

JULY 14, 2020

The Cumberland County Board of Elections met in Room 118 of the Cumberland County Courthouse at 1:00PM for their regular monthly meeting.

Present: Floyd W. Johnson, Jr., Chairman Linda Devore, Secretary
Bobby Swilley, Member Helen Nelson, Member
Irene Grimes, Member Terri Robertson, Director

Staff: Angie Amaro

Guests: Sally Shutt, Glenn Adams, Peter Apone, Sharon Johnson, Vera Horvath,
Rhudy Smith, Kia Anthony, Kia McMillan, Kori Haggard, Michael Haywood

Chairman Floyd Johnson called the meeting to Order at 1:03PM, welcomed guests, and presented the Agenda.

ACTION: Secretary Devore moved to adopt the agenda as presented.
Seconded and passed unanimously.

Chairman Johnson opened the public comment period.

Sharon Johnson, 8436 Umstead Drive, Fayetteville, NC, expressed concern for polling sites that were mentioned at the last meeting that may not meet criteria for social distancing. Recommendations: consider using East Regional Library, which is 3.5 miles from the current EO-02 site at Baywood Pentecostal Holiness Church; consider Lucille Saunders Elementary School for CC09; consider using the Crown Complex Auditorium lobby or Agri-Center for PM3; consider using John Griffin Middle School for PM4; and consider using Loyd Auman Elementary School on Raeford Road for CC28-1.

Vera Horvath, 531 Hillsboro St, Fayetteville, NC, suggests that employees paid by taxpayer dollars be required to meet additional continuing education requirements. Disappointed that when she called the BOE to inquire about what is in the Constitution that violates the previous voter ID verification process, she was advised that staff did not have the answer. Concerned about human trafficked and non-documented individuals and their right to vote.

Director Robertson read written comments from three individuals submitted through our portal.

Pamela Wade, 2728 Helaman Ct, Fayetteville, NC, asking that the Board approve eight early voting sites: BOE, Cliffdale, North Regional Library, East Regional Library, Smith Rec, Spring Lake, Hope Mills, and Grays Creek, and that all sites be open every day for the hours mandated by law, including all Saturdays 8-3 and all Sunday afternoons.

Ben Clark, resident of Hoke County, representing NC Senate District 21, including parts of Cumberland County, recommends that all BOE publications related to early voting inform citizens that they can drop off their completed mail-in absentee ballot envelope at any open

one-stop early voting site within the county, and establish an express voting line at each one-stop to drop off their absentee envelopes.

Chairman Johnson inquired about the drop-off process.

Director Roberson explained that current law allows a voter to drop off an absentee ballot envelope at any early voting site. The ballot is logged into the computer, and the precinct official takes possession of the ballot envelope.

Member Swilley inquired about whether this would be a drop box.

Director Robertson explained that the ballot must be handed to the election official, and logged in as being received. Not a drop box. We cannot do anything other than what the law allows.

Manuel Mejia Diaz, 5844 Chason Ridge Drive, Fayetteville, NC, thanked the Board for making it possible for citizens to submit comments virtually. Concerned that in these uncertain times, with people worried about being around huge crowds, the citizens of Cumberland County be able to vote in person while remaining safe. Urges the BOE to have extensive weekend hours apart from what is legally required, including all Saturdays and at least one Sunday, and open in places across the county and that serve under-represented communities, such as those of color.

ACTION: Member Swilley moved to close the public comment period.
Seconded and passed unanimously.

Secretary Devore presented minutes from the June 9, 2020 Board meeting for approval.

ACTION: Moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2020 meeting.
Approved unanimously.

Director Robertson provided each Board member with a packet, including the staff recommendation for the November Early Voting Plan, proposed precinct site changes and consolidations.

