

**MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
SPECIAL SESSION
MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
ROOM 16
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2019
2:00 PM**

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

Jerry Wallin, Chair; Sandra Tolley, Member; Brian Ball, Member; Dyatt Smathers, Member (telephonic participation); Kathy Ray, Director; Wade Gahagan, Deputy Director; Matthew Wechtel, Commissioner; Norris Gentry, County Commissioner Chair; Forrest Gilliam, County Manager; Mandy Bradley, Clerk to Board of Commissioners; and Tom and Barbara Coulson, Members of the Public.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wallin called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

AGENDA

Chair Wallin stated the purpose of the meeting was to determine which type of ADA ballot marking device the county should adopt and acquire, given the recent certification of new voting equipment. He commented that the voting equipment demonstrations in Haywood County provided a lot of good information. He noted that any available AutoMark Ballot Marking Devices for purchase will be refurbished equipment that will likely be phased out over the next five years. The ExpressVote Ballot Marking Device is newer technology with a longer life expectancy of 10-15 years. He indicated that the county would need at least 14 ADA ballot marking devices each election day – one for each precinct, one for the election office, and one for backup if there is a breakdown. He continued his comments by giving a cost breakdown for 14 AutoMark (\$29K) and 14 ExpressVote (\$49K) machines, stating that the AutoMarks will cost about \$2.8K more per year than the ExpressVotes to maintain, and providing information that voting equipment vendor Elections Systems & Software (ES&S) will not expect payment for the equipment until the next fiscal budget year which begins July 1, 2020. He finalized his comments by providing an email from Susan Fanning, Legislative Assistant to Senator Ralph Hise, that stated the current proposed state budget includes a directed grant of \$188K for replacement of Madison County's elections equipment.

Member Ball indicated that the ADA voting equipment will likely not be used very much, and the ExpressVote is a better system with newer technology that should give us many years of good service. He stated that the ExpressVote barcodes were an issue with some people, but a good explanation about how the barcodes work was given during the Haywood County demonstration. He finalized his comments by stating that he preferred new equipment over refurbished.

Member Smathers commented that this Board of Elections has been following the ExpressVote for six years and waiting for the State Board to certify it for use. He stated that the company has indicated the test of the ExpressVote will be conducted free of any charges, and that the AutoMark machines are basically obsolete and will technologically likely not be supported on down the road.

Moved, Seconded (JW, BB) and Carried (4,0) to recommend to the county commissioners that the Board of Elections adopt and acquire the E.S.&S. 5.2.2.0 voting system (DS200 Ballot Imager, ElectionWare, and ExpressVote Ballot Marking Device) including any needed software, firmware, hardware, and tabulation software required to program, control, and support the equipment and to test the voting system during the November 5, 2019 Municipal Elections.

Moved, Seconded (DS, BB) and Carried (4,0) to purchase 14 ExpressVote Ballot Marking Devices pending successful testing, obtaining all required approvals, and that ES&S will allow the county to pay the bill at the beginning of the next fiscal budget year.

COMMISSIONER COMMENT

County Commissioner Chair Norris Gentry indicated that we collectively have a duty to have honest and fair elections. He complimented the Board of Elections and community in doing a good job to meet that high expectation and to be held accountable for it.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

A citizen inquired as to the need for ADA ballot marking devices to accompany paper balloting. She also expressed that her concerns regarding the barcodes on ballots and thermal paper were addressed during the Haywood County demonstrations.

A citizen expressed concerns regarding voting equipment security and barcodes.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 2:39 PM.



Jerry Wallin, Chair



Ray Lewis, Secretary