

Buncombe County Board of Elections

Asheville/Buncombe County Board of Elections

Monitor Name: George Elam in person and Cheryl Williams virtual

Date & Time: February 28, 2023 4:30 PM

Names of Board Members Attending:

Jake Quinn, Chairman

Steven Aceto, Board Member

Linda Block, Board Member, Secretary

Glen Shults, Board Member

Bo Carpenter, Board Member

Names of Staff Attending

Corinne Duncan, Director

Anna Katherine Moore, Clerk to the Board

Devin Whitney, Elections Tech. Specialist

Joyce Kanavel

Observers:

A total of 7 observers; one from LWV and 6 representing conservative views

Agenda Items

Minutes from 1/17/23 approved unanimously with Mr. Carpenter abstaining because he did not attend

Office Updates (Corinne Duncan):

- The proposed budget that the Board reviewed has been submitted. Elections staff will meet with County management to discuss it on 3/16. If approved it will be forwarded to the Commissioners who must also review and approve it.
- Elections staff are already developing a student education and outreach program and have met with officials of Buncombe County and Asheville Schools. They will reach out to the Charter schools to expand the program further.
- The archive project, which was started a long time ago, is moving forward. The goal is to expand digitization of Elections records, which saves on storage space and facilitates access. Ms. Duncan said they keep paper record for easy access by staff.
- New Board Member orientation is scheduled for June 27 with swearing in to occur on July 18. Elections staff have developed an orientation day that will include setting expectations among other things.

- Board members are expected to attend a required training offered by the State Board of Elections on August 13-15. A hotel has not yet been selected.
 - Mr. Quinn noted that the last in person required training was in Charlotte and the one before that was in Winston-Salem.
 - Mr. Aceto asked about certification available to Board members. Mr. Quinn said the certification consists of an exam focused largely on elections law. Both he and Ms. Block passed the exam with near perfect and perfect scores, respectively, and neither of them is an attorney. Eligibility requirements to sit for the exam include two state trainings and serving through one election cycle. Details concerning the certification process will be discussed at the August training.
- The Board is aware that the Elections Office has two job postings listed
- The county-owned properties considered for affordable housing are on Coxe Avenue, Valley Street, and Woodfin Avenue. The property on Coxe Avenue had been considered as possible office space for the Elections staff but that likely won't happen in the view of Mr. Quinn. He further noted that each of the properties had at one point been associated with the Elections Office. All units in the development must be affordable. The County can access other sources of funds, such as the federal government.
 - The properties were identified by the Development Finance Initiative at the UNC School of Government pursuant to or in support of the Affordable Housing Bond Measure passed in November 2022. One goal of the Initiative is to minimize the expense to local governments for housing. As a result, county owned property is a good candidate because current prices in the downtown Asheville area are upward of \$1 million per acre.
- The ADA survey, conducted every 2 years is almost done.
 - Mr. Aceto asked the extent to which back up voting sites were included in the survey in part because one or more election judges asked him about it. Ms. Duncan said the 2 back up sites are listed in the voting plan and she will meet with Emergency Services regarding their condition. She also noted that the County has a mobile unit now which it did not have before.

List Maintenance (Joyce Kanavel):

- Ms. Kanavel provided an overview of the list maintenance procedures and referred the Board and observers to the publication Maintaining the Voter Registration Database in North Carolina issued by the State Board of Elections in July 2017 and referenced in the SBOE press release from Feb 27, 2023. The publication details the steps Ms. Kanavel discussed. Mr. Quinn said the manual is being updated and a revised edition will be issued.
- Mr. Aceto asked for confirmation that the procedures were carried out as specified by the State Board and by statute. Mr. Quinn and Ms. Kanavel confirmed.
- Procedural details covered in the presentation and the range of data sources available to Elections staff maintaining the list will not be discussed here because they can be found in the SBOE document. In general, she covered;

