

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

**Monitor Names:** Elaine Elam, George Elam, Cheryl Williams

**Date & Time:** May 19, 2026, 3:30 PM

**Names of Board Members Attending:**

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

**Names of Buncombe Co Staff Attending:**

Corinne Duncan, Director; Gabrielle Corey, Elections Administrative Coordinator; Neggy Fox, Assistant Director; Rachel Wonderlich, Recruiting and Outreach Coordinator; Amy Broughton, County Attorney

**Location of Meeting:** 35 Woodfin Street, Asheville NC

**Observers:** 9 total including the person who presented the 30 challenges, 4 Democrat, 4 LWVAB.

**I. Approval of Agenda** – passed 5/0

**II. Minutes (G.S. § 143-318.10)** Minutes for April 21: passed 5/0

**III. Office Updates – Corrine Duncan**

- Ms. Duncan said that today the County Manager is presenting the proposed budget to the County Commissioners, which means the budget dashboard is available online. Board Members have been sent an email with the budget dashboard link.
- Election season is here with candidate filing to open on June 8.
- The Office will be closed on Monday, May 25 and Friday, June 19.
- Ms. Duncan reminded Members that Buncombe County had been chosen very early in the year to be part of a State Board pilot audit of deceased voter removal. The Office will work with the State Board’s internal audit unit who will conduct a site visit on June 24.
  - Ms. Stein asked which other counties were included.

- Ms. Duncan said she had asked that question but has not yet received an answer. She will update the Board at the next meeting.
- Ms. Duncan said that Dr. Weinert and Ms. Stein could update the Members on their meeting with Tim Love, Assistant County Manager. Ms. Duncan and Ms. Corey also attended the meeting. Ms. Stein deferred to Dr. Weinert for the update, saying she would fill in any gaps.
  - Dr. Weinert said that 50 Coxe would not be ready for Election Services to move into until 2029 after the Presidential Election.
  - Plans to move into the Canoe Lane warehouse are in limbo and does not look like it will affect Election Services even if other parts of the project move forward.
  - The working group is still looking for space that Election Services could move into.
  - Dr. Weinert said that Ms. Duncan and the staff would prefer that a move take place in “downtime” and asked Ms. Duncan to elaborate.
    - Ms. Duncan said that 2027 was the “downtime” for the office so planning for a move in 2029 will begin in 2027, given how long it takes to build a new site or retrofit an existing site.
    - Mr. Quinn asked whether the County had given any certainty about how long the Office will have to plan. Ms. Duncan said no.
    - Ms. Stein suggested that perhaps past plans for moving could be adjusted for the next move.
    - Mr. Quinn said the basic point is that it’s not going to be like the last move when the Office was given a deadline lacking any rationale. Ms. Duncan and her staff graciously bent over backward to accommodate the County. This move will be different.
    - Dr. Weinert said the working group will keep the Board updated on meetings between the working group and Mr. Love.
      - She invited any Board members who wish to attend meetings to do so.
      - Ms. Braine asked when the next meeting will be held. Dr. Weinert said August 5.

- The Board agreed to invite Mr. Love to the next meeting to provide an update on plans.

#### **IV. Poll Worker Survey Summary: Rachel Wonderlich**

- Ms. Wonderlich said the Office conducts 2 poll worker surveys for each election; 1 for Early Voting sites and 1 for Election Day. Ms. Corey passed out copies to the Members.
  - Early Voting Survey: 70 percent response rate
    - To the first question about confidence in elections in Buncombe County all respondents said they strongly agreed.
    - To the second question of why did you decide to work the polls, which allowed for more than one response, most replied Civic duty. Second, 23 percent selected money as a reason which is up from 21 percent in 2024.
    - To the third question, regarding on the onboarding process, responses 94 percent provided positive responses largely citing the excellence of Elections staff. Negative responses concerned the length of time to complete paperwork.
    - To the next question regarding support from the Office, including the help line and geocoding questions were positive with most citing very or mostly helpful. No one cited negative comments such as not at all helpful.
      - Ms. Stein asked how that compared to the 2024 survey. Ms. Wonderlich said the question was worded differently in 2024 so the results are not directly comparable.
        - Despite that, both years were generally positive responses.
        - Ms. Duncan said that the call center experience was quite different this year because it was all housed in one room as opposed to being spread out as it was in 2024.
    - To the last question on what Elections staff could do to make the experience better, most responses were very positive. A couple respondents made suggestions for improvements to North and South Buncombe sites.
      - Poll workers prefer to be busy than to be waiting for voters to arrive.
      - They noticed that voters were uneasy about stating their party affiliation and didn't like that sample ballots weren't provided this year for the first time. For the next elections workers will be trained to use a QR code for voters who want to print out a ballot.

