

Columbus County Board of Elections

Monday, April 10, 2023

5:00 p.m.

Agenda Item #1: Meeting Called to Order

On Monday, April 10, 2023, Chairman Jeffery Register called the Columbus County Board of Elections meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Agenda Item #2: Roll Call

Board Members Present:

Jeffery Register, Chairman

Bonita Blakney, Member

David McPherson, Secretary

Brenda Ebron, Member

Ashley Collins, Director

Tucker Ward, Member

Agenda Items #3 and #4: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

- Invocation – Mr. McPherson
- Recited – Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item #5: Board Agenda Approval

Board member, Mr. Ward made a motion to approve the agenda, Mrs. Blakney seconded, and the motion passed.

Agenda Item #6: Approval of Minutes

Board member, Mr. McPherson made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Ward seconded, and the motion passed.

Agenda Item #7: Public Comments

- Gary Graham- spoke on the concerns of possibly moving Bolton's precinct from the Bolton Fire Department. He stated, as a town alderman for Bolton that the towns people have voiced no complaints with the voting location being at the fire department. Speaking on behalf of the towns people, we would like to leave precinct at the fire department. Mr. Graham also stated that he also attended the Columbus County Commissioners Board meeting and presented a letter from the Columbus County Board of Elections voicing their concerns of moving the precinct. He also spoke with Ms. Collins, and she did inform him that they haven't received the letter. The County Attorney, Amanda Prince stated that she would get the letter to Ms. Collins. Ms. Collins will inform the board once she receives a copy and she will toward it to the board.

- Frank Wilson- spoke regarding the concerns for the Town of Bolton. He stated that he was the former Mayor of Bolton for 20 years. In previous years the elections were held at the Bolton Town Hall and the Board of Elections decided that the Bolton Fire Department would be a better location to hold the elections; therefore, the location was moved. The citizens of Bolton agreed that the fire department was a more suitable location and it needs to stay at the fire department.
- Buddy Byrd- spoke as the commissioner of this district and stated that in the past there has been some issues with the Bolton Fire Department allowing the Board of Elections to use building for a voting location, but this is the most modern building in Bolton, and this is the best location for elections to be held.
- Chairman Jeffery Register spoke after the public comments were made informing them that the Bolton Fire Department has been listed on the agenda and hopefully once the topic has been discussed, it will resolve some of their concerns.

Agenda Item #8: Emails-Public Records/Meetings

Mr. Register discussed when sending an email to the board members, ***send a blind carbon copy***, so if you reply to it everyone doesn't get the message. The reason for this request is, if the majority of the board responds, it is discussing official business and it will be considered a meeting and; therefore, would be subject to all meeting requirements. This is referenced from G.S. § 143-318.10(d) Mr. Register asked County Attorney, Ms. Amanda Prince if she had any advice or recommendations and she stated, "it would be advised to avoid all group text if necessary."

Agenda Item #9: Director's Report

- Director, Ms. Collins reviewed the director's report and gave the board members a copy of the North Carolina Election Acronyms.
- Ms. Collins reminded the board of the district manager's meeting on April 18, 2023, in Lee County and shared that the director and Mrs. Felicia Brown would be attending.
- Ms. Collins informed the board that the office team has been discussing social media pages and will explore guidelines for setting up user friendly and accessible information for voting.
- Ms. Collins gave the board members some job descriptions to review for the open office position for an elections specialist. With this position, the director would like to include IT duties in the job description, so the person hired would be responsible for updating laptop, GIS and duties of an elections specialist. Ms. Collins asked the board to review the job descriptions and be prepared to discuss at the next board meeting. Ms. Collins also informed the board that the team had spoken with different elections offices within the state, and they already have an IT position in their office. She also advised the board that she is trying to coordinate with Brunswick County to have one of the

employees in the office to shadow their IT person to get ideas on how to organize the laptops.

- Ms. Collins gave the board a copy of meeting protocol and rules for review and consider adopting this for their office.
- Ms. Collins informed the board when she went to the budget meeting the director of finance sked to change how the board members are paid. Instead of getting paid for the meeting and travel, members only get paid for the meeting. The reason for this is, if the county gets audited then it raises red flags for the travel. The director of finance informed Ms. Collins that they are trying to get all boards within the county on a set pay scale. The health department has already done so with \$65 per meeting. At this time, Mr. McPherson made a motion to change pay for board members of the Board of Elections to the recommendation of the county to \$65 per meeting starting with the new budget year July 2023, Mr. Ward seconded, and the motion passed.

Agenda Item #10: Bolton for Department- G.S. § 163-129 (A & B)

Mr. Register stated that at the last meeting he was in favor of looking for an alternative location for the Bolton Precinct. However, at that time he had not completed the new board member training and once he completed his training, he changed his opinion on finding a new location. The reason for the change was because of G.S. § 163-129 (A & B). Stating that he understood the concerns of the Bolton Fire Department but changing this location would be setting a precedent going forward where we would be unable to deny any facility receiving taxpayer funding if they asked to have the polling location moved. Mr. Register also stated if there are unique issues with the Bolton Fire Department from other counties and state fire departments that the board of elections and the Bolton Fire Department can work together to resolve them.

Agenda Item #11: Closed Session G.S § 143-318.11(A)

- ❖ At 5:54 pm Mrs. Ebron made a motion to go into closed session, Mrs. Blakney concurred, the motion was passed.
- ❖ At 6:07 pm Mr. Ward made a motion to end closed session and to go back into regular session, Mrs. Blakney concurred, the motion was passed.
- ❖ Coming into closed session Mr. Register asked Ms. Prince to give a general account of closed session. Ms. Prince stated that during closed session the discussion of personnel issues required no motion.
- ❖ Mrs. Blakney made a motion to approve the general account and Mr. Ward seconded, and the motion was passed.

Agenda Item #12: Adjourn

At 6:10 pm Mr. McPherson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Ward seconded, and the motion passed.

With all business having been conducted, Mrs. Blakney made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. McPherson seconded; the meeting adjourned at 5:49 pm.

AC/amc*