- The no contact method of confirming a voter’s address
- Moving a voter’s registration status to inactive
- The processing of duplicate registrations
 - Ms. Kanavel said that duplicates can occur for several reasons, including well intentioned voter registration drives that encourage people to complete a new registration if they are uncertain of their registration status. Instead, she wished the folks registering voters would encourage them to check their status using Reg Look Up
- The biannual (mailings in January and July of each year) National Change of Address update based on data from the US Postal Service and shown in the table below
- Address verification for new registrants
- Data exchanges between states regarding people who move into the state and register
- Removal from the voter registration list for such situations as a felony conviction or death, and
- Mailings occasioned by changes made by the state or county such as changes in district or precinct boundaries
- At the last meeting, Mr. Quinn requested that Ms Duncan and her staff complete a comparison of the numbers of cards sent out during the last address update with a breakdown of how many were sent and the disposition of each. The table follows:
 - Ms. Kanavel said that about half of the total mailed were returned with updated information. In about one-third of the remaining cases, the voters had contacted the Elections office and updated their information.

Year – 2 times per, Jan and July	Total Mailed	Total returned for processing
2018	7098	2494
2019	6754	2294
2020	7192	2313
2021	8504	2316
2022	8149	2206

- A snapshot of the volume of work was presented with regard to list updates in 2022. In each case the updates must be investigated and confirmed by staff.
 - New registrations 17,086
 - Duplicate registrations 17,862
 - Change of information 20,037

Issues raised during Ms. Kanavel’s presentation:

- The database used by Elections staff is called State Election Information Management System (SEIMS) which consists of several modules including the Voter View. Some parts of the database are available to the public and can be downloaded. Voter View

contains all voters in the state and is larger than most home computers can process. No confidential data, such as last four digits of the Social Security Number, driver's license number, or specific date of birth, can be downloaded. The public may view signatures in the Elections Office and Elections staff may share a voter's age, but not their date of birth.

- The National Voter Registration Act of 1993, aka Motor Voter Bill, allows state department of motor vehicles and social services agencies to provide voter registration forms to clients. Both send data to the Elections office.
- The State Board is in the process of joining the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a nonprofit membership organization of state elections officials. ERIC was established in 2012 by elections officials from several states with logistical and financial support from the Pew Charitable Trusts. Membership has grown to 30 states and the District of Columbia. Its goal is to help states with list maintenance by, for example, comparing state roles to the Social Security Administration death index.
 - The funds to join have been appropriated but not authorized, pending the completion of a legal review to ensure that the data sharing requirements for members comply with NC law, particularly with regard to confidential data.
 - Political support for joining ERIC was questioned but Mr. Quinn noted that the funds were included in the budget which was reviewed and approved by the General Assembly before being signed by the Governor.
 - Once the legal review is completed, the State Board will develop an implementation plan before signing the contract.
 - Mr. Shults asked how one could track the progress of the state in joining. Mr. Quinn said he calls a staffer at the State Board.
 - An observer reported that the Alabama Secretary of State who campaigned on removing the state from ERIC visited the office space while on a trip to DC and disparaged the organization based on his observations.
 - Mr. Quinn said that his keen interest in voter list accuracy is, among other things, getting more precise data on how many people are registered. We know how many people voted in an election and we calculate turnout based on the number of people on the registration list which he suspects is inflated, as evidenced by the number of folks removed each cycle.
- Mr. Aceto asked about opportunities for the public to interface with the registration list other than by challenges during elections. Ms. Kanavel said that once a person's name is placed on the list, only the voter can change it and only Elections staff can remove it following procedures required by the state. Mr. Quinn noted that removing a person's name requires both evidence and a formal process. It cannot be done casually.
- One observer questioned whether students registered at their colleges might be registered in more than one jurisdiction. Ms. Kanavel said the list maintenance process would surface the duplicates and staff would investigate to take appropriate action.
- Discrepancies in geo codes, such as the name and number of a street, are checked against records from taxing and planning agencies.

- One observer asked whether voter rolls were cross referenced to a database of citizens. Ms. Kanavel said that the State Board cross references to some national data base but was not certain which one or how often that occurred. Later in the meeting, the same observer asked whether people should have to present a birth certificate to register. Mr. Quinn closed down that conversation by saying it was beyond the scope of the Board's responsibility.

Next Meeting Dates: March 14 at 3:30
April 25 at 3:30
May 23 at 3:30

Location: 59 Woodfin Place
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- These dates are tentative because Ms. Block had to leave early. If these dates work for her they will become confirmed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm

