

AUGUST 20, 2019

The Cumberland County Board of Elections met at the Board of Elections Office at 1:00 pm for their regular monthly meeting and for appointment of precinct officials.

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

Staff: Angie Amaro, Mitzie Roberts, Vicki Hilburn

Guests: Ethelyn H. Baker, Matthew C. Davis, Sharon Johnson, Grady Mims

Chairman Floyd Johnson called the meeting to Order at 1:00PM, and welcomed guests.

Public Comment Session - no public comments.

ACTION: Secretary Devore submitted minutes of the July 9th and July 24th meetings for approval. Approval was unanimous.

Vicki Hilburn presented the absentee report: 7 civilian absentee and 2 military absentee ballots have been received for the September 10th special election. One of the military ballots was received by email, and needs to be duplicated.

Member Swilley asked whether there are any irregularities with the absentee ballots received. Hilburn reported no irregularities.

ACTION: Member Swilley moved that the Board accept the absentee ballots as presented. Seconded and unanimously approved.

Director Robertson reported that the staff has prepared a list of recommendations for precinct judges and chief judges for two-year terms in our 77 county precincts. Total of 231 positions, though there are a few vacant where qualified individuals have not yet been identified. Lists of recommendations were received from both political party chairs. The Cumberland County Democratic chair did not submit a list before the statutory deadline on August 15th. The list was received late afternoon Friday, August 16th. Staff has been working to get contact information, calling, and leaving voicemails. The Republican list was received on August 15th, and gave name, address, and contact information for each person recommended, but did not recommend a particular placement. Staff is recommending they all be used where needed, though most not as judges, unless they have prior experience.

Chairman Johnson stated that he was not inclined to go with what the staff recommends. He is more inclined to go with the party recommendations.

Secretary Devore reminded that as public officials we need to follow statutory requirements. This deadline has been in place for many years, and is a minimum necessary for staff to properly contact those on the party lists.

Member Swilley asked whether the names submitted by each party chair have been incorporated in the staff recommendations.

Director Robertson said the staff worked to contact each person, but did not have phone numbers for some until this morning, and some others who were contacted did not want to serve in the position they were recommended for by their party chair. We worked to include as many as we could.

Members Grimes stated that we need to consider the staff recommendations since they have years of experience working with these people.

Chairman Johnson recognized Cumberland County Democratic Chair Sharon Johnson to address the late submission by her party.

Sharon Johnson reported that she had received information from the North Carolina Democratic Party that the deadline was August 17th, and was unclear about reading the information sent a couple of weeks ago from our staff reminding of the August 15th deadline.

Secretary Devore stated that Board Members had been copied on the email reminder to party chairs. This is a statutory deadline. Devore asked Director Robertson if there is any past precedent when the Board has accepted a list of recommendations from a county chair after the statutory deadline.

Director Robertson indicated that we are always in need of names of those willing to work, but specific recommendations may not be accepted after the deadline because we have to be prepared for this appointments meeting.

Member Nelson suggested that the Board review the recommendations from the Cumberland County Democratic Party individually by precinct alongside the staff recommendations. Nelson asked Director Robertson to comment on the recommendations, as we went through the list.

Robertson and Roberts provided comments from their notes on each recommendation on the Democratic Party list that has not been recommended for that position by staff. Staff has attempted to contact each person recommended. Some do not have experience working for us in any past elections, and some could not be reached. Statute requires that we appoint in-precinct as much as possible, and that can present a challenge to balance the party appointments.

Member Nelson asked Director Robertson to explain the process for replacing currently serving chief judges with those wanting to move up.

Director Robertson stated that we have recommended those with the most experience for these positions, and they will train the newer workers to move into vacancies over time. Those not appointed today will be incorporated as assistants.

Member Nelson asked to review the Republican Party recommendations, and staff commented on each. Most will be used as assistants.

Member Swilley commented that it appears both party lists have been given due consideration in developing staff recommendations.

Member Grimes asked how future vacancies during the two-year terms are handled. Robertson and Roberts explained the process, which requires Board action, other than last-minute circumstances when another trained person is moved in to fill a position for that day.

Chairman Johnson stated that we understand the difficulties of not having names submitted on time and our need to go with the best experience, but is concerned about how new folks can get that experience.

Member Nelson inquired as to whether those who are on the party lists that staff has been unable to contact yet, will be followed up with. Director Robertson explained that we need everyone. We will put them somewhere when we hear from them. We need people.

Member Swilley commented that even though the Democratic Party list was received late, the persons they recommended were considered.

ACTION: Member Swilley moved that the Board accept the list of recommendations for precinct judges and chief judges, as presented by staff. Motion seconded and unanimous. Johnson did not vote.

Director Robertson reported to the Board that the State Board of Elections has sent us information on a precinct project, and recommendations to adjust precinct lines to align with census blocks. Staff has been reviewing these proposed adjustments. Some of the proposed changes affect no voters, but others affect large numbers. The largest proposed adjustment affects the precinct line between CC23-1 and CC23-2, and moves about 500 voters. We need to respond to the State by October 1 with any recommendations for adjusting their proposed changes. The changes will become effective January 1, 2020.

Vicki Hilburn displayed some of the proposed changes before the Board. There are instances where we may want to make minor common-sense adjustments to the state proposal to avoid splitting structures (homes) and neighborhood streets to minimize voter confusion.

The Board agreed to review staff recommendations for precinct adjustments at our Absentee Meeting on September 24th at 1:00. Due to the number and complexity of the changes, the staff will make arrangements for Board members to individually review before the meeting.

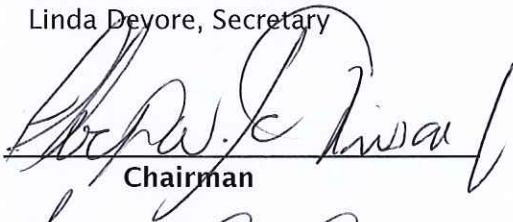
Secretary Devore offered a suggestion for adding visibility to early voting sites during early voting periods with large signs with arrows directing voters into the sites. Staff will follow up.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:38 PM.

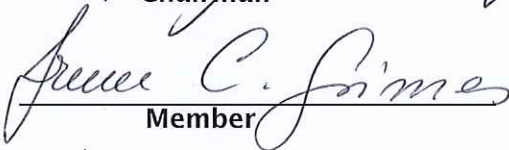
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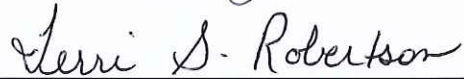
Linda Devore, Secretary



Chairman



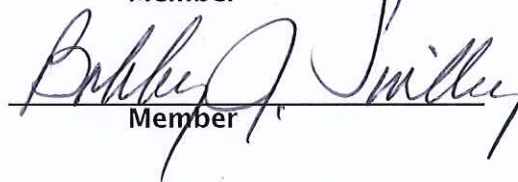
Member



Director



Member



Member