

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

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

Date & Time: January 9, 2024 5:30 PM

Names of Board Members Attending:

Jake Quinn, Chairman

Mary Ann Braine, Board Member

Glen Shults, Secretary

Sally Stein: Board Member – virtual

Not Attending: Steven Aceto, Board Member

Names of Buncombe Co Staff Attending: Corrine Duncan, Director
Karen Rae, Elections Coordinator; Devin Whitney, Elections Technical Specialist;
Justin Tate, Absentee Coordinator; and Anna Katherine Moore, Administrative
Coordinator and Clerk to the Board remotely

Location of Meeting: 59 Woodfin Place, Asheville NC

Observers:

Seven observers including 1 from the Democratic Party, 1 from Common Cause, 1 from the NC Elections Integrity Team, and 3 from LWVAB

Agenda Items

I. **Minutes** from December 12 meeting – deferred until next meeting when Mr. Aceto will be present.

Mr. Quinn noted that the County Commissioners begin each meeting by approving the agenda and moved to begin the practice for this Board.

Mr. Quinn proposed to add the appointment of MAT team members to the agenda for this meeting. All agreed to the addition and to the practice of voting on the agenda at the beginning of each meeting. The changes were approved 4/0.

II. MAT Members Appointments – Justin Tate

- Mr. Tate noted there were three names on the list he shared with Board members, one of whom is unaffiliated. The list was submitted by the Democratic Party of Buncombe County.

- Mr. Tate addressed the observers by saying that more people for MAT teams were needed and that it is a paid position. He encouraged observers to spread the word to friends and neighbors. He said especially the County needs Republican applicants for the teams.
- The County has issued a press release letting the community know about the need for MAT team members. Elections Services has also posted the notice on its website. [Note: I found a news item about the need for poll workers, especially folks affiliated as Republican but no mention of the need for MAT team members.]
- The list of Democratic affiliated MAT members was approved 3/0 with only the Democrat board members voting.

III. Office Updates: Corrine Duncan

- 2023 Accomplishments
 - Implemented Express Vote machines for ballot marking and other processes to streamline the voting process, such as improvements to imaging the lap tops used by workers; and the check in by Chief Judges.
 - Engaged in Team Building training for Elections Services Team, which is rather large, that included orientation for the Board and classes for staff.
 - Completed an NC Together video that highlights the work of County Elections staff from across the state.
 - Mr. Quinn said that while it was a statewide project, the impetus came from Ms. Duncan.
 - Three videos were completed and one was shown to the Board and observers.
 - The goal is to show the community that Elections Staff are there to help voters.
 - Only 5 of the Election Day poll workers for the municipal elections did not show up for work. This number was lower than in years past and Ms. Duncan said she thought improved orientation and communication about expectations accounted for more people showing up.
 - The 2023 Municipal Elections were successfully completed.
 - The impact of changes to Voter ID checks and mail-in ballots was minimal.
 - It was great to have a smaller election to try out the new procedures before the greater volume of a Presidential Election cycle.
 - Several vacancies were filled. County Commissioners gave approval to fill the position of Candidate Coordinator but delayed hiring until Feb

2024 which is a tight timeframe in light of the Primary. Still the position will be posted and interviews begun.

- The posting has gone through the HR process and is on track.
- The person who fills this position will have extensive contact with candidates.
- Elections administration has been changed by the law, such as the requirement for Voter ID and the removal of a grace period for returning completed mail in ballots.
- The State Board of Elections has issued a revised Voter Registration form which makes it clear that a date of birth and either a driver's license number or last four digits of a Social Security Number (SSN) is required. **People who do not provide this information will not be registered.** The state added a checkbox to indicate that a person has neither a driver's license or a Social Security Number.
 - The change did not result from a change in the law but rather a complaint that the existing registration form did not comply with the requirements of the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA 2002). The Board heard the complaint at its 11/28/2023 meeting and agreed. The Board did not agree with the complainant's request that staff contact affected voters.
 - Anyone who registered before 12/14/2023 without filling in the driver's license or SSN fields (about 556 people in the system) will be grandfathered in but will need to provide a form of identification listed under HAVA 2002 which includes, in addition to a driver's license, passport, or last 4 of their SSN, such identification/proof of residency as utility bills, bank statements, paychecks, and public housing identification cards.
 - However, if they do not bring HAVA ID they can still vote provisionally and bring appropriate ID to Elections Services before canvass.
 - A total of 29 people has registered since 12/14 without filling in the ID fields. They will be covered by the new requirement. Elections Services has sent each of these people a letter explaining that they will not be registered until they provide appropriate identification.
 - Ms. Braine asked whether staff could call people who did not provide a driver's license or SSN. Ms. Duncan said staff do not have phone numbers.
 - NCSBE is expected to provide additional guidance.
- Staff have developed promotional materials for the Early Voting period and for the upcoming election year.

- New Voter Cards have been sent to every registered voter in the County.
 - Voters do not need to bring the cards when they vote.
 - The new cards help with verifying the current rolls.
 - Staff have received many calls regarding the new cards and whether voters should bring them to the polls.
- Staff have approved the ballot for the March 5 election and the copy is currently with the vendor.
 - When they are finished staff will be able to link them to VoteRegLkUp.
- In 10 days, Absentee ballots can be sent out.
- Training for Early Voting workers is scheduled for 1/22 and for Election Day workers on 2/6.

Mr. Quinn reported that he attended the January 2 meeting of the County Commissioners to discuss the proposed salary for Director Duncan and how the Board reached its decision. He said the Commissioners realized how complex the job is. He plans to attend the next meeting on Tuesday as well but has no plans to speak. He is optimistic the Commissioners will approve the recommended salary for Ms. Duncan.

IV. Early Voting Election Official Appointments (G.S. § 163-166.35(a1). S.L. 2023-140M Sec, 27(c)) – Corrine Duncan and Karen Rae

- The law has mandated changes to the names of various elections officials but for practical reasons, they have kept the old names on this roster. For example, the new term is Captain which replaces Chief Judge.
- The law now mandates that Early Voting workers/officials, as well as MAT teams, and Election Day workers/officials be balanced by party affiliation.
- Early Voting has shifts so that workers do not have to work multiple 14+ hour days, which is very popular.
- Each precinct has a Chief Judge and 2 Party Judges.
- Ms. Rae passed out copies of a roster of Early Voting workers and officials.
- The County is almost fully staffed for Early Voting and has backups in case some folks don't show up.
- Captains (aka Chief Judges) have separate training.
- Each Captain will have a co-Captain because of the hectic schedule at the end of Early Voting which allows two people to share the responsibilities.
- The call center staff are full-time staff who can substitute for no shows if need be.

- In the event of a challenge to a ballot, officials will call Elections Services staff for advice on how to handle it and who should handle it.
- A motion was made and unanimously approved to approve the roster of officials and workers for Early Voting.
- Ms. Duncan asked that the Board formalize the delegation to Elections staff to make substitutions to the list of officials/workers.
 - No discussion ensued or action taken on the request.

V. Public Comment

- An observer asked about notifying voters in precinct 57.1 that polling will take place at the Church and not the Fire Station. Mr. Quinn said that the new voter cards sent to every voter in the county contained that information.

**VI. Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 30 at 3:30 – First Absentee Meeting
Location: 59 Woodfin Place**