

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

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

**Date & Time:** April 25, 2023 3:30 PM

**Names of Board Members Attending:**

Jake Quinn, Chairman

Steven Aceto, Board Member

Linda Block, Board Member, Secretary

Bo Carpenter, Board Member

Absent: Glen Shults, Board Member

**Names of Staff Attending:** Corrine Duncan, Director

Neggy Fox, Program Manager

Anna Katherine Moore, Clerk to the Board

Devin Whitney, Elections Tech. Specialist

**Observers:**

A total of 7 observers; three from LWV; 1 from Common Cause; 3 representing conservative views

**Agenda Items**

**Minutes from 3/14/23 approved 4 to zero**

**Office Updates (Corrine Duncan):**

- The Elections Office has completed the second round of interviews for the 2 open positions and is ready to make offers with a start date of May 26, 2023.
- Elections staff have met with precinct chairs regarding their responsibility to provide the names of potential poll workers to party chairs; assist party chairs in providing poll worker nominees to the Board of Elections; and the time frames for completing those tasks.
- Elections staff have made two reductions to the budget. First was to reduce their request by \$11,000. Similar reductions were requested from all departments. Second, \$14,000 was removed after a consultation with IT staff who determined the project as written was not feasible (BOE monitors had conflicting notes on this amount; it may have been \$42,000. We'll pin this down when the BOE's minutes come out). In addition, the start date for the Candidate Coordinator position Elections had requested was moved to February, which is after filing for the 2024 elections starts. This is not ideal and was made to reduce the overall budget request.
- Training for new Board of Elections members is being developed to be ready for any changes that occur in June.

- Joyce Kanavel, Voter Registration Specialist, is retiring Friday, April 28. Her service and expertise will be sorely missed, especially on election night, as noted by Mr. Quinn.
- The Express Vote machine request was discussed at a Budget Info session this morning (Tuesday). Ms. Duncan and Elections staff gathered multiple documents in support of the request which they presented in the 10 minutes they were allotted. Ms. Duncan thought the meeting went well. She stressed to the staff that a choice must be made because the current machines are breaking down and cannot be repaired. The next step is formal adoption of their request and preparation of a resolution of adoption that staff have already drafted.
  - Mr. Quinn requested that copies of the draft adoption resolution be provided to Board members, which Ms. Duncan said she would do.
  - Ms. Block asked when the request would be implemented. Ms. Duncan said the order for the machines would be signed on July 1, which she expects will be fulfilled quickly. However, if it not, the County has enough Vote Express machines to conduct the municipal elections in November.
  - Ms. Duncan said staff have been developing an education program with demonstration tapes and other materials.

**Discussion of Eligible Voters for the Woodfin Water and Sewer District this fall:**

- Mr. Quinn noted that the Asheville Watchdog had recently reported on the condition of the Woodfin Water and Sewer District elections. Specifically, he noted that confusion regarding eligibility to vote for the water and sewer district because it was not drawn to represent any population.
  - (NOTE: I didn't find an article on eligible voters but did find two articles on the condition of [water supply infrastructure in Woodfin](#)).
- Mr. Aceto further noted that this district and others like them were created in the 1920s and 1930s to issue bonds to build water and sewer infrastructure. Most of these districts across the state have been absorbed into other political units. The Woodfin Water and Sewer District is the only such district left in this area.

**An observer asked the Board about their response to an email from Tom Braine in February 2023 regarding additional audit steps once Express Vote machines are used**

- Mr. Quinn said that the email suggested Elections staff feed ballots created by Express Vote machines through an optical character reader (OCR) to compare the counts created by the DS 200 tabulator and the OCR. Mr. Quinn said the authority to implement any change to the elections or audit process was outside the scope of this Board and resided with the NC State Board of Elections. He suggested that Mr. Braine forward his suggestion to Karen Brinson Bell, the Director of the State Board. He further noted that other jurisdictions routinely use the Express Vote machines which have been tested and approved by the State Board. Further discussion included the following points:

- Ms. Block commented that the OCR would read only the printed names and not the bar code, which is an essential link to the individual voter. She was uncertain how the additional step would enhance the procedures already in place.
- Mr. Quinn questioned when the ballot would be fed into the OCR and what would happen if the OCR damaged the ballot in a way that prevented the DS 200 from accurately reading it.
- The observer continued that Mr. Braine believed the step should be taken because often elections hinge on the results from 1 or 2 precincts. She also noted her belief that Express Vote machines can be set to provide both an original ballot and an electronic copy which might be used in the audit instead of the paper ballot.
- Ms. Block pointed out that the discussion of precincts raised a question about the methodology for sampling precincts to audit. Presently the manual audit procedure selects two precincts to be audited; the recommendation by Mr. Braine is to run ALL ballots through the OCR.
- Mr. Aceto noted that technology may soon rise to meet the need.
- Mr. Quinn said that Mr. Braine had acknowledged the need to preserve confidentiality of voting records. He also endorsed the idea of continuing to explore ways to enhance election integrity.
- Ms. Duncan said the State Board was always open to suggestions to enhance audit procedures with an eye toward limiting risks to the process.
- Mr. Aceto said that any step that involved touching a ballot needed to be nested within a set of protections to ensure its integrity.
- Mr. Quinn again urged the observer to encourage Mr. Braine to forward his idea to the State Board. He said the Board should not forward the idea since it would suggest an endorsement which the Board does not have the authority to do. Ms. Duncan agreed with Mr. Quinn.

**An observer who identified himself as Doug Brown continued to express concerns**

- Mr. Brown said it was great to send the idea to the State Board but said the public must trust the Board that the machines are reliable when evidence suggests that Vote Express machines can and have been tampered with.
  - Mr. Quinn said that when people bring forward evidence rather than conjecture that Vote Express or DS 200 machines have been tampered with, he would review it thoroughly. He further noted that when the Vote Express machines were first approved by the State Board in 2019, he was also skeptical. However, Buncombe County and other jurisdictions have been using them since then with not evidence of any problems. He again stated that actual evidence in the form of specific examples and not conjecture would be helpful.
  - Mr. Brown said he would get evidence from the John Locke Society.

**Another Observer stated she had concerns about using Vote Express machines while voting in Mecklenburg County**

- This observer who identified herself as Belinda Carrol (?) said she could never confirm by looking at the bar code whether her vote was counted.
  - Mr. Quinn asked whether she had fed the ballot into another Vote Express machine to compare the two ballots to ensure that her selections were accurately reflected.
  - She said she was not aware of that option and had not done so.
  - Mr. Quinn said the education campaign being developed by Elections Services would stress ways voters could confirm that their selections were accurately reflected in the ballots tabulated by the DS 200.
  - Mr. Quinn also showed an example of a ballot produced by a Vote Express machine and noted that the uniform font would be easily scanned by an OCR.

**Meeting adjourned at 4:05 pm**

**Next Meeting Date: May 25 at 3:30**

**Location: 59 Woodfin Place**