November Early Voting Plan recommendation (12 sites):

- Smith Recreation Center
- College Lakes Recreation Center (substitute for N Regional Library, which is not large enough to meet social distancing requirements)
- Hope Mills Recreation Center
- J.D. Pone Recreation Center in Grays Creek
- Spring Lake Recreation Center
- E.E. Miller Recreation Center
- Westover Recreation Center
- Cliffdale Recreation Center
- Kiwanis Recreation Center (in lieu of BOE site)
- Stoney Point Recreation Center
- East Regional Library
- Massey Hill Recreation Center

Each site to be open: 8:00AM-7:30PM Monday-Friday
8:00AM-3:00PM Saturdays (3)
1:00PM-5:00PM Sundays (2)

Total of 2004 voting hours (167 x 12 sites)

Director Robertson reported that the BOE office is not large enough with social distancing requirements to accommodate more than 10-11 booths, so it is not included in the staff recommendation. We will advertise, and place the new sites at the top of our site listings. College Lakes RC is just across from North Regional Library, and can accommodate an adequate number of voting booths with social distancing—North Regional Library cannot. We have a larger room at Hope Mills RC, but it is not as large as we would like.

Member Grimes commented that Kiwanis, Massey Hill, and Smith recreation centers would take up voters that would normally vote at the BOE.

Member Nelson inquired whether we could leave the BOE site open for overflow, and utilize Fuller Rec Center.

Director Robertson explained that we cannot open a site only for overflow. If it is a site, it is open to all voters. Many voters have used BOE in the past, with lines through the hallways to the front door and into the parking lot. With a six foot distancing requirement—we could not control that. Staff does not recommend using BOE with the smaller capacity allowed under social distancing guidelines. Signs will be posted at the sites that have been relocated, directing voters to new sites.

Secretary Devore commented that this proposal adds two more sites than we had in 2016. Westover would help relieve Cliffdale, and Stoney Point would help with Hope Mills. Only 4% of voters chose absentee in 2016, and 66% voted during EV. With this plan we will have more early voting sites than 2016 with the likelihood that, with the anticipated increase in absentee voting, there will be fewer in-person voters early and on election day—but we need to distance them. We also have no-excuse absentee voting in NC, and anyone may request an absentee ballot. We just need every voter to feel comfortable and safe with whatever method they choose.

Director Robertson explained that we do not know what voters will choose, but we want to be prepared for whatever method a voter chooses—we want to make sure they have all those choices.

Member Grimes thanked the staff for providing the historical numbers and statistics, even though we do not know what will happen this year, it is helpful.

Member Nelson inquired whether it would be possible to retain the BOE site.

Member Grimes stated that it is 1.2 miles from BOE to Smith REC and 1.6 miles from BOE to Kiwanis.

Director Robertson explained that if we use the BOE, we will have lines.

ACTION: Member Grimes moved to approve the Early Voting Plan for November with the 12 early voting sites, days, and hours as recommended by staff. Seconded and passed unanimously.

Chairman Johnson thanked the Director and staff for their work on the Early Voting plan.

Director Robertson reported that several current precinct polling sites are of concern, as reported at our last meeting, because of site capacity with distancing requirements. Staff has identified nearby sites that are larger and offer improved accessibility, and recommends these four precinct sites be permanently relocated:

- PM4 Faymont Baptist Church (0.1 mi from current site at Fire Station)
- EO-02 Temple Baptist Church (1.5 mi from current site at Baywood Pentecostal Church)
- CC09 Church of Christ on Country Club Drive (0.7 mi down Country Club Drive from current site on Green Valley Rd)
- LI65 Linden Community Center (0.1 mi from current site at Linden Fire Station)

ACTION: Secretary Devore moved to approve the four permanent precinct polling site changes as recommended by staff. Seconded and passed unanimously.

Chairman Johnson accepted remarks from County Commissioner Glenn Adams voicing his concerns about traffic on County Club Drive in the area of the Church of Christ.

Director Robertson presented two recommendations to the Board for precinct combinations.

The first recommendation concerns CC05 at Ramsey Street School, where voters have fallen on the stairs in the past. We recently moved CC19, which is a very low turn-out precinct, to the VFW location on Ramsey Street, and there is a lot of room there. Staff recommends that we combine CC05 and CC19 at the VFW site.

