

Eddie L. Edwards III

Chairman

Jimmy E. Hull

Secretary

Nicki T. Artis

Member

County of Wayne

Board of Elections

Bridgette C. Cowan

Member

Charles Wright

Member

Anne C. Risku

Director

Wayne County Board of Elections Board Meeting September 13, 2022

Eddie L. Edwards, III, Chairman

Nicki T. Artis, Member

Charles Wright, Member

Anne Risku, Director

Jimmy E. Hull, Secretary

Bridgette C. Cowan, Member

Andrew Neal, Staff Attorney

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Mr. Edwards.

I. Approval of September 13, 2022 meeting agenda

- Ms. Cowan made a motion to approve the September 13, 2022 meeting agenda. Mr. Artis seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

II. Approval of July 19, 2022 and July 26, 2022 Meeting Minutes

- Mr. Wright made a motion to approve the July 19, 2022 and July 26, 2022 meeting minutes. Mr. Hull seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

III. Director's Update: Ms. Risku updated the Board on the following items.

- Absentee by Mail: Staff mailed out 476 Absentee ballots on September 9, 2022 and have received 7 back. Sample ballots are available on our website. There are 58 ballot styles as they are coded by precinct instead of style this year. Most counties code by precinct and it will save time and money in the long run.
- Records Requests: The office has seen exponential growth in public records requests since August. The requests are comprehensive and voluminous. Some have been filled while others have been denied as they are seeking confidential information like cast vote records and voted ballots. It appears to be an attempt to stop staff from preparing for the upcoming elections. Many are expansive and may not be able to be fulfilled until after the election. Some of the requests are local but most appear to be copy and paste requests from online sources pushing conspiracy theories. It is possibly an effort to stop Boards of Elections from destroying records in accordance with the records retention schedule.
- Numbered Memos: Ms. Risku referenced several recent Numbered Memos issued by the State Board of Elections.
 - The COVID-19 state of emergency has been lifted.

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- The Absentee return deadline has been extended by the Executive Director due to a holiday but that decision is currently being litigated.
- There was a recent court order regarding voter assistance for Absentee voters. The order allowed for disabled voters residing in facilities to receive assistance from anyone except an employer or union representative. This will likely reduce our MAT visits but staff will still offer services to any facility in need. O'Berry Center and Willow Creek residents were mailed ballots on September 9th. Mr. Edwards asked if there was any litigation regarding the ruling. Mr. Neal responded in the affirmative. Ms. Risku stated that when a voter returns a ballot in person they are required to complete an attestation affirming they meet the requirements outlined in the court order. Mr. Artis asked if the rules for candidates had changed. Ms. Risku stated, yes, that it is acceptable for a candidate to assist a voter if the voter requests their assistance. However, staff will report anything that appears suspicious to State Board investigators.
- Observer updates: The State Board of Elections proposed new rules regarding partisan observers but they were struck down by the Rules Commission. The rules for the General Election will be the same as they were for the Primary. The State Board has stated that they will support local Board's in maintaining order in their Polling Places. Officials forced to act when Observers impede the process or break voter confidentiality. Mr. Edwards stated that the Primary election experience with Observers offered many lessons learned and we'll be better prepared to deal with them in the General. The Board intends to make sure Observers function as observers and do not insert themselves into the process.

IV. Board Compensation: Ms. Risku provided the Board with an update on their request to raise Board member pay. In 2016 the Board switched to a monthly rate of \$250 per month as opposed to being paid per meeting. The rate has remained the same but the duties of the Board have increased significantly as have pay rates across the County. Ms. Risku conducted a salary survey and the respondents most similarly situated to Wayne County paid around \$400 per month. Mr. Neal stated that North Carolina General Statutes set the minimum at \$25 but the rate is set by the County Commission. Any pay increase would need to be approved in the form of a budget amendment. Ms. Risku stated that she was not informed of the County's minimum wage change prior to budget or would have included the raises in her budget proposal. The budget amendment will be for approximately \$9,000. Mr. Hull

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expressed support for the raise and stated that many people think the Board only works a few days a year. Mr. Wright asked if the Board should consider a \$50 differential for the Chair as some other counties do. Ms. Risku suggested the same rate for everyone as the duties are not inherently different amongst the members. Mr. Artis made a motion to raise Board Member pay to \$400 per month effective September 1, 2022. Mr. Wright seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

V. Public Comment (4-minute limit)

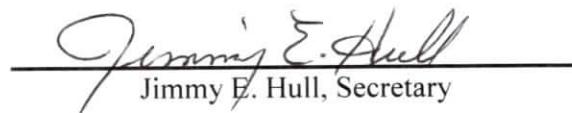
- Barbara Dantonio, 152 Parks Rd, Goldsboro, expressed concern about the placement of curbside voting. She stated that most precincts place curbside voting inside the 50 foot boundary and this prevents her and other electioneers from distributing materials to those voters.

VI. Board Comment

- Mr. Hull thanked the staff for their creation and maintenance of the Board's website stating he recently spent time assisting relatives in the western part of the state and their local Board's website was impossible to navigate.
- Ms. Cowan noted that there have been some difficult discussions in recent months but she was proud that the five members always found a way to work together.
- Mr. Edwards stated that all five members are passionate about their work and that they all work hard to protect the rights of every voter. He also commended the staff for their hard work.
- Mr. Artis expressed his support for the staff.

VII. Adjournment:

- With all business having been conducted, Ms. Cowan made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Wright seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.



Jimmy E. Hull, Secretary