



ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

July 17, 2018 – 12:00 pm
Regular Meeting

The Rockingham County Board of Elections met Tuesday, July 17, 2018, at 12:00 pm in the Commissioners' Board Room.

Board Members Present: Royce Richardson, Chair; Toni Reece, Vice-Chair; Bonnie Purgason, Secretary; and Jeff Parris, Member

Staff Members Present: Tina Cardwell, Director; Keli Watkins, Senior Deputy Director; and Susan Barker, Deputy Director

Other Persons Present: Members of the media and public

ITEM #1 – MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order at 12:00 pm by Chair Richardson. Chair Richardson welcomed those in attendance and introduced the Board and Staff.

ITEM #2 – ORGANIZATION OF BOARD

Secretary Purgason nominated Toni Reece as Chair, the vote was unanimous.

Member Parris nominated Royce Richardson as Vice Chair, the vote was unanimous.

ITEM #3 – APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Secretary Purgason made the motion, seconded by Member Parris, and the vote was unanimous to approve the Agenda for this meeting.

ITEM #4 – APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice Chair Richardson made the motion, seconded by Secretary Purgason, and the vote was unanimous to approve the minutes of the June 19th Regular Meeting as presented.



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ITEM #5 – PUBLIC COMMENTS

Norma Kelly, 14022 NC 87, Eden

-I just want to say that for years and years we voted on Election Day. And I don't see any reason why we still can't do that. We don't even have enough jobs in our county for our people who want to be working; so why should we put this extra financial burden on the county, to have to pay for extra voting days. No telling what it costs for those few people who come in on those extra voting days. Thank you.

Diane Parnell, Republican Party Chair, 220 Woodlyn Dr., Reidsville

-Good morning Madam Chairman, Board of Elections, I am Diane Parnell. I speak as the Chairman of the Republican Party of Rockingham County. For years and years, I'm going to agree with Norma, we did voting in one day and amazingly we got it done. We got people elected. I have worked this early voting. I know the remote sites do not have a great participation in the remote sites. It's not trying to keep anybody from the availability of voting; but it's hard on the candidates, it's hard on the workers when you have so many, so many days that you have to stand up. It's hard on the people at the Board of Elections. Do they actually get any time off? But I'm going to say today, let's come together. We don't need Raleigh making the decision for Rockingham County to do. This is an expensive venture. I don't know exactly the amount the Commissioners' allotted for this; but I've heard a lot of figures being thrown around that this could possibly cost as much as \$76,000. Think about it in terms of, what could \$76,000, or half of that, if that's what it's going to cost us, do for the children that are not serviced in Rockingham County? What could it do for the kids that do without food? Or the adults, the older people, that don't have the fans that the Sheriff is collecting for them, or meals. This is such a waste of money; and I hope that you will absolutely consider this, of making a unanimous decision so it will not go to Raleigh because I think you are completely capable of ruling Rockingham County. Thank you very much.

Jenny Edwards, 330 E. Main St., Stoneville

-Madam Chair, Board, thank you so much for listening to me today. I just moved up here last year, so happy to be a voting member of Rockingham County. Senate Bill 325 requires that one stop sites be staffed by a full time employee. This means that putting that staff person on a 12 hour shift pays overtime. So counties lose the ability to stagger voting sites, which has been our tradition. The lawmakers who sponsored this bill claim that it's to minimize confusion, but the reality is that it is clearly targeted to make early voting more difficult by putting an undue burden on the County Board of Election. So I'm not here to debate that; it's passed, it's law. But the reality is, not unlike the honored person who spoke before me, lots of people use these extra voting sites. In 2016, more women utilized early voting than men, more Democrats used early voting than Republicans and more one stop voters utilized early voting than ever before.



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So, early voting sites are clearly critical to the democratic process to fair and just elections. So I would like to urge the Board to figure out how to keep early voting sites open for the sake of our democratic process. Thank you.