- The most positive part of the experience is supporting democracy and voting, also the teamwork and camaraderie that develop.
- The least positive part included having to wait for voters to arrive and not being able to park near the polling site.
- Election Day Voting Survey: 59 percent response rate, which was down a little from 65 percent in 2024. The responses generally mirror the responses to the Early Voting Survey.
  - To the first question about confidence in elections in Buncombe County all respondents said they strongly agreed.
  - To the second question of why did you decide to work the polls both judges and poll workers mostly replied Civic duty.
  - As to tenure, 25 percent said it was their first time, which was up a bit from 2024 when 21 percent were new, and 75 percent said they had worked elections before.
  - Comments were very positive, although poll workers reported confusion among voters about differences between Early Voting and Election Day Voting sites, which the Office has been working on.
  - Civic duty was the most often cited motivation to work in the elections.
  - On boarding responses also listed the amount of time to complete paper work and the need to bring documentation to the Office.
  - Regarding Election Day training, all respondents said it was mostly or generally helpful.
    - Poll workers would like to spend more training time on transfers into and out of the precinct and on the end of the day procedures.
    - Judges were the only workers trained on provisional ballots and responded that completing them took more time than expected.
  - With regard to language barriers, only 1.5 percent responded that they had experienced difficulties compared to 7.5 percent in 2024.
  - The overall rating for the Office was 4.7 out of 5 compared to 4.5 out of 5 in 2024.
- Dr. Weinert commended the staff for conducting the surveys and congratulated them for receiving such high marks, especially

regarding language barriers in a county as linguistically diverse as Buncombe County. Kudos to all.

- Ms. Duncan said it is important to gather the feedback and see trends over time to the changes the Office makes as a result. The poll workers are the face of the Office to the public.

## **V. Badge Access Resolution**

- Ms. Corey passed out copies of the draft resolution with suggested changes to Board members.
- Ms. Duncan said at the last public meeting the Board had asked staff to prepare a draft resolution on badge access for Members. The draft was sent to Members for their review and today is the discussion of the draft. A second draft with suggested changes was given to all Board Members.
- Dr. Weinert suggested putting the 2 documents side by side and discussing each item.
  - Item 1 – no changes between the copies.
  - Item 2 – no changes between the copies.
  - Item 3 – added “Under the general supervision of the Board and the Director of Elections” and “the Board delegated certain statutory required duties to the Director”
    - Ms. Stein didn’t see what value the changes added and questioned by they needed to be made.
    - Dr. Weinert said that Ms. Broughton is fine with the changes.
  - Item 4 – added warehouse and whatever location it may be in the future to the list of areas where Members seek access.
    - Ms. Duncan said adding the warehouse may present problems because it is not always staffed and the Board should not have access when it is not staffed.
    - Ms. Stein asked how the Members would know when staff are present.
    - Mr. Quinn asked whether the access system could be set to restrict access at certain times.
    - Ms. Duncan said the warehouse has an alarm that the first staff in has to disarm and she isn’t certain the system will allow the kind of changes Mr. Quinn mentioned, even though she likes the idea.
    - Ms. Blossman said that farther along in the draft it mentions that Members can only access areas when staff are present.

