

Madison County Board of Elections

Meeting Minutes – Monthly Meeting

August 19, 2025

The Madison County Board of Elections held a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at Suite E, Room 16, 5707 US 25-70 Hwy, Marshall, 28753. In attendance: Dyatt Smathers, Chair; Brian Ball, Secretary; Ray Lewis, Member; Debbie Ponder, Member; Robert Briggs, Member; Jacob Ray, Director; Kathy Ray, Election Specialist; Democratic Party Chair, Paula Dempsey; and one member of the public.

Call to Order:

- Chair Smathers called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Meeting Agenda:

Chair Smathers moved to amend the agenda to reflect Item Number 5 as Party Chair Comments and Item Number 6 as Chairman's Comments.

- **Motion (BB, RB) to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).**
- **Motion (DP, RB) to approve the July 22, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).**

Members' Reports:

- Member Lewis gave an update on his recent accident and gratitude that the resulting injury wasn't worse.
- Member Briggs expressed appreciation for the warm welcome as a Board member, and he is pleased and honored to be a member. He commented on a few of the items that were emphasized at the Wilmington Conference including: 1) Board members are not players but impartial umpires; 2) Board members can make campaign donations but not put up a sign in the yard; and 3) Board members must make decisions based on facts and policy.
- Secretary Ball stated that he regretted being unable to attend the training due to a family obligation but did review the conference materials and agenda to stay updated.
- Member Ponder commented that she learned a lot at the conference and asked that former Chief Judge Dean Benfield's family be remembered due to a family health crisis.

Party Chair's Comments:

- Democratic Party Chair Paula Dempsey welcomed Member Robert Briggs to the Board and expressed appreciation for his comments related to the conference training. She emphasized how much work is involved in the election officials search; and she referred their election related questions, suggestions, and input to the Director of Elections.

Chair's Comments:

- Chair Smathers gave a summary of key events and challenges over the past several years of election administration. Events mentioned included Board member and office staff changes and challenges, the COVID

19 Pandemic, Hurricane Helene, and developing and approving early voting plans. He concluded with "Hats Off" to this Board for its spirit of cooperation.

Director's Report:

- The Director provided an update on the Voter Registration Repair Project. One hundred forty voters remain on the list and will soon receive letters from the State Board of Elections. Voters who do not correct (update) their registration must use the provisional process when presenting to vote.
- The Director provided the first budget expenditure report for fiscal year 2025-2026 and emphasized that Board member dues have been paid.

New Business:

Chair Smathers clarified that the precinct officials can be approved as a list by a majority vote of the Board. Member Ball asked if there were any new precinct officials on the list.

- **Motion (BB, RL) to approve the list of precinct officials. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).**

Other Matters:

Chair Smathers suggested the Board members may want to consider flying to the next long-distance conference or training.

Public Comment:

- Cheryl Smith commented that it is a pleasure to come to the Board meetings and experience the cooperation that exists among the group.

Adjournment:

- **Motion (RL, BB) to adjourn at 3:37 p.m. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).**

Chair



Secretary

