

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

**Monitor Name:** George Elam and Cheryl Williams in person

**Date & Time:** March 8, 2024 5:30 PM

**Names of Board Members Attending:**

Jake Quinn, Chairman

Mary Ann Braine, Board Member

Steven Aceto, Board Member

Glen Shults, Secretary

Sally Stein: Board Member

**Names of Buncombe Co Staff Attending:** Corrine Duncan, Director; Devin Whitney, Elections Technical Specialist; Justin Tate, Absentee Coordinator; Anna Katherine Moore, Administrative Coordinator and Clerk to the Board; Bria Bailey, Elections Technical Specialist; Shannon Cole, Voter Registration Specialist; and Joyce Kanavel (back temporarily)

**Location of Meeting:** 59 Woodfin Place, Asheville NC

**Observers:**

8 observers as follows: 3 Democrats, 2 Republicans, 1 Common Cause, and 2 LWVAB. No virtual observers.

**Agenda Items**

**I.** Agenda for this meeting approved 5/0 following an amendment to add approval of meeting minutes.

**II. Minutes** – Minutes from February 27, March 4, and March 5 were approved 5/0

**III. Office Updates – Corrine Duncan**

- Processing of provisional ballots is going well. Have about 170 absentee ballots and about 310 provisional ballots to review.
- Preparing the Supplemental Abstract is almost complete.
- The review of provisional ballots tonight is not for approval, which will be done next week. The review is of ID exception forms. Ballots will be replaced in the envelopes and sealed until the review of provisional ballots.
- Processing the signatures on petitions to qualify for candidate filing is going well. The review will need to be completed by April 8 and they will more than meet that deadline.
- Regarding the Certification of Petition, if the petitioner has enough valid signatures to meet the threshold, the person is qualified to file for office.
- Buncombe County will likely have a second primary on May 14 for several races, such as Republican races for Lt. Governor and State Auditor.

- The Board will have to finalize the Early Voting Plan by 3/18. Ms. Duncan suggested the Board review the draft plan at the March 14 meeting. Staff will email a draft in advance. NCSBE needs the approved plan in enough time to complete their review by March 25.
- Buncombe County had a second primary in 2020 for Republican congressional races with one Early Voting site at the warehouse. Ms. Duncan believes the Office is a better location for Early Voting.
- Elections staff also need to plan for Early Voting days. About 8 percent voted despite a great deal of interest in the race.
- Ms. Duncan suggested hours for Early Voting at the office from 8-5 weekdays and on the last Saturday before Election Day. There will be no same day registration.
  - Mr. Quinn asked whether they would need to use the same Early Voting hours of 8-3 that were used in the Primary.
  - Ms. Duncan said she would clarify.
- Ms. Duncan said that on Election Day for the second Primary, all 80 precincts would have to be open. She estimated the cost for poll workers on Election Day to be \$81,000. She had notified County Budget officials that the unbudgeted cost will likely be over \$100,000.
  - Ms. Braine asked whether the state provides any funding. Ms. Duncan said it does not.
- The law says they must make Absentee Ballots available “as soon as possible” so staff will need to begin work on them immediately after Canvass. All 100 counties will be getting ready under very tight timeframes. Ballot development is an iterative process between the Counties and the State. As a result, even if Buncombe is very quick to complete their tasks, they may in a queue with other counties for State reviews. The first absentee meeting would need to be held two weeks after Canvass.
- After this meeting, the Board will have two more meetings, March 14 to review the Early Voting plan and March 15 to vote on it.
- Mr. Shults asked how many Absentee Ballots came in after 7:30 on March 5. Mr. Tate said 28.
- The law has changed regarding same day registration that requires staff to send a letter when the first confirmation mailing is returned stating that the voter must bring their HAVA identification to the office by 5:00 pm on 3/14. If not, the ballot will not be counted.

#### **IV. Initial Provisional Ballot Review (GS § 163-82.4(f)) – Shannon Cole**

- Ms. Cole presented 27 provisional ballots for review of Photo ID exception forms.
  - Of these 4 needed to be opened because the Photo ID or exception forms were not in the clear sleeve on the envelope. The Board will review the ID or exception form and replace the ballot in the envelope. Ms. Cole then resealed the envelope until the meeting to approve Provisional Ballots.
- All 27 ballots passed review and will be reviewed for approval on March 14.

## **V. Supplemental ICV and UOCAVA Absentee Ballot Review (GS §163-231(b)(2))– Justin Tate**

- Justin presented 5 civilian ballots that had been received after the last Board meeting on Monday March 4 and the end of voting at 7:30 pm on March 5. He commented that quite a few people brought their ballots to the office.
  - The 5 were approved 5/0.
- Justin presented 3 military and 16 overseas civilian ballots.
  - Both sets were approved 5/0
- Justin presented 12 ballots with exception forms pending review. Two bipartisan teams formed for the review.
  - The 12 were approved 5/0.
- Justin presented 147 supplemental absentee ballots for review by the 3 bipartisan teams (an additional person joined Mr. Quinn to form a team) for review.
  - All 147 were approved 5/0.
- Tonight 183 ballots were approved.
- The ballots were scanned, then sealed in color coded plastic envelopes.
- Mr. Tate administered Mr. Quinn the oath for certification of the three categories: Civilian, Civilian overseas, & Military.
- Mr. Shults asked about the difference in Primary Election Day closing in which Board Members helped Elections staff to close the Express Vote machines.
  - Ms. Duncan explained that a change in the law no longer allows County Boards to close out Express Vote machines at their 2:00 pm meeting the day before Primary Election Day. Instead, Boards must wait until the polls close at 7:30 on Primary Election Day.
- Ms. Duncan estimated the Canvass meeting will begin at 10:00 am with a lunch break at 12:30 pm.
  - The Board will hear two challenges and make all materials available for review. Board Members may take all the time they need to review.

## **V. Certified list of approved Absentee Ballots**

- The Board waited for the three Abstracts of Absentee Ballots to be completed. The law requires that the lists be signed by all Board Members and must be completed in ink, which takes time and demands accuracy.
- Ms. Stein left at 7:15 pm and will return to sign the Abstracts on Monday, March 11 during business hours.

## **VI. Next Meeting:** Friday, March 14 at 3:30 pm

**Location:** 59 Woodfin Place

- Sample Audit, Monday, March 11 at 10:00 am – not a Board Meeting but is open to the public