

Mecklenburg Board of Electors

August 17, 2021

Present were Jeanne M. Capello Chair, Robert P. Chadeayne Secretary, Yvonne Alexander, Jason Corwin Registrar, and Jeff Stratford Mecklenburg County Democrat Committee Chair.

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Capello at 12:51 PM. Mr. Corwin led us in a brief prayer.

The proposed agenda was agreed to with modification to include discussion of Sunday Voting for November election.

The minutes of April 13, 2021 were approved as presented. The May 19, 2021 minutes were approved as presented with Mr. Chadeayne abstaining as he was not present at that meeting.

June Primary – Mr. Corwin reviewed the performance of the new pollbook equipment. He has had discussion with the vendor Demtech regarding our experience. They will respond to our login issues and general comments. Over-all the primary had very few issues and our people were comfortable with the new equipment.

November Election - Early voting will begin on September 17, 2021. Mr. Corwin reported that he has prepared the pollbooks for the election including breaking out the voters in Brodnax for the separate town ballot. Mr. Corwin also reviewed his proposed ballot order for November. Motion was made to approve the ballot order as proposed. Motion passed.

Mr. Corwin stated that based upon our experience in the November 2020 election whereby ballots had to be removed from the CAP voting machine prior to the close of election, he is proposing a procedure for controlling and documenting the process for clearing a machine to prevent malfunction. After some discussion it was decided that the documentation be revised to positively state proper handling and security. We will revisit this at the next meeting for approval.

Officer of Election assignment sheets were distributed. Mr. Corwin indicated we and he should review them. If additional information regarding staffing changes surfaces before the next meeting he will advise us. This will be an agenda item for next month.

Mr. Corwin introduced new absentee voting envelopes for review. Discussion followed regarding bar code tracking and label requirements. Mr. Corwin is preparing to place the order for the envelopes.

Ms. Capello put forth a suggestion that Mecklenburg County allow limited hours, (Noon to 4:00 PM or 1:00 to 4:00 PM), for Sunday voting on at least one week-end during the early in-person voting period. In the discussion that followed, Mr. Corwin stated that he was opposed to the idea. Virginia currently has the absolute longest period, (45 days), of early voting within the country. The adjoining counties have not embraced any extension to the window of time, and our experience has been that for the two Saturdays before election day that we are already open, activity is quite weak.

Ms. Alexander offered that most church goers would most likely continue their practices of socializing and dining out after church services. There does not seem to be an obvious compelling benefit to Mecklenburg residents to inaugurate Sunday voting. Mr. Corwin suggested that if the board wants to move in this direction, we should survey the voters of the county to determine their level of demand or support for

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Sunday voting. He also cautioned that if Sunday voting is offered, it will be very difficult to eliminate it in the future, as the expectation will have been established.

Mr. Chadeayne raised a question regarding survey methodology and the degree of accuracy engendered in the type and format of any survey. If the objective is to conduct a survey to support a desired decision, then you simply select the vehicle and tailor the questions to obtain the desired result. On the other hand, it could be quite difficult to select the vehicle and design the questions to achieve a high degree of accuracy of responses across a broad spectrum of Mecklenburg County voters. Whatever we do, we have to have a high degree of confidence that the response matches the sentiment of the community. The last thing we need to do, is to make the wrong move and alienate the voters of the county.

By common consent the discussion on this topic was deferred to the next meeting.

NCOA – Cancellations, 310 voters were removed from our rolls because non-notice of change of address over two presidential elections. 93 address updates were also provided. Notification has been made to each political party.

Office Update – Mr. Corwin reported that he has received approval from the Attorney General’s office granting authorization to relocate our CAP to the new office prior to the start of early voting. The Board of Supervisors has moved up our move date to comport with the new requirement in-law. Mecklenburg County was the first applicant to go through the waiver process with the AG’s office. This means that our office re-location can proceed as planned. September 1, 2021 is the completion date for the move. Mr. Corwin has made contact with the media to advertise our relocation. Signage has been designed to announce the move to be placed at the former location with directions to the new office. The EB will tour the new location post meeting.

Mr. Corwin proposed a camera security system to be installed in the new office location. The board reviewed the proposal and moved to authorize the purchase and installation of the security system proposed. Motion passed.

Law Updates – New 2021 law books have been distributed. Revisions in law regarding curbside voting have gone into effect, requiring new signage at our precincts. Mr. Corwin proposes a generic sign with a single contact number. The office will have every precinct chief’s cell phone number, so that when someone calls in, they will contact the chief to alert them that a voter is outside needing assistance. There will also be similar new signage for the new registrar’s office and a dedicated parking spot in front to accommodate curbside voting.

Motion to approve the Office of Election sign. Motion passed.

There has been a revision to law requiring preprocessing of absentee ballots. This would entail the office opening each absentee ballot as it is received. Processing receipt into VERIS, which we have always done. Mr. Corwin has reached out to ELECT for clarification regarding the interpretation of law. Mecklenburg County has not had any issue with timely processing returned absentee ballots on election day. In addition, the county uses a ballot cure process to minimize common errors made by voters. Thus, Mecklenburg County has a very low rejection rate of absentee ballots. We will wait for an official response to our inquiry before considering implementing any change to our process for handling returned ballots and the counting of the ballots.

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Moving May Elections – The County Supervisors, School Board, and Town Councils are all preparing to move local elections from May to November. Each governmental agency has incorporated this into their agendas and is beginning the formal process of moving the election date. Each entity has been advised on the necessary changes to their charters in order to complete the transition. The change should be effective November, 2022.

Split Precincts – South Hill has been receiving attention because it is considered a split precinct. The current proposal being reviewed by ELECT is to have a single precinct for the Town of South Hill and separate precincts for the district at-large outside of the town boundary. The issue here is that South Hill is within two districts, District 4 and District 5. Compounding the issue is that South Hill registered voter count exceeds five thousand voters. By law, this would force the town to have two voter precincts so as to have no precinct exceed five thousand voters. There would still be a requirement for separate voter precincts for those district residents outside the corporate limits of the town, thus having two smaller inefficient voter precincts. This will increase staffing requirements, the necessity of two additional ADA accessible and available polling locations, and additional voting equipment creating a heavy burden to the county with ostensibly zero gain. Current poll book technology easily segregates voters into the proper entity so that any ballot type differences can be easily accommodated.

The board's recommendation is that a. the Registrar alert the Board of Supervisors to the potential problem b. Mecklenburg County appeals to the State Board of Elections for a waiver from this revised law c. make known to the appropriate State Senate and State House of Delegates committees the conflict of unintended consequence created by this revision in law.

Voting Machine Firmware Update – An update for our voting machines has been prepared and certified for our machines. Mr. Corwin has advised the vendor that we want to hold off on the update until July 2022. This update is not critical and we do not wish to introduce any changes prior to the November election and future primary if there is to be one. The estimated cost will be \$6,384 when the updates are applied.

FOIA Requests – There has been a significant increase in the number of formal requests for information, many from individuals, a few organizations, and both political parties. The State Police Fusion Center has been alerted to the increase for their investigative activity.

ELECT Visit – Our Liaison from ELECT will be visiting August 24, 2021.

The next meeting will be September 14, 2021 at 1:00 PM at the new office location.

At 2:30 PM the board voted to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing performance evaluation.

At 4:20 PM the board reconvened in public session. Ms. Capello reported that no votes were taken nor was any topic outside of the stated purpose discussed in closed session.

The meeting adjourned at 4:25 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert P. Chadeayne

Secretary