MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Teddi Benson Chairperson
John Adams, Secretary
Debbie Burris, Member
Dree Wynkoop, Member
Tasha Medley, Member

BOARD MEETING MINUTES
August 13, 2024
5:30PM

The Montgomery County Board of Elections (BOE) met August 13, 2024, at 5:30PM at the BOE office located at 327 N. Main Street in Troy, NC. Board members present were Teddi Benson, Dree Wynkoop, John Adams, Debbie Burris, and Tasha Medley. BOE staff present was Rhonda Johson, Director of Elections.

Chairperson Benson called the meeting to order at 5:30PM.

Minutes of the July 9, 2024, board meeting were approved. Member Adams noted misspelled word in minutes, Director Johnson said she would correct the spelling. Member Burris made the motion to approve the minutes with the correction and Member Wynkoop seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Board Meeting Agenda was approved. Member Wynkoop made a motion to approve the agenda and Member Burris seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Director Johnson provided the Director of Elections report. Report is attached.

Old Business

Hearing Update: Board conducted hearing of challenge to Mr. Bill Hudson being resident of Star. The board found that they were not convinced, based on the information and testimony presented during the hearing, that Mr. Hudson really lived in Town of Star, but that his residence was at the lake. Mr. Hudson's attorney gave notice of appeal. Director Johnson explained that the State Board of Elections would decide whether to hear the appeal. Director Johnson advised that the State BOE has requested all exhibits presented during the last hearing and from the previous 2022 hearing. There were no exhibits from the last hearing. There is a packet that Mr. Hudson and his attorney gave from the 2022 hearing. Director Johnson plans to gather the requested items along with the ruling that the BOE attorney prepared from the last hearing and send them to State BOE tomorrow.

Public Comment

The following individuals spoke: George Knight, Bridgett Bennett, Larry Emmert, and Brenda Ritter.

New Business

Precinct Workers for Fall:

Current Roster: Director Johnson provided a copy of the current roster identifying individuals who have committed to work as Judges and Assistants and noted that blank areas indicate that there is no worker assigned to work that position/precinct at the time of this meeting. Specifically, Candor and Rocky Springs need a Democrat to serve as Judge and Wadeville needs a Republican Judge. The party chairs were made aware of vacancies and are going to work on it. Member Medley questioned if there is direct confirmation from the people listed for Mt. Gilead and Wadeville. Director Johnson stated that she had spoken personally with

all those individuals and received confirmation they would work. Member Adams remarked that he was not sure all the precincts needed Assistants and Director Johnson stated that it is best to have equal representation from both parties in each position so as to have Assistants at each precinct.

Student Assistants: Director Johnson reported that one student moved out of county, one went to the military, and one has committed to returning to work. Chairperson Benson stated she would get back with the schools to attempt to recruit other students.

Deputy Director: Director Johnson reported that the Deputy Director position was vacated. The County is handling the hiring process, has posted the position and is currently accepting applications. Three applications have been received to date.

Law Books: Director Johson advised that the new Board of Elections Law books have arrived and are available to be picked up from her office after the meeting. Each Member received a copy of the Law Book upon leaving.

Absentee Meeting: Director Johnson provided Members with handout noting the meeting schedule for the Board to review absentee ballots. Scheduled dates are as follows: 10/1/2024, 10/8/2024, 10/15/2024, 10/22/2024, 10/29/2024, 11/4/2024 and 11/5/2024.
Member Adams asked the Board to consider no meeting as scheduled if there are no or very few Absentee ballots received. Member Wynkoop made motion to set minimum number of Absentee ballots received at five so that if less than five Absentee ballots were received, the scheduled meeting would be cancelled. Member Medley seconded the motion. All Members were in favor.

Chairperson Benson advised the Board would be going into closed session following the regular meeting of the Board and any attendee would be welcome to return following the completion of the closed session. With no further business at hand and no other comments, Chairperson Benson called for a motion to adjourn. Member Wynkoop gave the motion with a second from Member Medley. All Members were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:19PM with the Board going into closed session.

Member Adams announced the closed session had ended to the attendees waiting. Chairperson Benson ordered the meeting back to order at 6:43PM.

Chairperson Benson reported that the board reviewed documentation from all three judges, the judge's mother, Kelsey, Rosa, Board Members, Rhonda and two employees. She said that the Board has learned a lot from this situation and that it was a series of very unfortunate events that they want to make sure doesn't happen again. They have identified five points.

1) The fire station was unaware of the second primary election because there was a new fire chief. The Director should have contacted all the precincts to make sure they knew about the special primary election.
2) The conditions were less than acceptable (temperature, rain, bathrooms, etc.) and the Board was not informed. The conditions that a precinct worker is asked to work in should be better than what they were in Wadeville.
3) The original precinct workers did not work, and the Board was not informed. The board appreciates that the Director got "bodies" to work, but there was a mother/daughter team. Relatives are not supposed to work together in a precinct. The board recognized that this was a special situation, but Rhonda was aware that the daughter did not reside in North Carolina.
4) The Judge, Bridgett, called the BOE office throughout the day. Per testimony from one of the judges, often those calls were not taken as no one answered.

5) The conditions at the precinct continued to worsen and workers wanted to leave. The Director drove to the precinct and the Director told the workers to leave. The director got other people to cover the polls.

What the Board learned from this is regardless of how much information is available, the Director needs to check with the precinct locations to make sure they are prepared for their facility to be used for the election. Chairperson Benson expressed appreciation to Ms. Bennett for being there to work the polls that day and not leaving her post. Chairperson Benson expressed appreciation to Director Johnson for getting people to the precinct to finish working the polls that day.

Chairperson Benson advised that this be written up and submitted to the State. Member Adams explained that Party Chairs find workers for the polls and that situations like this make it difficult for them to find workers. He noted that finding workers in this climate is very difficult and that the majority of the poll workers are elderly retirees. Finding younger workers is hard because they have regular jobs, and it is hard to take a day off. Chairperson Benson added that this is one of the reasons they started the Student Program, to get them there and interested in voting and working the polls. Member Adams said that there was fault on everyone involved in this situation including the Board for not knowing what was going on. Member Adams said that the Board must take better care of not only the Director and the Deputy Director, but also the poll workers. The Board has to get more information in order to make decisions. The Board does not want what happened in Wadeville to happen again. We must learn from our mistakes and move forward.

George Knight expressed that there seems to be problems with precincts being at fire stations in the past and specifically mentioned past problems at Uwharrie and Mount Gilead precincts and wanted to suggest considering a different place in Wadeville for voting. Member Wynkoop asked if there was another place that could be used as a precinct in Wadeville. No one made a reply to her question. Member Burris expressed that she was wondering if the Board should set up something to where the Members of the Board contact someone so that they would know that people over the facilities are notified. Member Adams said the Board could talk about that later.

Member Medley thanked everyone who played a part in the last election. Member Medley thanked Bridgette Bennett for her service, apologized to Ms. Bennett for having to work under the conditions she and the other workers had to. This was a teachable moment for all the Board Members. The Board can do better for the workers and others going into the polls. Member Medley also thanked the Director and anyone else who had a part in the election.

With no further comments, Chairperson Benson called for a motion to adjourn. Member Burris made the motion and Member Wynkoop seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:56PM.

Teddi Benson _____ CHAIR

Debbie C Bennett _____ SECRETARY

_____ MEMBER

Dee T Wynkoop _____ MEMBER

Latrina Burris _____ MEMBER