

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

**Monitor Name:** Williams in person

**Date & Time:** August 15, 2023 5:00 PM

**Names of Board Members Attending:**

Jake Quinn, Chairman

Steven Aceto, Board Member

Glen Shults, Secretary

Mary Ann Braine, Board Member

Sally Stein: Board Member

**Names of Buncombe Co Staff Attending:** Corrine Duncan, Director  
Anna Katherine Moore, Administrative Coordinator and Clerk to the Board; Bria  
Baily, Elections Technical Specialist; Karen Rae, Elections Coordinator

**Location of Meeting:** Embassy Suites Charlotte - Concord/Golf Resort & Spa,  
5400 John Q. Hammons Drive NW, Concord, NC

**North Carolina State Board of Elections:** two staff who were not identified

**Observers for the in-person demonstration:**

About 40 participants who may have been elections training conferees, including at least one from Swain County and one observer from LWVAB

**Agenda Items:**

Demonstration of Voting Systems:

- The Board and Staff observed the operation of two voting systems in two presentations: an in-person demonstration of the ES&S DS 950, high speed scanner and tabulator with the Express Vote ballot marking machine and an online presentation of the Hart Verity System. AK Moore filmed both presentations
  - The entire Board and staff as well as about 40 other persons observed the in-person ES&S equipment
  - The entire Board and staff as well two staff from the State Board of Elections observed the Hart equipment
- Key aspects of the ES&S equipment, which is used in 93 NC counties, included:
  - 2 factor authentication to open the equipment
  - An audit log that records any attempt to open the equipment

- An audible beep if someone attempts to open the equipment
- Each ballot is given two unique serial numbers located in different places
- The ability to conduct a risk limited audit covering multiple precincts using a random selection of ballots by unique serial number
- A USB drive that does not connect to any outside computer and is interchangeable with other devices in the suite of machines
- Lockable blue ballot boxes with attached handle and wheels for easy exchange in the event a ballot box fills and needs to be replaced
- Off the shelf use of HP inkjet cartridges
- Greater ease of set up so that multiple people are not required
- All code, which is reviewed by the Elections Assistance Commission, and all USB sticks are manufactured in the US
- Improved technology to reduce ballot jams, easier access to the trays in the event a torn ballot causes a jam, and brushes to reduce the amount of static cling generated as the ballots move through the machine. In addition, a red light illuminates and the ballot count is stopped in the event of a jam, which means ballots do not have to be rescanned.
- Scan screen allows for management of ballots by batch and greater reporting and retrieval functions as well as searchable audit logs
- Express Vote machines allow multiple ballots to appear on the screen and records images of write ins
- Voters can verify that the Express Vote correctly recorded their selections by re-inserting it into the machine
- Officials can alter settings to do such things as to separate over voted ballots or sort by contest for a hand recount
- Questions about this system included:
  - the use of a modem which company representatives said is not allowed by the state of NC, which means that equipment sent to NC does not have installed modems
    - Representatives reported they had demonstrated to state legislators that modems are not included in NC and told county officials that a certified tech could show them that the modem is not installed in their equipment.
  - Mr. Quinn asked whether the life of the machine was counted in years or number of ballots to which representatives said so long as the machine was routinely cleaned it will last 4-5 years regardless of the number of ballots

- Mr. Aceto asked what could go wrong and was told the technology could fail but the company would provide information on how to fix it or a power outage could occur although the machine provides 20 minutes of battery time to print reports before the machine shuts down.
- Virtual demonstration of the Hart Verity System, which is used in 7 NC counties, was viewed by the entire Board and staff plus the two staff from the State Board of Elections and the LWVAB observer. Highlighted features included:
  - Lightweight and easy to set up
  - Alerts for over-voted ballots so that voter can choose to “spoil” the ballot or submit as is
  - A thermal printer
  - A printed audit tape that captures all scanned ballots
  - Adjustable set up configuration to accommodate persons with disabilities, including head phones, large on-screen type, Braille print, and audio read out of selections as voter moves a cursor the ballot prior to voting
  - Ability to mark ballots as provisional which will not be accepted by the tabulator
  - Ability for voter to review the entire ballot or selected contests
  - Printed ballot looks exactly like a hand-marked ballot
  - No need to insert a printed ballot because machine prints each ballot on blank ballot stock although settings allow counties to use preprinted ballots
  - Ability to support ballots of 11.5” by up to 20” in up to 4 colors to keep each ballot on a single page
  - Screen maintains a running total of ballots at the bottom of the screen or can produce a report
  - State staff reported that all 100 counties were happy with the voting machines they chose

#### Recommendation of Voting Systems

- Mr. Quinn noted that SBE memo # 2021-01 requires the Board to observe two different systems prior to choosing one and passed a form for each Board member to sign attesting that they had done so
- Discussion of the systems followed and included the following topics:
  - All voting equipment now uses bar codes which informs the scanner of where to look for marks

- Interest in bar codes was piqued when Express Vote machines began using them.
- Mr. Quinn pointed out that the Hart equipment would not be interchangeable with the ES&S equipment the county now uses
- Ms. Braine liked the fact the Hart ballots look just like hand-marked ballots and questioned the initial choice of ES&S equipment
  - Jake said it was in use in 2007 when he first attended Board meetings
  - State staff reported that when it had funds to provide equipment to counties it issued an RFP to which 6 vendors responded, all of which but ES&S dropped out after learning in more detail the state's requirements. When the One Vote machines were decertified, the state issued another RFP, to which two vendors responded.
- Mr. Quinn clarified that the form had two parts: first, the observation attestation and second, the recommendation for approval which is only needed for the ES&S software upgrade, not the DS 950 tabulator which is really the component the county needs most because its current DS 850 machines are "getting rickety".
- Mr. Shults noted that the ES&S technicians show up in a timely manner when needed
- The initial vote to approve the ES&S equipment was 4 – 1 which led to further discussion of the tight timeframe facing the Board which needs the equipment in time for the fall municipal elections and an agreement to pursue additional information from the State Board regarding her concerns
- Final vote was unanimous

**Meeting adjourned at 7:34 pm**

**Next Meeting Date:**

**August 22 at 3:30 pm**

**Location: 59 Woodfin Place**