

Madison County Board of Elections

Meeting Minutes – Monthly Meeting

July 22, 2025

The Madison County Board of Elections held a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, July 22, 2025, at Suite E, Room 16, 5707 US 25-70 Hwy, Marshall, 28753. In attendance: Dyatt Smathers, Chair; Brian Ball, Member; Ray Lewis, Member; Debbie Ponder, Member; Robert Briggs, Member; Honorable James Baker, Retired Superior Court Judge; Jacob Ray, Director; Kathy Ray, Election Specialist; and three members of the public.

Call to Order:

- Chair Smathers called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and welcomed Retired Superior Court Judge James Baker to administer the Oath of Office to the newly appointed Board. He noted that Judge Baker was currently serving as Vice Chair of the North Carolina Ethics Commission, had been a former member of the North Carolina State Board of Elections, and had served as a former member of the Madison County Board of Commissioners.
- Judge Baker administered the Oath of Office individually to the Board members. He thanked the Board for the privilege and honor to swear in the new Board.

Election of Secretary to the Board:

- **Motion (RB, DP) to nominate Member Brian Ball as Secretary to the Board. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).**

Meeting Agenda:

- **Motion (BB, RB) to approve the agenda as submitted. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).**
- **Motion (RL, BB) to approve June 18, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).**

Members' Reports:

- Secretary Ball expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve as the Secretary to the Board and welcomed member Robert Briggs. He further expressed confidence in the newly appointed Board to carry out the work ahead and complimented the North Carolina State Auditor's selection of Dyatt Smathers as the Chair. He stated that he wants to see that people are treated fairly and given the same opportunities.
- Member Ponder welcomed Chair Smathers as Chair. She said she was very pleased and honored to serve on the Board. She emphasized the cooperation, fairness, and honesty of the former Board and has confidence the Board will continue to work that way.
- Member Lewis stated it was an honor to be appointed again to the Board of Elections. He emphasized his commitment to continuing the Board's work in conducting open, honest, and fair elections.
- Chair Smathers commented that to the best of his knowledge, this is the third Board of Elections meeting in 13 years that former Chair Jerry Wallin has missed. He elaborated that Former Chair Wallin has invested a lot in this Board over time and will be missed. He acknowledged that Former Chair Wallin's were big shoes to fill by this Board and expressed his thanks for his many years of service. Chair Smathers continued his comments by

informing the Board how they can go online and view the North Carolina State Board of Election's meeting recordings. He reported that Member Ponder's appointment had been approved by the North Carolina State Board of Elections at its Monday, July 21, 2025, meeting; the State Board of Elections has already received one complaint against a Board member that they dismissed; and that several numbered memos have been re-issued specifically related to UOCAVA voters and Same Day Registration. He also commented that this was our first experience with all three towns hosting partisan municipal elections, and that Boards of Elections could extend the filing period by 5 days in non-partisan elections. He finalized his comments by reporting that Executive Director Sam Hayes mentioned House Bill 958 in some of his comments, which if passed, would make it a felony for any person to reveal the result of any count of ballots prior to the close of the polls on election day.

Director's Report:

- Director Ray welcomed Board Member Robert Briggs and reported that 80 percent of the Board are returning members which helps to make this a great Board to work with. He provided information about the petition process, people who have either filed or indicated interest in filing an unaffiliated petition for candidacy, the partisan candidate list, and announced there will be no municipal primary elections in September. He informed that the Towns of Mars Hill and Marshall hosted partisan elections in 2023; and that the Town of Hot Springs had received an extension of non-partisan elections until this year, making this the Town of Hot Springs first partisan election. He provided information regarding the number of voter signatures required for candidate petitions in each town. Chair Smathers added that the Town of Hot Springs has amended its charter for staggered terms to begin with the 2027 election cycle.
- Director Ray provided the most current numbered memos and informed them they will not pertain to the municipal elections as no town provides absentee voting. They will, however, be relevant during the upcoming 2026 mid-term elections. Numbered memos will be distributed to all Board members as they are received.
- Director Ray provided the Board with an update on the Voter Repair Project. Madison County has 161 voters on the list. Seventy-eight have been reviewed so far; and six have been cured. Affected voters will receive a letter from the North Carolina State Board of Elections to update their registration by providing the missing information.

New Business:

- **Motion (DP, BB) to authorize a polling site change for the Town of Hot Springs. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).**
- **Motion (BB, RB) to relocate the polling place for 488 North Marshall Precinct voters in the Town of Marshall Municipality. Motion passes unanimously (5-0).**
- **Motion (BB, RL) to relocate the polling place for 148 South Marshall Precinct voters in the Town of Marshall Municipality (BB, RB). Motion passes unanimously (5-0).**
- **Motion (RB, BB) to transfer 488 North Marshall Precinct voters to the South Marshall Precinct. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).**
- **Motion (BB, RL) to transfer 89 Beech Glen Voters to the Mars Hill Precinct in the Town of Mars Hill Municipality. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).**
- **Motion (DP, RB) to relocate the polling site for the Mars Hill Precinct voters in the Town of Mars Hill Municipality from Mars Hill Elementary School to the Mars Hill Public Library. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).**
- **Motion (BB, RL) to relocate the polling site for the Beech Glen Precinct voters in the Town of Mars Hill Municipality from Beech Glen Community Center to the Mars Hill Public Library. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).**

Other Matters:

Chair Smathers inquired about Board member compensation for the month of July. Director Ray has submitted the request to the payroll department and is waiting for an answer. Chair Smathers commented about his visit to the future courthouse site.

Public Comment:

- Cheryl Smith complimented the continued good work of the Board. She also expressed clarification that no municipal election will host early voting.
- A member of the public asked for more information regarding the number of voters on the Voter Repair List and the review/cure process.
- Cindy Davidson expressed how pleased she was at the camaraderie that exists between red and blue teams at the polling sites, and that early voting was not held on Sundays. She asked if we now had 11 precincts rather than 12, as the South Marshall polling site on the island had been closed due to Hurricane Helene.
- Chair Smathers reported that we have 4 registered voters in this county over 100 years old.

Adjournment:

- Motion (RL, BB) to adjourn at 12:43 p.m. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Chair



Secretary

