

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 15, 2022 – 4:00 PM
REGULAR MEETING**

The Rockingham County Board of Elections met Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. at the Rockingham County Board of Elections Office located at 240 Cherokee Camp Road, Reidsville, NC.

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

Board Members Absent: Thurman Hampton, Member.

Staff Members Present: Paula Seamster, Director.

ITEM #1 – MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chair Wright. Chair Wright welcomed the Board members and the guests that were present as well as those watching via the internet.

ITEM #2 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Secretary Schoolfield.

ITEM #3 – INVOCATION

Chair Wright gave the invocation. The person that was going to give the invocation was under the weather.

ITEM #4 – APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

ITEM #5 – APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Secretary Schoolfield stated that before there was a motion to approve the minutes there was one correction to the Minutes of October 25th to October 18th, there are two October 25th minutes and there should only be one.

Secretary Schoolfield moved, seconded by Member Cole to approve the October 11, 2022 Absentee Meeting Minutes, October 18, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes, October 18, 2022 Absentee Meeting Minutes, October 25, 2022 Absentee Meeting Minutes, November 1, 2022 Absentee Meeting Minutes, November 7, 2022 Pre-Election Absentee Meeting Minutes, and the November 8, 2022 Absentee Meeting Minutes as presented with the one correction. The motion carried unanimously.

Secretary Schoolfield added that the length of time it took for the Board to read the minutes was pretty significant and the Board owed the Director thanks for all the work because it takes 5 times as long to put the minutes together.

ITEM #6 – PUBLIC COMMENTS

With no one signed up for Public Comments, Chair Wright closed Public Comments.

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ITEM #9 – DIRECTOR’S UPDATE

2022 General Election Information

The Director stated that the One Stop (Early) Voting started on Thursday, October 20th and ran through Saturday, November 5, 2022. There were 18,482 voters that voted during One Stop. She stated that she was still trying to find the records from the 2018 Election but from what she understood that was a significant increase for One Stop (Early) voting. The Director stated that on Election Day there were 13,303 voters that voted. She continued by saying that there were 1139 Absentee Mail-In Ballots that were mailed out. 819 CIV ballots, 11 Military ballots, and 2 Overseas ballots were approved by the Board for a total of 832 absentee ballots that were approved. 23 CIV ballots were disapproved by the Board due to missing voter signatures, missing witnesses’ signatures or notary signatures. She stated that 855 of the 1139 absentee mail-in ballots were received back into the office. There were ballots that were turned back in when they voted in person. The Director stated that overall it was a good election, it was a very busy election, and there were some incidents that occurred and she gave the example of a provisional ballot being put into the DS200 voting machine. There were complaints from voters about electioneers but overall the election went very well. The Director stated that she had not received any complaints about anyone having to wait in long lines. She had been told that there were lines after about 4:00 p.m. on Election Day but the voters went through the lines quickly and no one complained. The Director asked the Board if they had any questions or concerns.

Secretary Schoolfield stated that this was the first time there was more early voting ballots than Election Day ballots, only about 32% of the individuals that voted, voted on Election Day which meant that about 60% of those who voted, voted early and he thought this was significant. He stated that he did not know how this compared to the 2018 Election. The Director responded that normally more people voted on Election Day than during early voting.

Chair Wright asked the Board if they had any other questions or comments.

Secretary Schoolfield asked if there were any restrictions from the State Board of Elections on request for Absentee Mail-In Ballots. He knew that some states have restrictions on who can request absentee mail-in ballots. The Director responded that she was not aware of any restrictions, as long as the voter fills out a request form they will be sent an absentee mail-in ballot. Secretary Schoolfield stated that this should be an item for discussion at another time.

Chair Wright stated that she thought Election Day went well. She went to all of the precincts except two and she did not see any issues however, she did ask as she went through if there was anything they needed to discuss with her concerning the election and she did not have anyone to tell her anything. She commended the Director and her staff to the highest because no one realizes how much work goes into setting up and going through Election Day. Chair Wright stated that she wanted to take her hat off to Paula and her Team and she wanted to take her hat off to the Board Members for their presence at the precinct sites and she was very proud of all the Board Members do even during the meeting. She stated that she wanted the public to know that the Board is a good working team. She stated that she was very pleased with the work that had been done by the Director, Staff, and Board Members.

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Member Cole stated that he concurred with what the Chair had said relative to the professionalism of the Staff and their due diligence in everything that they do. He said he took his hat off to them as well. Member Cole stated the only comment he heard from the precincts he visited was that there were spurts when voters would show up but this could not be changed. He stated it may be something to look into where the precinct officials could be shifted from one precinct to another during busy times. Member Cole stated that to pull the Election off it requires a tremendous amount of staffing and any way the precincts could be assisted would be great.

Member Totten stated the only comment she wanted to make was that she would hope that the electioneers understand that when they have an issue the staff here and especially Paula are well versed in the regulations and policies on what can and cannot be done. She stated that she felt that the Director addresses the issues the best way she can if she does not know the answers she contacts the State. Member Totten stated like Member Cole stated there is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes that a lot of people are not aware. She stated that the staff here does a fantastic job.

Secretary Schoolfield stated that he agreed with what had been said and he thought it was the Board's job to look at the staffing in relationship to the work that needs to be done. He stated that looking at the information presented he estimated that 50% of staff time was spent on mailing out ballots, getting them back in, and the going through the absentee ballots. Secretary Schoolfield stated that there is a lot of time and expense on absentee mail-in ballots and he thought it was the Board's duty to look at the cost of the election. He stated that he did not think anyone realizes the cost of absentee mail-in ballots and the Board needed to look into that. Chair Wright responded that the voter cannot be asked why they are requesting an absentee mail-in ballot. Secretary Schoolfield stated no, not in North Carolina now but other states have restrictions and they are successful and he thought the Board should discuss this issue. Chair Wright responded that the Board could discuss it but the decision has to be made by the State Board of Elections.

Chair Wright thanked the Board for their comments.

ITEM #10 – ADJOURNMENT

At 4:17 p.m. **Member Cole moved, seconded by Member Totten to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Paula P. Seamster, Director

Ophelia Wright, Chair