Member Grimes inquired whether we could use the cafeteria at the other end of the building to avoid the stairs into the polling site.

Director Robertson responded that we would only be able to use the cafeteria when school is not in session for this election, but not for other elections. There are also stairs inside the building, leading into the gym where voting takes place. You have to go down stairs to get into the building, and upstairs using a lift to get to the gym. This recommendation is for a permanent change.

Chairman Johnson commented about whether the major concern with the current CC05 location is the hazard with the stairs.

Member Grimes commented that she knows the steps to be treacherous even for someone younger and not disabled.

Secretary Devore commented that with the VFW site we have an option that is on grade—no steps, and it is visible right on Ramsey Street. CC19 has the fewest voters among our county precincts—less than 1000 registered voters.

Member Nelson inquired whether there would be sufficient space at the VFW, and whether accessibility could be improved at Ramsey Street school.

Director Robertson reported that in 2016 there were 233 in-person voters on election-day, and 239 who voted one-stop from CC19. The VFW can hold 10-11 voting booths, so there is plenty of room for both precincts. Years ago the county installed a lift for the inside stairs into the gym where voting takes place. Handicapped voters can park in the lot on Ramsey Street, enter the building there, and go down a long hallway to the lift.

ACTION: Secretary Devore moved to accept the staff recommendation to consolidate CC05 and CC19 precincts at the VFW site that currently serves CC19. Seconded and passed 4-1. Nelson voted against.

Director Robertson presented the staff recommendation to consolidate CC10 with CC11. CC10 is located at the Fire Station on Boone Trail. It is a very small fire station, and would require us to move the fire trucks out during voting to accommodate social distancing. There were 318 election-day voters in 2016. CC11 at Massey Hill RC has a large room which can accommodate voters from both precincts.

Secretary Devore commented that while this consolidation looks good on a map, there is a set of railroad tracks and a lake separating the two precincts along their common boundary. In order to get from homes in the Briarwood Hills neighborhood in CC10 over to Massey Hill RC, you have to get around the railroad tracks, approximately 3.4 miles.

Director Robertson stated that any changes would be mailed to each voter with a map and a new voting registration card, and advertised in the paper.

Secretary Devore inquired whether we have looked at any of the vacant commercial space in the strip mall directly across the street from CC10 fire station, knowing that the SBE has encouraged us to look at temporary moves into vacant commercial space to accommodate social distancing in this election.

Director Robertson expressed concerns with the process and uncertainty of renting commercial space.

Member Grimes expressed concern with notifying 1200 voters for a temporary change.

Member Nelson suggested that we move the fire trucks out for this election, as we do in other sites.

ACTION: Secretary Devore moved to not accept the staff recommendation for consolidation of CC10 and CC11 precincts. Seconded and passed. 4-1 Grimes voted against.

Director Robertson reported that there are seven additional sites that require further assessment. Five fire stations, one church, and a library. The church is a really good site, but is undergoing renovations. We are also asking our precinct judges to look at their spaces differently, so that voters can move around more efficiently inside the site. This has solved our spacing challenges in some locations. If it is determined that we need to make a change to any of these, we will need a special meeting. We also need to look at changing our August monthly meeting to the 18th.

ACTION: Secretary Devore moved to change next month's regular Board meeting date from August 11th to August 18th at 1:00PM.
Seconded and passed unanimously.

A tentative date of July 28th at 1:00 was agreed upon for considering any additional precinct site changes for the November election. If there are not any additional changes to be considered, the tentative meeting will be cancelled.

Chairman Johnson commented that we have done a wonderful job today to ensure that our voting population has the conveniences to be able to vote. That is our main objective.

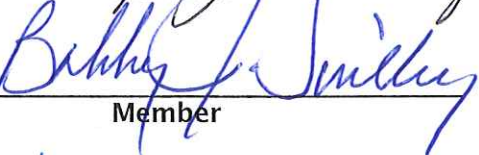
ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15PM.

Next scheduled monthly meeting: August 18, 1:00PM

Submitted by,


Linda Devore, Secretary


Chairman


Member


Director


Member


Member