

CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

ABSENTEE/REGULAR MEETING

Chatham County Board of Elections Office
984 Thompson Street, Suite D
Pittsboro, NC 27312

GoToMeeting

Recorded meeting is available <https://www.chathamcountync.gov/government/departments-programs-a-h/elections/board-of-elections-members-meetings>

October 17, 2023 – 5:00 P.M.

ATTENDEES:

Chair Laura Heise, Member Frank Dunphy, Member Mark Barroso, Member Bob Tyson, Member Erika Lindemann, Director of Elections Pandora Paschal, and Elections Voting Equipment Technician Marvin Caracol.

Moment of Silence and Pledge

Member Bob Tyson led a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Call to Order

Chair Heise called the meeting to order stating that a quorum was present to conduct the meeting.

Approval of Agenda

Chair Heise asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Member Tyson stated that he had two items to add. 1). Only auditing contested elections, versus uncontested elections and 2). Machine misinterpreting overvotes. Chair Heise stated these items would be added to the agenda as item number 4. Member Lindemann made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Member Dunphy seconded the motion. All were in favor. Vote 5-0.

New Business

Approve Absentee Ballots

There were no mail-in ballots returned to approve for this meeting. Chair Heise asked the board to select a bi-partisan team to spot check the ballot envelopes for the meeting to be held on October 24, 2023. Member Lindemann and Member Tyson were selected to spot check the mail-in ballot envelopes and copy of mailed photo ID for the next meeting. Director Paschal asked the board if they would like to set a schedule with bi-partisan teams for the remainder absentee meetings so board members would be aware if they should come to the office 30-45 minutes before the meeting starts for this purpose? The board agreed to pick the bi-partisan team at each meeting and adjust the anticipated time needed according to the number of mail-in ballots returned. Deputy Director Steve Simos will send an email regarding number of ballots received in the mail after picking up the mail at 1:00 pm.

Director Paschal reminded the board that voting equipment would be tested at that same meeting.

Meet Attorney Caroline Mackie

Chair Heise welcomed Attorney Caroline Mackie to the meeting. Chair Heise stated that the board was not aware that they had access to an attorney with elections experience through the county's arrangement with Poyner Spruill. Attorney Mackie stated that she has worked with other counties on election matters, redistricting litigation with cities and towns, work on referenda, and election protests. Attorney Mackie made it clear to the board that she would be available for any election related matters, but she would recuse herself due to conflict of interest from any matter that was in opposition of Chatham County, and if the board needed legal guidance on any matter opposing the county that they would need to seek alternative legal counsel. For full discussion see live streamed meeting at this link: <https://www.chathamcountync.gov/government/departments-programs-a-h/elections/board-of-elections-members-meetings>

Discuss Early Voting Options for 2024 Primary

Chair Heise reminded the board that early voting plans are due December 1, 2023, and they are required to have a unanimous vote on the plans. If not the North Carolina State Board of Elections would make the decision on the plans for them. Director Paschal presented early voting plans to the board. There were four options to discuss. The board was presented with the statistics from the 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022 Primary elections, and Sunday voting statistics from 2022 Primary election. The board agreed that the data indicated that turnout for Sunday voting was extremely low. Member Barroso supports option 1. Member Lindemann supports option 3. Member Heise supports option 3. Member Tyson supports option 2. Member Dunphy commented that staffing workers at six early voting sites could be challenging since early voting data show Sunday voting is underutilized, further eroding worker enthusiasm for Sunday Duty. Member Barroso suggested to the board to start by eliminating the options that they don't want.

Chair Heise Made a motion to eliminate option 4 (Open 2 Sundays). Member Tyson seconded the motion. All were in favor. Vote 5-0. Member Tyson suggested eliminating option 1 (No Sundays). The board agreed. Member Tyson made the motion to adopt option 2 (No Sundays/Open 1 hour later Saturday, and close 1 hour later except last Saturday). Member Dunphy seconded the motion. 4 in favor (Heise, Dunphy, Barroso, and Tyson) 1 opposed (Lindemann).Vote 4-1.

Member Barroso asked the board to try again to get a unanimous vote. Member Lindemann made a motion to adopt option 3 (Open 1 Sunday). Member Barroso seconded the motion. Vote 3-2. (In favor Lindemann, Heise, and Barroso). Opposed (Dunphy and Tyson). Chair Heise tabled the vote for option 2 or 3 until another meeting to obtain unanimity by the board.

Staff will place a one question survey on the website and on the next-door app to obtain public opinion before the board votes on the early voting plan. For full discussion see live streamed meeting at this link: <https://www.chathamcountync.gov/government/departments-programs-a-h/elections/board-of-elections-members-meetings>

Auditing Contested Elections/Machine Overvotes

Member Tyson voiced his concerns about auditing uncontested elections because only one contest may not challenge tabulators to resolve multiple choices leading to inferior statistical robustness. Furthermore, he described how machines could be deceived by folds inherent in mail-in ballots leading to false overvotes. A Sample Audit is mandated by N.C.G.S. 163-182.1(b)(1). For full discussion see live streamed meeting at this link: <https://www.chathamcountync.gov/government/departments-programs-a-h/elections/board-of-elections-members-meetings>

Other Election Business**Adjourn**

Member Tyson made the motion to adjourn. Member Dunphy seconded the motion. All were in favor. Vote 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

Frank Dunphy 11/06/2023

Secretary, Frank Dunphy

Pandora Paschal

Attest, Pandora Paschal