Carol Edwards, 330 E. Main St., Stoneville

-I want to thank the Board for hearing me, this is the first time I have ever done this. My daughter gave me a talking point, it's short. In 2012, nearly 36% of the votes cast were during early voting. So therefore it's important that people have the opportunity to vote early. From a personal standpoint, she didn't write down, at the age of 81 I have voted a lot of times. I know how precious my vote is and how precious is the freedom that we have. I worked as a single mom supporting 5 children. I've worked in factories, I've worked in mills, I have worked as a waitress. I have worked shifts, I have worked for good bosses and bosses that didn't give you leeway and you had to show up. You had to show up if you had the flu or the children had the flu, it didn't matter. We had to show up. So, the early voting sites offer an opportunity to people tied to surviving on their income, trying to stay off welfare, trying to keep a family together. So I strongly and emotionally support the consideration of giving this second thought. They are not too expensive in light of how important the vote is to the individual and to this county. I thank you so much.

Ron Price, 218 Cedar Run, Reidsville

-Good afternoon Chairman and Board Members. I was coming to speak about the cost and the need for this service. I've spent a lot of time at the polls during the elections usually because I have been a candidate, and I have been there campaigning for other people so I see the activity that goes on, but at the same time this past season, we watched a number of polling locations where there was very sparse attendance and we were not getting a good return for our money. I mean we need to have voting options for people. We certainly have absentee ballots available, which I would consider a number of times using except I have been here at the polls so it was very convenient for me. But certainly to use absentee ballots, you can request a ballot and mail it in if it's a problem coming to the poll to vote. The cost associated with this new statute on voting requirements, it's going to double down, triple down on the amount of time that's required at each location because all the remote sites will have to be the same, covering the same amount of time. I heard mention of a number like \$76,000.00, also that number could be as high as \$200,000.00 and that is a lot of money for the county. There is always that propensity to spend money that either we don't have or say well, we will take it from someplace else. So I would propose that we have one remote early voting one stop which would be at the board of elections and that the other locations would not be open because of the immense expense. Certainly people from different areas can get to the location to vote here in Wentworth and get their opportunity to come and vote and cast their ballot. To open the other sites increases the expense significantly and it's something that we don't need



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because of all the other options. I can remember when I first started voting we voted one day and you had to do it then, we have certainly have expanded that. This past time it was 19 days or 18 days. Thank you.

Roxanne Griffin, 108 S. Wilson St., Madison

-Good afternoon. Our country came into being due to taxation without representation. Our form of government was set up to prevent any one faction from silencing the voice of dissenting opinion. From any one branch of government having all the decision making power. Our state's constitution echoes these premises. But since 2011 we have seen assault after assault on the rights of voters through partisan and racial gerrymandering and legislation which has made boards of elections essentially dysfunctional. We have seen more laws take power from agencies, the governor and municipalities and shift that power to the General Assembly. In 2018 we will have 6 constitutional amendment referendums on the ballot. Most of which are designed to take even more power and bestow it on the legislature, including the ability to ensure a partisan judicial system so there will no longer be a check on that power. But, the piece de resistance is here in this room today under the guise of uniformity in early voting throughout the state. Less populated county boards of election are faced with the very unpatriotic task of suppressing the vote by closing remote sites due to the burden of taxpayer expense. You, the Rockingham County Board of Elections members must decide how to shortchange voters you are supposed to be working for. Fewer polling locations and hours at less expense or unnecessary maximum locations and hours at more than twice the price of past elections. I urge you to consider that remote sites are misnamed because voters in Madison and Reidsville afford voting closer to home for the majority of Rockingham County citizens, particularly those who depend on public transportation. By closing the board of elections office for early voting and opening all three so-called remote sites with the addition of maximum Saturday voting, you could partially compensate for the loss of Wentworth, though it would cost slightly more than is currently budgeted. On the other hand, you could open only Wentworth for the maximum days and hours possible including full Sundays and half Saturdays. Perhaps the Board of Commissioners could be persuaded to make use of the savings to run direct route busses from the closed locations to Wentworth, and when you send your voting plans to the State Board of Elections, I suggest that at that time all 4 of you protest to the NCGA for their unconscionable abuse of power. To those of you who work hard so that elections run smoothly I offer my sympathies for this last minute wrench in your works. You too deserve better from our elected officials. Thank you.