- Letter A: “Members shall ask questions of staff as part of their oversight responsibilities.”
  - Mr. Quinn said it presents a problem because Members should not be looking over the shoulders of staff. It is both unprofessional and disrespectful. He prefers that Members direct their questions to staff through the Director. He will not sign a resolution with wording that allows Members to quiz staff.
  - Ms. Stein raised the issue that individual conversations between staff and Members are not heard by other Members and should not take place because of the potential for miscommunication.
  - Dr. Weinert said it is imperative that communications go through the Chair or the Director. It’s one thing to observe staff at work and another to talk with them about their work. It’s the beginning of a slippery slope.
  - Ms. Blossman asked what Members were to do when they had questions.
    - Dr. Weinert suggested writing the question down and relaying it to the Director or Chair.
    - Mr. Quinn said the situation is comparable to poll observers who go to the Chief Judge with any questions they have.
    - Ms. Stein said she has great concerns about Members having conversations with staff that are outside of the awareness of the rest of the Board.
    - Dr. Weinert said her job is similar in that she does not ask questions of the stores under her but instead goes to the General Manager who is their direct supervisor.
    - Mr. Quinn said it always makes sense to follow the chain of command to help ensure communications are consistent.
    - Ms. Blossman asked whether, in that case, the Members could only access staff areas when the Director is present. Mr. Quinn said no.
    - Ms. Stein repeated that Members will need to write their questions down and check with the Director.
    - Ms. Blossman said Members should not be compared to poll observers because the Board has oversight

responsibility and should have access to just about everything.

- After some discussion, the Board agreed to strike the part about asking questions of the staff and insert language that Members who have observations, questions, or concerns are to notify the Director.
- Mr. Quinn said the MOU with the County says Members shall not interrupt staff in the performance of their duties and if Members ask staff about what they are doing, then, by definition, the Member is interrupting them. He will not sign any resolution that allows Member's questions directed to staff.
- Ms. Duncan said describing the flow of communications protects the Board from instances when she, or staff are "thinking out loud" because staff interpret it as a direction. The power differential between Members and the Board should not be ignored.
- Everyone agreed.
- Ms. Broughton said it is important for all Members and Ms. Duncan to agree on the wording but legally approval of the resolution does not require unanimity.
- Ms. Stein asked about the section in the original draft about notifying the Director when Members plan to access space.
  - Dr. Weinert said it was stricken because if you must notify, the what is the point of having access.
- Ms. Blossman said it is not nice to require the Board to call in advance because the Board runs the whole show.
  - Mr. Quinn said that the Board is a committee and does not act as individuals. When Members speak directly to staff they are acting as individuals and not as a committee.
- Mr. Quinn fails to understand why the Board is getting so deeply in the weeds on this. Interaction with individual staff is not what Boards typically do. It introduces an element of risk to the operations which is not helpful.
- Ms. Blossman said the Director is totally under the Board and it makes no sense not to have access.
- Dr. Weinert called the Members back to the task.

- Item B: No access to staff computers, desks, and file cabinets unless the Director/staff is present. Double secure space.
  - Ms. Stein asked what was stricken.
  - Dr. Weinert said the requirement that such access require a bi-partisan team.
  - Mr. Quinn and Ms. Stein objected stating that because the Board conducts its work in a bipartisan manner, access to file cabinets and other work spaces should be as well. The optics of individual access are not good.
  - Ms. Braine asked what happens when the other party refuses.
    - Ms. Stein said that may be an issue with future Boards but not with this one.
    - Mr. Quinn noted that if a future Board finds the requirement unnecessary, they can make a new resolution.
- Item 5: Badge access is recorded and monitored by Buncombe County.
  - Ms. Duncan said this issue is, like many others, striving for a balance between transparency and security. Some Members feel access is necessary. Personally, she likes the bi-partisan requirement for both the Office and the warehouse.
  - All agreed that bi-partisan presence is very important. Ms. Blossman and Ms. Duncan specifically said that transparency is important to protect the Board.
- Dr. Weinert said she would give Ms. Corey an annotated copy of the resolution, so that Ms. Corey can confirm the agreed upon changes. Then she will circulate it to the Members who will vote on the resolution at the next public meeting.
- Ms. Duncan reminded the Board that they meet again on Thursday, May 21 and can vote in that public meeting.
  - The Board decided not to vote on the resolution without first seeing the changes.

