS 2500 which keeps a running tally.
  - The DS 200 will be used for all absentee ballots.
  - This led to a discussion of the machine and the risk of moving it during Early Voting. Mr. Quinn advocated for keeping the review process at 59 Woodfin Place to avoid any risks from moving the machine. Ms. Duncan advocated for moving the machine to allow staff to more closely simulate the actual operation of an election at 35 Woodfin Street, which would point out areas of weakness in advance of the heavy turnout for the 2026 midterms. Ms. Duncan admitted that moving the machine will require much more chain of custody work, much like what staff did to get the completed ballots to 59 Woodfin Place this morning.
  - Mr. Quinn is unhappy that the county has not yet included the need to move the scanner and the extra chain of custody work in its planning. Ms. Stein asked how the Board could be satisfied that everything about the machine is good following the move and whether Board members could observe the move. Ms. Duncan said yes. Mr. Quinn then said that such transparency helps the public have faith in the electoral process.
- The Board members and Chair signed the envelope. Dr. Wienert sealed the envelope which Ms. Fox said that the envelope will be put in a fire proof safe that is under 24/7 camera surveillance in an area that is limited to Elections Staff only.
- A motion was made to approve the 2 reviewed Absentee Ballots and passed 5/0.
- Ms. Blossman asked whether her signature is required because she will be out of town next week.
  - Ms. Duncan said that a majority vote is sufficient. It is not possible to put a ballot on screen for off site review. In small elections the presence of all Board members is not as critical as it is in large elections.

- Mr. Quinn said that his review of the letter developed by the State Board for the County send to Voters who indicated in their 2024 Absentee Ballot request that they had never lived in North Carolina raised questions. Specifically, the letter says “if you checked the box” when, in fact, there is no “if” to it. The voters received the letter because they had checked the box. It would be better if the staff could send the voter a copy of the form that had the box checked.
  - Ms. Duncan said they would bring that issue to the attention of the State Board.
  - Ms. Blossman asked whether a person who had lived out of the US for an extended time, could they vote in that country. Several people answered that possibly but it would depend on the country. Some people had dual citizenship and could vote.

## **V. Finalize Early Voting Plan for Primary – Neggy Fox**

- Ms. Fox said this is the fifth time the Board has reviewed the proposed Early Voting Plan for the 2026 Primary in March. The Board will vote on the plan today.
- The proposed plan had 10 voting sites which would be open on Saturday, February 21 and Sunday, February 22. Weekend hours are 10 am to 3 pm (one shift). In addition, sites would be open on the last Saturday, November 1 from 8 am to 3 pm as required by law.
- Staff reached out to Big Ivy as a possible site for North Asheville but have not heard back. Jupiter Fire Station is also a possible site but data show that most voters in that area vote on Election Day.
  - For the 3 precincts in the area that will be open on Election Day, the overall growth in registered voters has been 13.59 percent from 2010 to 10/8/2025 to a total of 7,782. Their options, if this site isn’t used for Early Voting, are to vote on Election Day, Vote Early, or Vote Absentee.
- Upper Hominy Fire Station, a possible site in West Asheville, is available and reserved.
  - For the 3 precincts in the area that will be open on Election Day, the overall growth in registered voters has been 17.25 percent from 2010 to 10/8/2025 to a total of 13,014. Their options, if this site isn’t used for Early Voting, are to vote on Election Day, Vote Early, or Vote Absentee.
- For North Asheville, the choice is between the North Asheville Library and UNCA, both of which have been reserved.
  - The UNCA site is at Highsmith Student Union which was used in 2016 requires voters to take stairs or an elevator to access the voting room.
  - On the plus side, UNCA is working on making parking available to voters.
  - On the minus side, it is on campus and voters will have to navigate campus traffic.
  - Several comments were made about a UNCA building on WT Weaver Boulevard that was large, with ample parking but is no long available. The site was used during Helene. Mr. Quinn urged Ms. Fox to see if UNCA could make that site available again.

