

MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
REGULAR/SPECIAL SESSION
Board of Elections Conference Room
Tuesday, July 21, 2015
3:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Smathers called the meeting of the Madison County Board of Elections to order at 3:00 p.m. at the Board of Elections Conference Room. In attendance were 10 members of the public, Dyatt Smathers, Chairman; Ray Lewis, Secretary; Jerry Wallin, Member; Wade Gahagan, Elections Specialist; and Kathy Ray, Director.

AGENDA

Moved, Seconded (RL, JW) and Carried (3,0) to set the agenda as amended to add a Closed Session to discuss the Election Specialist's 90-day probationary evaluation and the August 2015 meeting schedule.

BOARD MEMBER APPOINTMENTS AND ORGANIZATION FOR 2015-2017

The Honorable Clerk of Court Mark Cody affirmed Board members for the 2015-2017 term of appointment.

Moved, Seconded (RL, JW) and Carried (3,0) to elect Dyatt F. Smathers as Board of Elections Chair.

Moved, Seconded (DS, JW) and Carried (3,0) to elect Ray Lewis as Board of Elections Secretary.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved, Seconded (RL, JW) and Carried (3,0) to approve the June 10, 2015 regular meeting minutes.

Moved, Seconded (JW, RL) and Carried (3,0) to approve the June 10, 2015 closed session meeting minutes as amended to reflect the correct date of June 10, 2015.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Smathers thanked the members of the public for taking the time to attend the meeting. He provided an update on the Board of Elections' unanimous decision to delay the purchase of new voting equipment. He highlighted factors that led to the decision and provided information regarding the uncertainty of the State Board of Election's decision regarding certification of the ExpressVote ballot marker, the complexities of running two software versions during an election, and the recent legislation to delay the decertification of the iVotronic voting equipment until September 2019.

MEMBERS' REPORTS

Secretary Lewis commented that it had been his pleasure to serve on the Board of Elections for the past year. He complimented the office staff and board members performance during that time.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The 2014-2015 budget report was presented. The Board of Elections came in under budget by approximately \$12K. The 2015-2016 budget was presented. The Director informed the Board that the upcoming year's budget does not include funding for a potential statewide bond referendum, the presidential preference primary, or a potential second primary. Commissioners are aware they will have to provide additional funding for each of the aforementioned elections if they occur. The Board has received notification since the preparation of the budget that a presidential preference primary has been legislated, thus additional funding for that election will have to be requested.

The Director provided a summary of the upcoming elections, fixed dates and tentative dates.

OLD BUSINESS

Board action regarding the Director's and Election Specialist's job descriptions was tabled until the August 18, 2015 meeting. Chairman Smathers requested the Director's job description be revisited to include more emphasis on technology skills.

NEW BUSINESS

The Director asked the Board to revisit the one-stop action taken at the May 2015 Board meeting based upon the uncertainty surrounding State Board of Election's approval and the scheduling of one-stop polling sites. Chairman Smathers emphasized that the action taken was non-unanimous, thus increasing the risk that the State Board will reject the plan to reduce the number of one-stop sites from five sites to two sites to be located at the Mars Hill Public Library and the Board of Elections, Room 26.

Moved (JW) to have four one-stop sites to be located at Beech Glen Community Center, Mars Hill Public Library, Board of Elections Room 26, and Hot Springs Community Center, pending State Board of Elections approval. Motion died for lack of a second.

The Chair underscored the importance of submitting unanimous plans for State Board of Elections approval.

Moved (DS) to close the one-stop site on the island and have four one-stop sites to be located at Beech Glen Community Center, Mars Hill Public Library, Board of Elections Room 26, and Hot Springs Community Center through the end of 2015, pending State Board of Elections approval. Motion died for lack of a second.

Moved (DS, JW) and Carried (2,1) to close the one-stop site at Marshall Community Center and have four sites through the end of 2015, pending State Board of Elections approval. Secretary Lewis voted against the motion.

Discussion ensued regarding the timeline and process for the submission of local one-stop plans for SBOE approval. Further comment was made emphasizing the increased workload on the office staff to operate additional one-stop sites and the increased likelihood of highly publicized errors created by an overburdened work environment.

Discussion ensued regarding the school system transition plan for Laurel School. The school has served as the Laurel Precinct polling location. Dr. Wilcox indicated he did not foresee any obstacles to using the site as a precinct polling location, if needed, in November 2015.

Moved, Seconded (RL, JW) and Carried (3,0) to adopt a resolution to make the following precinct polling location changes and voter precinct transfers for the November 2015 Municipal Elections only: Hot Springs voters that qualify to vote in the Town of Hot Springs Municipal Election to the Hot Springs (Bill Whitten) Community Center, 43 N Andrews Ave., Hot Springs, NC; North Marshall voters that qualify to vote in the Town of Marshall Election to the South Marshall Precinct polling location at Marshall Community Center, 145 Blannahassett Island Road, Marshall, NC; and the Beech Glen and Mars Hill Precincts voters that qualify to vote in the Town of Mars Hill Elections to the Mars Hill Public Library, 25 Library Street, Mars Hill, NC.

The minutes for the March 2010 meeting cannot be located but the minutes were referenced to and approved at the April 2010 meeting. The Elections Specialist has scanned all minutes onto a flash drive. The flash drive and SEIMS backup hard drives are stored in a safe deposit box at First Citizens Bank. The Elections Specialist commented that the Board will continue to evaluate any additional backup measures that may be needed.

The Chair informed the public that one-stop hours for 2016 will change from the hours of operation in 2014 due to the comparative elections for which the Board has to match cumulative hours. The Presidential Preference Primary and the General Election in 2016 will have to match cumulative hours for the 2012 elections accordingly, whereas the Primary Election will have to match cumulative hours with the Primary Election of 2010.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

A citizen asked if there were plans to increase Board of Elections office staff due to the increased workload of running additional one-stop sites. The Chair responded that the Board did request an additional office staff position in the 2016 budget but the request was not funded due to budget deficits and subsequent staff reductions that had occurred across other county departments. The citizen asked if community volunteers could assist. The Chair responded that was unacceptable due to employment policies for election's staff and community expectations for political partisan representation.

Dr. Bruce Frost presented his plan for a voter registration drive across the county school system. The plan called for a voter registration application to be sent home with every student's school registration packet. The Board of Education asked Mr. Frost for input from the Board of Elections. The Chair responded that G.S. 163-82.22 provides guidance regarding allowable voter registration Board activities with additional county agencies. The Board of Elections will assist independent voter registration drives by providing a reasonable number of application forms to independent entities conducting drives and/or State Board of Elections contact information for additional resources that may be needed.

Moved, Seconded (JW, RL) and Carried (3,0) to combine the regular August 11th meeting date with the state required date of August 18th to appoint precinct officials.

CLOSED SESSION

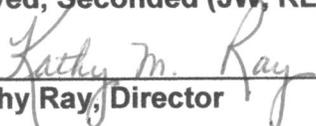
Moved, Seconded (RL, JW) and Carried (3,0) to go into closed session to discuss the Election Specialist's 90-day probationary evaluation.

Moved, Seconded (JW, DS) and Carried (3,0) to return to open session.

Moved, Seconded (RL, JW) and Carried (3,0) to permanently employ Elections Specialist Donald Wade Gahagan II based upon successful performance during the 90-day probationary period.

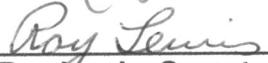
ADJOURNMENT

Moved, Seconded (JW, RL) and Carried (3,0) to adjourn at 5:11 P.M.



Kathy Ray, Director

Dyatt Smathers, Chairman



Ray Lewis, Secretary