W. E. James, 417 Piedmont St., Reidsville

-Madame Chairman, Members of the Board, I would have to take issue with some of the comments made just prior to my being able to address you, but this is not to be a debate and therefore I will just stick to the points that I wanted to make. The early voting requirements the



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State has imposed have a certain amount of wiggle room to them and I would suggest for the sake of compromise and the sake of flexibility that you keep the Wentworth site open for the duration of the 17 days and operate the satellite sites, a small number of them for the last week perhaps before the election. That would strike me as a reasonable compromise. There are a couple of things I think need to be taken into consideration with operation of numerous satellite sites and more and more days of early voting and this of course the problem that it does facilitate – cheating. In the 2016 election the video investigators at Veritas.org did an undercover investigation and they found some professional political organizers, I won't name the party, whom they videoed, bragging and laughing over the fact that they were able to transport people from one voting site to another, even from one state to another and I cannot see but how the expansion of the number of sites and the expansion of the number of days can only facilitate such a problem. Another problem that comes to mind is that when we have numerous voting sites operating for many lengthy days that tends to put the grassroots at a serious disadvantage. He or she does not have the money to pay poll workers. He or she has to rely on volunteers. There is a limited amount of time particularly for working at the polls and observing the polls and things like that, so if we are going to talk about discrimination, a wide open, all time site voting system will only discriminate against underfunded grassroots candidates. Thank you.

Wally White, 314 Von Ruck Rd., Eden

-Good Afternoon. I think I probably know better than almost anyone in here how important every single vote counts. I know that because I lost my Primary Election by 43 votes. Even with that and that was just with Democrats, somewhere I don't have the exact numbers but somewhere approximately only 10% of the registered Democrats came out to vote in that. So our goal here shouldn't be finding ways to make voting more difficult. We need to find ways to make voting easier. We need to find ways to encourage everybody to vote. Not be accepting of the 10% vote, reach out to the 100% vote and when we get there reach out to the people who haven't even bothered to register to vote yet because voting is the very core of our democracy. It is what makes our country, our state, and our county great. People died for that vote. When I was trying to think of what I would say to you all today, I kept going back to a picture of Oprah in the movie "Selma" and it wasn't about her, the actress, but it was about the character she played who was a real life person named Annie Lee Cooper. Annie was born in Selma. She moved away and when she came back to care for her ailing mother, which is something I fully understand, she came back as somebody who had been a registered voter in Pennsylvania and Ohio. When she came back to her home state, she wasn't allowed to vote. She had to fight for that vote. It was a hard enough fight that became a story they made a movie about. Black men hung in trees fighting for the right to vote. So yes, our General Assembly has passed last minute laws to make it more difficult for people to vote. But you have to spend that money now and then go back to them and say you give us the money back



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because you changed this last minute. I have already gone to the Reidsville City Council and asked them to reach out to you and say we'll help pay for our vote because we care about our citizens. But it's too late for everybody. Even though you all have to have a decision before all those councils could even step up and say we'll help because we care about our citizens. So it's left for you all to care for the citizens. Thank you.

Katherine Fox, 1529 Clovercrest Dr., Reidsville

-I didn't write anything to say, but, I remember when the first black person came to Northend School to segregate our classes of races of people. I saw them being mistreated and people that I thought were kindhearted, attended churches that I attended, and that were supposedly to behave a certain way according to Jesus and the Bible, I've seen them mistreated so poorly and they keep being pushed back and back and as a person I have lived in poverty, I have lived in not poverty, I have worked for the government, my ex was military. I've seen so many different people, different types of people, they look at race and religion and status as a purpose of division and I feel like everybody needs to be looked at in an equal manner and to be treated well instead of being left out of something so important for them because our government has been run for too long by people that are white and old and the movement at times has not been considering people of under status, different races and different religions. Our government is supposed to be keep equality a factor and they are not doing that. I feel like people of color are being discriminated against in not opening the early voting. Thank you.