- Typically, both UNCA and the Library are not open at the same time, except in Presidential election years.
- The library is on a main road, easy to access, but has limited parking and a small voting area.
- For South Asheville, both the Friendship Center and the South Buncombe Library are available and reserved, both of which have been used before.
  - The South Buncombe Library has good but not great parking and it is heavily used by patrons.
  - The Friendship Center is further north, so it would be a longer drive for voters in Arden and Fletcher.
  - Ms. Fox recommends the South Buncombe Library.
- The Board now must decide on having 10 or 11 sites and on the weekend dates and hours as well as whether to choose the North Asheville Library or the UNCA.
- Mr. Quinn said that the North Asheville Library is easily one of the top 4 early voting sites despite its challenges. In contrast, the UNCA site has never gotten close to being in the top 4. In the last General Election, a citizen approached nearby businesses to offer parking, which made the process go smoothly. Mr. Quinn saw the person today and would be happy to see if he would help this year.
- Both Dr. Wienert and Ms. Stein consider the cons of UNCA make it less desirable than the Library.
- Before voting, Members heard public comment. A voter from the neighborhood promoted the WT Weaver Boulevard as a future site and offered to do whatever she could to help. She said that site made it easy for students and area residents. Mr. Quinn said it also made it easy for the parties, campaigns, the poll workers, the election protection folks, and the observers. Dr. Wienert said the Board will continue to work on getting access to the WT Weaver Boulevard site but today the choice is between the Library or the Student Union.
- Another resident said that in 2020, 13 percent of voters used the Library even though the parking there is extremely difficult. Although she prefers the UNCA site, the numbers suggest more voters will be served at the Library.
- Mr. Quinn said he is considering approaching the City Council about why we don't have a functioning North Asheville Community Center, which he would like to see as a point in the next mayoral election. Private interests use the Center all the time but it is not being used for the community.
- Ms. Duncan said that this discussion serves to point out that we need to find bigger and better sites, especially the time
- A motion to approve the North Asheville Library, passed 5/0.
- A motion to approve the South Buncombe Library, passed 5/0
- Ms. Braine said that we approved the Upper Hominy site merits being the 11<sup>th</sup> site for the Primary then consider Jupiter for the General Election. Ms. Blossman said she did not like the fact that voters there must drive so far.

However, Ms. Fox said that on Election Day they have their own precinct. Mr. Quinn said that the data can inform us and we should open sites that have been used and not opening sites that would be underutilized.

- Ms. Duncan said Early Voting is the most popular form of voting and we need to be geographically distributed to make it easy and minimize burdens on voters.
- A motion to approve Upper Hominy as the 11<sup>th</sup> site, passed 5/0.
- A motion to approve the weekend dates and hours suggested by the staff, passed 5/0.
- An observer asked whether these sites were compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Ms. Duncan said yes, ADA compliance is a requirement.
- Ms. Fox said the next step, since the vote was unanimous, is to submit the plan to the State Board where it should be easily approved. She is not certain when they will hear back but as soon as they do, staff will begin promoting the sites after the November 4<sup>th</sup> election.

#### **VI. Update on Facilities Planning – Dr. Wienert and Board**

- Dr. Wienert took the engagement letter with original signatures and supporting documentation to the attorneys and asked about next steps.
  - Mr. Brandon Freeman, our attorney proposed coming to the next Board meeting for a closed session discussion either before 2:30 or after 5:30. She requested the Members come prepared with their questions and concerns.
  - Ms. Blossman said she will submit a written statement since she will have to miss the meeting. However, because she will be in a different time zone, she could attend a 5:30 meeting remotely.
  - Mr. Quinn said he wants to understand the agenda for the meeting. He likes the getting to know you part and discussing the memorandum of understanding to determine whether all the members are of the same understanding. The next step would then to meet with the County to help ensure that the County and the members share a common understanding.
  - Ms. Blossman agreed with Mr. Quinn.
  - The Board agreed to meet at 5:30. Dr. Wienert asked Ms. Blossman to share in advance her written statement just in case something does not work with the technology.

**Adjourn: 5:00 pm**

#### **VII. Next Meeting Date**

- Tuesday, October 21, at 3:30 PM at **35 Woodfin Street basement Board room.**