Madison County Board of Elections

Meeting Minutes –Monthly Meeting

February 26, 2025

The Madison County Board of Elections held a regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, February 26, 2025, at Suite E, Room 16, 5707 US 25-70 Hwy, Marshall, 28753. In attendance: Jerry Wallin, Chair; Dyatt Smathers, Secretary; Brian Ball (via telephone), Member; Ray Lewis, Member; Debbie Ponder, Member; Jacob Ray, Director; John Noce, North Carolina State Board of Elections Security Support Technician; and one member of the public.

Call to Order:
Chair Wallin called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Agenda:

- Motion (DS, RL) to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Minutes:

- Motion (DS, JW) to approve November 15, 2024, Canvass Meeting Minutes; November 20, 2024, Special Meeting Minutes; December 2, 2024, Special Meeting Minutes; December 4, 2024, Meeting Minutes; and January 15, 2025, Meeting Minutes, as presented. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Members' Report:

- Secretary Smathers reported on the North Carolina General Assembly being in session and informed the Board of introduced bills that could affect the Board of Elections. Secretary Smathers informed the Board and the public about the public comment being open on the latest proposed rule changes by the North Carolina State Board of Elections.
- Chair Wallin commented on the changes to the absentee and provisional deadline period during elections and discussed the increase in workload for staff and board members.

Director's Report:

- The director reported that the three municipal election sites have been secured. The South Marshall precinct polling location is unlikely to be available in 2026, and it was suggested that the board investigate possible solutions at the next board meeting.
- The director reviewed a handout on the "ExpressVote Printer" and discussed the benefits of purchasing this product for the Board of Elections. The director introduced John Noce, North Carolina State Board of Elections Security Support Technician, to discuss the product. Discussion ensued by the board, John Noce, the director, and Cheryll Williams, a member of the public and poll worker.
- The director addressed questions about the current fiscal year budget.

New Business:

The director presented a quote from IT to purchase 10 laptops for the board's review.

- Motion (DS, JW) to allow the director to proceed with the procurement process for the quoted 10 laptops. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

The director presented the 2026 fiscal year budget proposal for the board's review. The board took the following actions:

- Motion (DS, JW) to increase the salaries of director and deputy director positions by 3 percent. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).
- Motion (DS, JW) to increase the board members' stipend by $15.00 a month. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).
- Motion (DS, RL) to increase the hourly rate for poll workers from $15.00 to 15.50, the chief judge's flat rate from $325.00 to $340.00, the judge's rate from $275.00 to $290.00, and the assistant's rate from $225.00 to $240.00. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).
- Motion (DS, JW) to reduce the capital equipment request from 8 ExpressVote Printers to 7 ExpressVote Printers. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Other Matters:

- Member Ponder asked for an update on the exemption status of the director's position. The director informed the board that the County Attorney agreed with the board's view that the director's status should be exempt, and his recommendation to the County was to keep the director's current exemption status.
- Chair Wallin asked the director if he had any contact with FEMA about potential reimbursement. The chair encouraged the director to reach out to FEMA and attend county meetings with FEMA.

Public Comment:

- Cheryl Willaims complimented the board on their thoroughness with the budget procedure and thanked them for their bipartisan work.
- Secretary Smathers asked John Noce about the turnover rate with directors across the state. John Noce stated that the turnover rate has not slowed down since 2020, with most experienced directors opting to retire when they become eligible.

Adjournment:

Motion (DS, JW) to adjourn at 4:28 p.m. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

Announcement:
Next Scheduled Meeting: Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at 3:00 p.m.

Chair Jerry Wallin

Secretary Wyatt Smathers