Amanda Bell, 8763 Friendship Church Rd., Reidsville

-Madame Chair, Members of the Board, I do thank you for this opportunity just to share my voice. I grew up in a household where parents expected us to register and vote when we reached the age of 18 and that has remained with me throughout all of these years. I want to speak basically, on behalf of the senior citizens in the neighborhood that I witnessed during our last election. When I went back to my records, the early voting site in the Salvation Army in Reidsville had the highest number voted. I noticed that generation of people, like myself, the senior citizens, who also grew up with some of those same expectations, and that is to vote, to register and vote. There were a number of people, I was so impressed, by the number of senior citizens like my husband and I who choose to vote early, simply because we do want to avoid long lines, because senior citizens cannot stand at a long length of time. So they choose to vote early just for that reason. I urge you to please consider another generation of people who are committed to voting and who want to cast their vote because it is important to them. I urge you to please consider our senior citizens throughout the county who take advantage of the early voting sites. Thank you.



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Ann Brady, 3190 NC 65, Reidsville

-Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm upset and frankly surprised that our General Assembly passed these new early voting laws. On a national level, laws are being passed to minimize unfunded mandates. Our General Assembly, however, passed into law early voting criteria that will either deny voter access or cost our local government money. The General Assembly is clearly trying to suppress early voting opportunities and the ability of you all to have good options. And I will have to interject here; I don't disagree with what you suggested, that's not allowed under the law anymore – you can't have the remote sites open for a few days. They are either open or they are closed. They took away the opportunity for you all to determine the best course of action for our county to find a way to give equal access and opportunity to our citizens while holding costs in check. Early voting has been popular in Rockingham County. In the 2014 General Election, 42% of those who voted used early voting. In 2016, it was 56%. Early voting allows citizens to vote when they are not working or when they otherwise can fit voting into their schedule. We should do all we can to make voting as easy and as accessible as possible. Our county is unique with 3 pockets of population that are around the edges. Merely shutting one or two remote sites to cut costs would be highly unfair to those cities. For example, if you shut all remote sites except Reidsville, the one most used, you deny fair opportunity to Eden, Madison-Mayodan voters to vote early. There are reasonable options that you can consider. I have researched this topic thoroughly. And although I have my own opinion of a best plan, it is up to the Board to discuss alternatives and find a plan that will minimize expenses while providing as much access to our county voters as possible. Greensboro closed 2 of its 11 sites and included Sunday voting in addition to the mandated dates. Their Board of Elections came to an agreement, you can too. There are options. The challenge will be to find the best solution to ensure citizens have access to the polls while minimizing increased costs. Thank you for your good work.

Rochelle Tucker, Reidsville NAACP, 643 Grooms Rd., Reidsville

-Good Afternoon. Let me take this opportunity to again come before you, it seems like I was here in 2012, 2016 and talked to the Board at that particular time regarding the early voting. I was asking for voting on Sunday. We were granted a voting opportunity on Sunday and because of the rainy weather on that particular day that God blessed us with, it diminished the numbers that were out to vote. But within Rockingham County those who still attend church represent a pretty substantial number. So I contend that if we are going to limit some voting that we would consider a Sunday vote and because of the controversial limelight that continues to shine on the upcoming election, the potential for record breaking voter turnout is tremendous. After worship services we see that most folk have gone back to church now because of what we are seeing in this nation and the state. The number of voters who participate in the process, we think, will increase. And we will be excited to have those statistics enhanced here within Rockingham County. Our organization, Reidsville NAACP, was



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one of the leading groups that was involved in the recent Voter ID lawsuit that was recently resolved. In all departments, there at the building, for half a dozen years all of our partners joined with us in saying that we are against any form of intimidation and voter suppression. And since this last wave of leadership changes at the General Assembly, it was argued and proven in court, that schemes were concocted to increase the political power of this ultra conservative leadership at the expense of the power of the African-American vote. And we won't sit by quietly and watch this without any kind of reaction. And it's disheartening what we see here with all of the legislators recent efforts to do away with the early voting opportunities. Surely there has to be sufficient diplomacy to exist to fund one of the most fundamental rights and privileges afforded to us by the Constitution. Yeah, we didn't always vote on any day but Sunday, but then all of the stores weren't open on Sunday. So we do have change there so let's work together to do the very best that we can for this county. We have come too far, we fought too hard, we have been jailed too often and died too much for this right, and so let us work together to work this out. Thank you so much.

