

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Linda J. Sutton
CHAIR

Frank M. Dickerson
SECRETARY

Jerry D. Jordan
MEMBER



Robert H. Coffman
Director of Elections

Lamar Joyner
Deputy Director

FORSYTH COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS BOARD MEETING – February 23, 2011

Present: Linda J. Sutton, Chair
Frank M. Dickerson, Secretary
Jerry D. Jordan, Member

Staff: Rob Coffman, Director of Elections
Lamar Joyner, Deputy Director
Judy Speas, Senior Office Assistant
B. Gordon Watkins, III, Assistant County Attorney

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM in the Cooper Cardwell Elections Room.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Sutton welcomed the attendees at the meeting. She requested that the Board review the minutes for February 7, 2011 and suggest any corrections or additions if necessary. Mr. Dickerson moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Jordan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Elections Office Update

Ms. Sutton stated that the Board would complete their investigation into personnel complaints in a closed session under G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (6). Ms. Sutton asked that Mr. Coffman present an office status report to the Board before the closed session. Mr. Coffman first stated that there was currently a vacancy for a full time office assistant. However, since the current election year consists of only one non-partisan election, he suggested that late summer would be the opportune time to interview for this position. He also stated that evaluations were due for several employees. The North Carolina Certification in Elections Program would again be offered to interested employees. Several employees were certified previously. Mr. Coffman stated that he had attended a recent Census Redistricting workshop in Washington, DC. Census information would soon arrive for the North Carolina voting tabulation districts. This information would aid in possible precinct structural changes as some are unbalanced in numbers and many deal with split districts. The Board would work with the WSFC School System, City of Winston-Salem and County Commission as the precinct redistricting is completed. The census information would clarify the necessary redistricting changes; however, the Board may now research the possible splits or absorptions of precincts that may occur. It would be beneficial to rebalance the precinct voter numbers before the 2012 Presidential Election year. Of course, the state may have litigation problems with the redistricting.

Closed Session

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Ms. Sutton moved that the Board begin closed session and read a statement pursuant to the law. "I move that the Board go into closed session to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (6)." Mr. Dickerson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the Board began closed session at 1:20 PM. The Board left closed session after discussion ended at 2:25 PM.

Other Business

After reconvening the meeting, Ms. Sutton stated that information had been presented by Gardenia Henley and shared with the Board members. Ms. Sutton stated that the Board had heard an extensive discussion at the last meeting regarding possible election law violations. The Board members had responded to all allegations. However, the Board would like to further clarify a few other issues for the media. Mr. Dickerson said that he would like to discuss three issues concerning the election allegations.

The **first** concerned a complex issue into the network connections with the Unity Voter Management Program. The State Board of Elections recommended with precinct unification that the software not be on a shared network. Three employees have access rights to use the software and may access it from only specific computers. Accessing software by a VPN connection into the network remotely by internet is a common practice in many organizations. However, the State Board discourages this practice and the staff members no longer work in the Unity Program by a remote connection. Mr. Dickerson stated that the media may question Mr. Coffman or Mr. Duffey if further clarification of networking is required.

The **second** issue concerned an issue where the WSSU postal service returned undeliverable voter cards later than the normal procedure during the 2009 Primary Election. After researching the situation in that election, it was found that no one voted from the List Maintenance mailing and only seven voted from the early voting site registrations mailing. It was possible that the voters may have registered improperly and did not live on campus. However, the WSSU Housing Department verified that the voters did live on campus at the time that they registered to vote. It is regrettable that the voter cards were returned late but does not show organized fraudulent activity.

The **third** issue regards an allegation that staff was forced to enter a 01/01/1900 date of birth on registrations. Before 2000, voters were not required to provide their date of birth to process their registrations. The records of those voters were completed with a 01/01/1900 birth date in the software. A few thousand voters continue to have this birth date. These records are corrected as new information is received. Now the registration form requires the correct birth date. Since 2000, only three voters were entered with a 01/01/1900 birth date. One was entered by Pam Johnson and only showed an error in processing as the correct birth date was contained in the provided information. The Board did not find any fraudulent activity in this issue and encouraged the media to question Mr. Coffman or Mr. Duffey if further clarification is required.

Mr. Dickerson presented a motion that the Board has researched all allegations in possible voter fraud and has found no credible evidence of intentional violations of voting laws. Mr. Jordan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Sutton stated that the Board would continue to work on other issues, including poll worker training and equipment problems that are present in all counties of the state. The Board would endeavor to make the office and all elections run as smooth as possible.

Adjournment

The Board requested that Mr. Coffman provide them with the census geometrical data from the shapefiles when they became available. Mr. Jordan stated that the precincts may also be renumbered during the process of redistricting. Ms. Sutton said that a preliminary draft was expected from Paul Norby, City-County Planning Board Director by the next meeting. The Board reviewed their schedules and determined that the next Board of Elections meeting would be April 5, 2011 at 1:00 PM. Ms. Sutton requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Jordan moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 2:40 PM.

Linda J. Sutton, Chair

Frank M. Dickerson, Secretary

Jerry D. Jordan, Member