## **VI. Discuss Board Priorities – Corrine Duncan**

- Ms. Duncan reminded the Board that the General Assembly is still in session so changes may still occur. From her notes, Ms. Duncan assembled a list of priorities and would like to confirm with the Board that these are the correct priorities to complete before September.
  - The Early Voting Plan
  - Contingency and Emergency Planning that was deferred in 2024

- Badge Access to Election Services office space
- Informational session for Board from Human Resources and Budget Directors scheduled for Thursday, May 21.
- Monitoring facility plans for the warehouse
- Adding an addendum to the MOU with the County that the Election Services Director is the hiring authority for the Election Services Office, not the County Human Resources Manager
- Members expressed support for completing these actions.
- Ms. Stein asked whether regular reports on the activities of the State Board of Elections would be very helpful.
- Ms. Blossman said she is really impressed with the State Board and its recently issued achievements report but
  - Mr. John Noce, their liaison to the State Board can help with that.
  - Ms. Duncan said that in the past she had more regular meetings with the State Board and then reported to the Board about them. She will work with Mr. Noce to get reports on the State Board “back on track”.
- Ms. Blossman had one comment on access to Election Services space. Specifically, the State Board has proposed replacing the SEIMS system and she would like to see how it works at least once before the new one is in place. As a Board member she should be able to see it, at least once a year.
  - Ms. Duncan said she would arrange that.
  - Mr. Quinn said that a contractor has been selected by the State Board. The contractor is to devise the system.
  - Ms. Stein asked when/if the Board can provide input on the new system.
    - Mr. Quinn said that the Board should have these discussions up until the State Board conference so they can present their concerns as a Board.
    - Mr. Quinn also said the State Board has 4 rules out for public comment, rules which are potentially very impactful.
    - Ms. Duncan said the purpose of the annual conference is to gather comments and inform everyone.
    - Ms. Duncan said she could arrange for information sessions on issues the Board would like.
    - Ms. Braine said she had once asked for such a session and found it helpful.

- Such sessions could allow the Board to advocate for items the Director and staff would like – Ms. Duncan said the most important feature to add to the new system is to make it GIS based.

## **VII. Present 2026 Early Voting Plan (G.S. § 163-166.35) – Neggy Fox**

- Ms. Duncan said the goal of this presentation on the Early Voting plan, one of the Board’s biggest tasks. This meeting is not the only time the Board and staff will discuss the plan.
- Encourage the Board to strive for a unanimous vote to help in the case of challenges. Also, she wants the Board to remain in control of the plan which happens if the vote is unanimous. If not a unanimous vote the State Board will select a plan for the County.
- Ms. Duncan praised the Board for its support of the method the Office uses to develop the plan. It’s not due to the State Board until July 24 and the survey is open for a month. Consequently, there is plenty of time to incorporate everyone’s comments.
- **Ms. Fox began with the timeline for development of the Early Voting Plan**
  - May 19 – present to the Board; May 21 – Public Input survey opens; June 19, Public Input survey closes; June 23, review public comments; July 14 Board votes on revised Plan.
  - Other timing mandates include: Early Voting Oct. 15-31 (depending on whether the General Assembly votes to shorten it); Weekday hours are 8:00 am to 7:30 pm; Last Saturday hours are 8:00 pm to 3:00 pm; Uniform days and hours for all locations.
  - The Board decides 1) the number and locations of sites; 2) Weekend days and hours; 3) whether the vote will be unanimous.
- The Communications and Public Engagement team is working on putting the Plan and survey on the Engage Page for the County.
- Promoting the plan involves having the plan for the County website, social media, social outreach events, and other ideas.
- Considerations in developing the plan include data on the number of sites, the turnout numbers in past years, number of registered voters, and population density; suitability considerations include convenience to voters (on main roads), parking availability, square footage of the space, room layout, and Americans with Disabilities Act

compliant. Other factors include the budget, capacity of staff and facilities, availability of equipment, current laws, numbered memos, and public input.