Jean Harrington, 650 Washington St., Eden

-Madame Chairman and Board, I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I signed up rather late but I thought since there was a microphone and since Tommy is not here to speak, that I should perhaps be the Harrington to speak to you all today. What I want to say to you all is very short and simple. We have all been given the same opportunity to vote as everybody else. No one has been left out. Everybody can vote. I have heard the words alluded to old and white, I guess I fit in that category; I have the old department more than anybody else. But, I have been voting all my life, I don't think I have ever missed an opportunity and it has never been inconvenient to me. It has been a privilege and I think that's how we should look at voting. It's a privilege. That we are all very concerned about our rights, our rights. Well we all have the same rights. And we all have the same privileges. So I think that we have been given privilege to vote. I think we should take the opportunity and be proud to do that and not expect the county. I think it's always been pretty interesting to think about how much would each vote cost and I know a lot of talk has been mentioned today about how much the extra voting is going to cost. I think that's something that you as a board have to consider. As we all know, Rockingham County is not a wealthy county. At this point, we hope to change that, but someone is also saying how much money you are going to spend more profitably than opening polls just for the convenience of people when they take the opportunity to go to the polls as part of their duty as citizens. Thank you all.

Donald Gorham, Reidsville City Council, 285 Pennsylvania Ave., Reidsville

-Good afternoon Madame Chair, I apologize for scratching my name out. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I just want to make a few points. As a classroom teacher for many years, I had to make adjustments to my lesson plans to make sure that I had an opportunity to reach



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every student in my classroom. A conservative plan of action will cause some learning to take place in the classroom. As a school principal, my school improvement team and myself would come together to make sure that we could properly serve every student in the school building. And in doing so we could also try to supply the needs of each of the teachers. Conservative use of thought could have caused failure for some of the teachers in the classroom and some of the students also. Somebody had the right idea years ago to make sure that everyone had the opportunity to vote. Early voting just didn't come for no reason. It came for a reason. Just like those adjustments in the lesson plans that I would have to make to reach all students. Just like the diligent work that my school improvement team and myself put together to make sure that everybody had a fair and equal opportunity to learn. I am asking you today to continue that fair and equal opportunity for everyone to have an opportunity to vote. You don't have any idea what comes up in the lives of individuals with the election process. And Wally, I know what it means also in reference to each and every vote counting. I ran for mayor in '09 and I lost by 27 votes, a half a bus load.

ITEM #6 – 2018 GENERAL ELECTION ONE STOP PLAN

Director Cardwell presented information regarding rewritten Session Laws and Statutes concerning One Stop (Early) Voting Plans and discussed the estimated costs of complying with new mandates. The Board discussed the number of Precinct Officials scheduled at remote sites, as well as staffing and OT costs at the Board of Elections Office. Vice Chair Richardson stated he researched Precinct Officials staffing and training costs in adjoining counties. The Board conferred about current options available for One Stop (Early) Voting including Absentee By Mail and business hours available at the Board of Elections office.

Secretary Purgason made the motion, Chair Reece seconded, to adopt a plan to open only the Board of Elections Site from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm the 14 days as mandated by the State of North Carolina plus Saturdays.

Chair Reece	Aye
Secretary Purgason	Aye
Vice Chair Richardson	Nay
Member Parris	Nay

The motion failed because it was not unanimous.

Vice Chair Richardson made the motion, seconded by Member Parris, to adopt the plan opening the Board of Elections Site from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm and all three remote sites from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm and adding the first Saturday, October 20th, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm; Sunday, October 21st, from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm; and the last Saturday from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm.



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Vice Chair Richardson	Aye
Member Parris	Aye
Chair Reece	Nay
Secretary Purgason	Nay

The motion failed because it was not unanimous.

The One Stop (Early) Voting Plan will be decided upon by the State Board.

ITEM #7 – NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

ITEM #8 – ADJOURNMENT

Secretary Purgason made the motion, Vice Chair Richardson seconded, and the vote was unanimous to adjourn this meeting at 1:07 pm.

Next meeting is set for August 21 @ 3:00 pm – Regular Meeting

Respectfully Submitted,

Tina Cardwell, Director

Toni Reece, Chair