The Rockingham County Board of Elections met Tuesday, March 22, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. at the Commissioners Chambers.

Board Members Present: Ophelia Wright, Chair; Tom Schoolfield, Secretary; Nelson Cole, Member; Thurman Hampton, Member; and Sarah Totten, Member.

Staff Members Present: Paula Seamster, Director.

**ITEM #1 – MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

The Board meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Wright. Chair Wright welcomed the Board members and the guests that were present as well as those who were viewing the meeting online.

**ITEM #2 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Member Hampton.

**ITEM #3 – INVOCATION**

Invocation was given by Co-Pastor Jody DeLancey, Resurrection Life Church in Eden, NC.

**ITEM #4 –** **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Secretary Schoolfield moved, seconded by Member Hampton to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.**

**ITEM #5 – APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Member Totten moved, seconded by Secretary Schoolfield to approve the February 9, 2022 Special Meeting Minutes, February 15, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes, February 22, 2022 Special Meeting Minutes, and February 28, 2022 Special Meeting Minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.**

**ITEM #6 – PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The Director read the Public Comments policy.

Lissa Harris – Emailed in Public Comments

“Lissa Harris, Concerned Voter, Community Outreach Advocate, 311 Short Avenue. Dear Board of Elections & Director Seamster: As a voter in Rockingham County I would like to ask the board to please consider improving the Voter Education Outreach to our county.  Unfortunately the election participation shows significant gaps due to thousands of citizens who do not understand the election process. All county citizens do not know what will be on the ballot. Please consider investing more in (staff, promotional materials and visual aids such a digital media, radio/television and providing election information on ground in communities.) Targeting areas such as improving Voter Registration, Understanding Absentee Process, How to confirm your current Voter Status, or Understanding How to ensure you are accessing your correct ballot/polling site are only a few. There are countless nonpartisan organizations, civic engagement, Faith-base and nonprofits that support our county and should be part of a Rockingham County Election Educational Collaborative. While I understand our BOE has limited staff who already work hard, sometimes creating digital resources that various media outlets and community groups may access can improve the overall engagement of our citizens. I am asking you as our dedicated Board of Elections to please invest in providing the resources and strategic planning needed to increase and improve overall election material access and voter election information. Unfortunately there are stumbling blocks that are deterrence to the citizens of Rockingham County. They choose not to vote rather than go to the polls not being well informed of the important issues as well as knowing which candidate will represents their best interest. Ensuring all communities and demographics, social economics are supported by having a clear understanding of the election process matters!”

With no further comments Chair Wright closed Public Comments.

**ITEM #7 – DISCUSSION ON HOW TO MAKE ELECTIONS INFORMATION MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THE VOTERS**

Chair Wright stated that at one of the Board meetings the Chair charged the Board to brainstorm on how to get information out to the voters.

Member Totten stated that putting information in the Eden’s Own Journal would be a means to get information out to the public. She stated that the Board had mentioned the public forums and these could be videoed and put on YouTube to make that accessible to the public.

Secretary Schoolfield stated that the Board had a real opportunity with some of the civic organizations. He stated that he and Member Hampton had some discussions on this and thought a fairly large sign at the voting precinct locations as well as the early voting sites would be very appropriate.

Chair Wright stated that she knew the Board had contact with the political parties and could send information to them to distribute. She stated that social media had been mentioned such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Chair Wright stated that under the old director information was taken to the high schools to the juniors and seniors to make them aware of voting.

Member Hampton stated that during the conference last week there were two Elections directors from two different counties who talked about the efforts they had made to reach out to the community to conduct voter education and suggested reaching out to other directors on what they do.

Chair Wright recommended using Star News and the Sunshine List. She recommended sending a tool kit to the media through the Sunshine List as well as ask the municipalities to distribute information through their Sunshine List.

Member Cole stated that he carried around a list of about 7 items where one vote made a difference and he recommended sharing this list of items to the public. He stated that in 1845 one vote brought Texas into the Union, in 1876 one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States, and in 1649 one vote caused Charles I of England to be executed.

Chair Wright stated that a lot of things had been listed but the Board needed to get together to decide on where to start.

Secretary Schoolfield asked who would represent the Board to go and speak to the various groups.

The Director stated that she had received information from Mike Moore with Mike Moore Media as well as Roy Sawyers who has the Rockingham Update webpage so those are other resources that Elections had.

Chair Wright stated that the Board would look to the Director to help get this started and there would be more discussions on this within the next few days.

Member Hampton stated that Elections staff was busy and giving them additional things to do may not help in the overall effort. He asked how the Board would go about creating things that the Board wanted to put out to the public without burdening staff with additional work. Member Totten responded that this could be discussed in the meeting that the Board would hold to determine what the Board was going to do to get the information out to the public. Chair Wright stated the things that Elections already has. Member Hampton asked what would be in the tool kit. Chair Wright responded that it would have things like where to vote, when to vote, etc. Member Hampton stated that someone needed to put this information together in a presentable form in order to have speakers to go out to talk to the public. Chair Wright asked Member Hampton to suggest when the Board should get started. Member Hampton responded that he was ready now. He suggested talking to the other counties about what they have done after the Primary Election but before the General Election.

