**Mecklenburg County Electoral Board**

**September 8, 2020**

**Minutes**

Present were Jeanne M. Capello Chair, Robert P. Chadeayne Secretary, Yvonne Alexander, and Jason Corwin Registrar. Guests: R. Wallace Hudson.

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Capello at 1:11 PM. Mr. Corwin led us in a brief prayer.

The proposed agenda was agreed to with modification.

The minutes of August 11, 2020 were approved as presented.

Poll workers - Mr. Corwin reported that he has seven new Officer of Election applications in hand. He is requesting that they be approved so that they can receive training. His plan is to use these seven people as reserves to fill unexpected vacancies if and when they arise. He also advised the board that Mona Rainy will not be available as Chief for precinct 602. A motion was made to appoint Jamaica Davies as the permanent Chief for precinct 602. Motion passed. A motion was made to approve the list of Officers of Election for November 2020 including the seven new applications. Mr. Corwin will send a letter to the new applicants informing them they have been appointed and to schedule them for up-coming training.

Election procedures – Mr. Corwin explained that the legislature passed a bill to extend election day to noon on Friday after November 3, 2020 for absentee balloting. In-person voting at the precincts will still be conducted from 6:00 AM to 7:00 PM as normal. So, he is proposing that our procedures be as normal for Tuesday election day. The board shall meet on Wednesday to process provisional ballots and perform the canvass except for CAP. The board will reconvene on Friday to complete the canvass and certify the results. There will be a separate voting machine set-up to process the absentee ballots received up to noon on Friday allowing us to process everything on Wednesday leaving only the segregated absentee ballots received up to Friday. Without objection the board agreed to the modification of procedure.

Included in the election law change is a requirement to provide a “Drop off box” for voters who wish to hand deliver their ballot to the registrar’s office. In addition, on election day every precinct is also designated as a drop off point for absentee ballots. The plan is to use the metal boxes, appropriately labeled, that we traditionally have at the precincts. Each metal ballot box will be sealed with a secure metal numbered seal. These changes to law are in effect for the November 3, 2020 election only. The board discussed chain of custody questions and possible ways to document transfers of custody. In all cases the documentation of custody will be attested by a minimum of two signatures.

Ballot printing – Ms. Capello raised a question as to whether local printers could be used to print the ballots we use for an election. Mr. Corwin explained that any printer used will have to be certified by the manufacturer of the voting machine and the State Board of Elections. Additionally, there are responsibilities of a printer to meet certain chain of custody and documentation standards that are rather rigorous. If a local printer desires to enter this business it is their responsibility to obtain credentialling and certification. At this time there is not a local printer who meets these qualifications. We do currently use local printers for many things other than ballots.

Gator’s – Mr. Corwin has it on his agenda to discuss this topic with Wayne Carter. However, due to the new shutdown within the county for COVID mitigation, he has been unable to meet. Ms. Capello expressed a concern with continuing use of Gator’s, precisely because of the COVID social distancing requirements. There is a common consensus among the board that we need to petition for an emergency relocation of precinct 802 to the Bluestone Middle School for the November election. It is physically impossible, in a 10 foot by 18-foot room to separate poll workers and voters sufficiently to be compliant with the guidelines. Mr. Corwin agreed to elevate the priority of relocation with Mr. Carter and to have this issue put before the Board of Supervisors at their next meeting.

A discussion developed as a result of the county shutdown regarding impact on the Registrar’s Office. In person absentee balloting begins on September 18th requiring that voters have access to the office. It was suggested that Mr. Corwin reach out to the County Administrator seeking an exception to the shutdown order. If necessary, we will look into renting a large tent to be erected in front of the office and move the CAP under the tent. Security and protection of personnel and equipment then looms as additional issues. This needs to be explained to the Administrator.

Mr. Corwin reported that he has applied for a grant for the county for election activities from the state. This is not a matching grant so any funds would be over and above our budget. The thinking is that we would use these funds, if successful, to augment poll worker pay to compensate for concerns of COVID and as an incentive for a full complement of staff for the election.

Mr. Chadeayne introduced the following statement into the record:

Mecklenburg County Electoral Board

Robert P. Chadeayne

Public Statement regarding citizen concern over alleged activities by a member of this board.

When I was appointed to the Electoral Board, I was told that the Registrar’s Office and the Electoral Board are non-partisan.

This emphasis of non-partisanship is a central theme in all of the training classes conducted by the state that I have attended.

Today, I am faced with an advertisement published in the August 19, 2020 edition of the Mecklenburg Sun purported to be placed by the Chairperson of this board. This is troubling on many fronts.

* The advertisement does not comport to current law in that there is not a disclosure statement of who placed and paid for the advertisement.
* The advertisement is misleading and implies that “in person voting “will begin in precincts on September 18th by not referencing absentee balloting. In addition, without reference provides the telephone number of the Registrar of Voters.
* The advertisement is misleading, in that without disclosure, it implies that the only candidates on the ballot in November are the three names listed. There is no reference to any referenda questions, other candidates, or offices.

When information was published in the August 26th edition of the Mecklenburg Sun identifying Jeanne Capello as the alleged advertiser, the Chairperson of this Electoral Board; the Registrar and entire Electoral Board became implicated. An inference to which I clearly, loudly and strongly make objection to.

At best this may be a simple lapse of judgement and at worst, some sort of sinister plot to undermine our election and constitution.

In case anyone hasn’t noticed, this November election is one of the most contentious in recent history. Those of us who are in positions of authority can not and must not contribute to, or condone any behavior that calls into question the integrity and transparency of the Officers of Election charged with conducting this or any other election in Mecklenburg County.

The Registrar’s Office and the Mecklenburg Electoral Board MUST**, and I underscore the word MUST,** scrupulously conduct themselves in such a manner as to maintain the confidence and trust of all the citizens of Mecklenburg County.

Mr. Chadeayne requested that his statement be made part of the record.

Public Comment – Mr. R. Wallace Hudson, Chairman of the Mecklenburg County Republican Committee, based upon what he has seen and heard he is appalled by the conduct. As chair of the Electoral Board he expects this behavior should never have occurred and as a consequence he requested that Ms. Capello resign from her position on the board.

As there is no further business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 1:48 PM.

The next meeting will be on October 13, 2020 at 1:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert P. Chadeayne

Secretary