- Ms. Fox compared turnout in 2018 with 11 sites; a 65 percent turnout; 41 voters per hour on average, and a total of 1,881 hours to 2022 with 12 sites, 58 percent turnout, 37.86 voters per hour, and 1,860 hours.
- Ms. Duncan said the budget has not passed yet and the pattern of early voting differs between primaries and general elections. In primaries voting starts out low and trends up while the rate is more evenly spread out in general elections.
- Ms. Fox then discussed the number of sites they have contacted or considered in each section of the city: North, South, East, and West.
- A population density map accompanied each section of the city showing the proximity of potential sites to major roads, and how the section relates to the County as a whole.
- The staff have considered vacant commercial areas, empty buildings, churches, community centers, libraries, and firehouses. Commercial sites typically want long-term leases, not the short term for Early Voting. Also, commercial sites do not always want electioneering on their property. Spaces that turned down the opportunity to host a site most often cited the inability to provide exclusive use to Election Services.
- The staff proposed having 12 sites although the budget permits adding 2 more sites; closed on the first weekend (October 17-18); open on the second weekend (October 24-25); weekend hours from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Opening the second weekend but not the first is what the Office has done the past couple of elections.
- Mr. Quinn asked about the UNCA campus, especially the off-campus health center site that was used during Helene when it was closed.
  - Ms. Stein said discussions with UNCA are still ongoing.
- Ms. Braine asked why the Upper Hominy site isn't listed and noted that it has never been given a chance.
  - It was an underutilized site according to poll workers.
  - Ms. Fox said she would contact them.
- The 12 recommended sites are: Bee Tree Fire Station; Black Mountain Library, East Asheville Library\*, Enka Candler Library\*, Fairview Library, Leicester Community Center, North Asheville Library\*, South Buncombe Library\*, Weaverville Community Center, Wesley Grant Center in lieu of the Election Services Office, West Asheville

Library\*, Former Permits and Inspection Office in downtown or the Friendship Center.

- Five of the libraries listed above with an asterisk will only be used if no other suitable location is found by July 15.
- The former Permits and Inspection Office, if used, would become the location in lieu of the Office at 35 Woodfin Street.
- Mr. Quinn counted the potential sites on the slides and counted 48, which is a large number of sites to inspect. He also said the Permits Office should be listed with a Charlotte Street address because it is much easier to access parking.
- Ms. Braine suggested we again consider Upper Hominy because special circumstances, Covid and Helene, prevented using it in the past.
  - Dr. Weinert said the inconsistent use may depress turnout.
  - Ms. Fox said that the Friendship Center has not been consistently used but it has enjoyed good turnout.
- Mr. Quinn urged his fellow Members to encourage folks to apply to be Early Voting poll workers.
- Ms. Fox said she would look again at the Woodfin YMCA even though her memory is that it has two floors.
- Ms. Duncan said they will explore use of radio to announce the survey as well as flyers and press.
- A question from the audience led Ms. Fox to clarify that the budget, which has not yet passed, contains funds for up to 14 sites.

### **VIII. Voter Challenges Hearing (G.S. § 163-85(d)) – Neggy Fox**

- In April the Board held a preliminary hearing on challenges to 30 voters who may be dead. At that meeting, the Board determined that the challenges were properly filed and reasonable cause existed for a final hearing. Today is the final hearing.
- Ms. Fox passed out packets containing the results of staff research in each case. All of the challenged voters are in Inactive status; none of them has voted in a while, and; 2 have already been removed from the rolls. Inactive status is the first step toward removal from the rolls.
- Each challenge is accompanied by a death certificate.
- Dr. Weinert read out the names of the challenged voters.
  - No one was present to provide any additional information.
- Dr. Weinert administered the oath to Ms. Fox.

- Ms. Fox said the State Board currently sends weekly lists of deceased individuals to Buncombe County. The list of deceased individuals is checked daily during Election season to help ensure staff are working with the most current list of voters.
- The Board reviewed the materials presented by Ms. Fox.
- Following its review, the motion to strike the names from the rolls was seconded and passed 5/0.
  - Ms. Duncan said the State Board is also looking at the issue of removing deceased voters from the rolls. Buncombe County, among others, will be part of pilot audit of such processes conducted by the State Board.
- Mr. Quinn said that the Board should consider developing procedures for what to do at polling sites in the case of oddities, such as the presence of federal officials. The State Board did not think the issue merited further study, but Buncombe County should be ready.
  - Dr. Weinert agreed.

**IX. Next meeting Date: Thursday, May 21 at 3:30 pm at 35 Woodfin St.**

**X. Closed Session for Personnel Discussion (G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(6))**

**Adjourned at 7:00 pm for the Board to enter into closed session from which it will formally adjourn the meeting.**