Member Cole recommended that the director and staff put together some information on the process and then advise the Board. Member Hampton responded to establish a baseline on what had been done. Member Cole stated yes.

Member Cole moved, seconded by Member Hampton to proceed with staff developing the steps for this process within a week to 10 days.

Member Totten recommended changing the timeline from 10 day to a week. Member Cole stated that this was fine with him.

**Member Cole moved, seconded by Member Hampton to proceed with Staff developing the steps for this process within 5 days. The motion carried unanimously.**

**ITEM #8 – DIRECTOR’S UPDATE**

2022 Primary Election Update

The 2022 Primary Election would be held on Tuesday, May 17, 2022. The polls will open at all 15 precincts at 6:30 a.m. and will close at 7:30 p.m.

One-Stop (Early) Voting

One Stop (Early) Voting will begin on Thursday, April 28th and end on Saturday, May 14, 2022. Early voting will be held at the Rockingham County Board of Elections office; the Eden Library, 598 S. Pierce Street, Eden; Zion Baptist Church, 807 Piedmont Street, Reidsville; and the Madison Mayodan Library, 611 Burton Street, Madison. The Board of Elections hours will be from 8:00 am to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and then on Saturday, May 14th from 8:00 am to 3:00 p.m. The other three remote sites will be open from 8:00 am to 7:30 pm Monday through Friday and then on Saturday, May 14th from 8:00 am to 3:00 p.m.

Ballots

There will only be two ballots this year, a Democratic Party Primary Ballot – D0001 and a Republican Party Primary Ballot – R0002. Absentee Ballot requests will begin to be mailed out on Monday, March 28th. Voters have until Tuesday, May 10th to request an absentee ballot. The absentee ballots can be requested from our office or through the State Board of Elections website. If ordered through our office an Absentee Ballot Request form will need to be filled out prior to a ballot being mailed out.

Registration Deadline

The Voter Registration Deadline is Friday, April 22nd at 5:00 p.m. Rockingham County residents are allowed to register to vote during registration but they would need to show proof that they live in Rockingham County and are eligible to vote.

2022 Elections Schedule

In the Board’s packets there was a 2022 Election Schedule that told when Absentee Board Meetings and Regular Board Meeting would be held. It also told when One-Stop (Early) Voting begins and ends as well as when County Canvas would be held. This information will be posted on the Board of Elections website once some things were decided by the Board.

Board of Elections Meeting Date Change for April 19, 2022 and May 17, 2022

The next item on the agenda, the Board of Elections needed to change the meeting date or time for April 19th and May 17th. On April 19th the Board will have an Absentee Board meeting at 5:00 p.m. She asked if the Board wanted to hold the regular scheduled Board meeting at 10:00 a.m. or change it to 5:00 p.m. and have the Absentee Board meeting following the regular Board meeting and if the Board changed the Board meeting to 5:00 p.m. it would be held at the Board of Elections office.

She continued that the next regular Board meeting was scheduled for May 17th, which would be Election Day. The Director asked the Board if it wanted to hold that meeting on the same day or delay it for another time, possibly, Tuesday, May 22nd depending on whether the Commissioners Chambers meeting room would be available as well as Roy Sawyers

**Secretary Schoolfield moved, seconded by Member Cole to hold both regular meeting dates, April 19th and May 17th, at 5:00 p.m. at the Board of Elections Office prior to the Absentee Board Meetings. The motion carried unanimously.**

NC State Board of Elections Conference

The NC State Board of Elections Conference was held on Monday, March 14th and Tuesday, March 15th. The Director thanked the Board members for attending the conference. There was a lot of information shared.

Board of Elections FY 2022-2023 Budget

The Board of Elections budget had been submitted to the County. According to the Budget Calendar during March and April the management team will review the departmental requests and begin recommendations. Starting April 13th through April 20th there would be department/agency budget meetings with the county manager and budget/finance staff as needed. The county manager hoped to start finalizing the outstanding budget decisions and begin writing the county manager’s budget message. April 29th the departments should receive their budgets back for review. The county manager will present the recommended budget to the Board of Commissioners on May 13th.

**ITEM #9 – CLOSED SESSION**

**Member Cole moved, seconded by Member Totten to go into Closed Session to prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential (NCGS 143-318.11(a)(1) and to consider the compensation, terms of appointment and performance of an individual public officer (NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6). The motion carried unanimously.**

**Member Cole moved, seconded by Member Totten to go back into Regular Session. The motion carried unanimously.**

**ITEM #10 – ADJOURNMENT**

At 11:55 a.m. **Member Totten moved, seconded by Member Hampton to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Paula P. Seamster, Director Ophelia Wright, Chair