Albemarle County Electoral Board Meeting Minutes

January 6, 2026

Location: Albemarle County Office Building, 5th Street
Attendance: Jim Heilman, Valerie Dormady, Bucky Walsh, Jonell McFadden, Alex Branch, Counselor Andrea Ruege
Public who spoke: Laurie Jones, Rick Garnett

The meeting began at 9:30 am.
The meeting was convened by Vice-Chair Bucky Walsh.

Reorganization of the Board. Jim moved the following nominations: Bucky Walsh as Chair, Valerie Dormady as Vice-Chair, and Jim Heilman as Secretary. The motion passed unanimously. Board, staff, and observers welcomed Valerie to the Board.
The agenda was approved.

Announcements by Board and Staff.

- Bucky announced that Board meeting agendas are posted on our website www.albemarle.org/government/elections. He also noted that draft meeting minutes are posted on our website as soon as they become available. Videos of meetings are also posted on the website, as are dates and times of future meetings.
- Jim announced that Governor-elect Spanberger has nominated Steven Koski to be the state's Election Commissioner, replacing Susan Beals.
- Jonell discussed staff hiring; she has posted for 3 full time and 1 part time positions. She has many applications for these. She has promoted Christina Sprouse to a part time permanent position.
- Counselor Ruege is auditing contracts that we have with non-public school polling places and is seeing what needs to be updated.
- Jonell is looking at our equipment contracts. She noted that the software contract on our Election Officer management system ended December 3. Staff will be looking at three potential vendors who will be presenting their products this week.
- Jonell noted that, in December, we went over 90,000 registered voters for the first time.
- Jonell noted that our budget for this Fiscal Year (July '25 through June '26) is 1.3 million dollars. We have spent roughly half that so far. She discussed some major changes she is proposing in next fiscal year's budget.

The minutes for December 11 and 23 were approved.

Old Business.

- University Polling Place Reorganization. The question of how to move forward was addressed. We will consider who from the Board should be the point person on reorganizing.

- Election/Registration Office Accounting. Jonell reported that the highest cost centers so far are part-time wages, equipment, ballots, absentee balloting processing, and software. She has submitted a budget request for FY27 for 1.6 million dollars.
- DS300 Optical Scan Failures. We are still awaiting a response on what the vendor, ES&S, plans to do to evaluate and correct the problems we experienced in November.

New Business.

- Contingency Planning for Possible April Referendum. Jim discussed issues we will have to handle very quickly if/when the General Assembly and Governor call for an April referendum on redistricting. He noted that we will need to inform all our polling places of the impending referendum and that we will need to discuss with Facilities Management the need for reservation of an appropriate room for early-in-person voting. He suggested that, if we predict a very low turnout, we may not need the large Room A but can conduct voting in the smaller Room B. Laurie suggested that maybe we could use Room B until the last two weeks and then switch to Room A.
- Electoral Board/Registrar Responsibilities. Bucky presented an exhaustive list of Board responsibilities that he extracted from the Code of Virginia. He asked Jonell to work on determining which responsibilities the Board should do and which we should delegate to the Registrar.
- Assigning Election Officers to their home precinct. Bucky discussed trying to follow the spirit of the law in assigning to their home precincts those officers who want it. We agreed awhile ago to query those officers not currently in their home precinct as to whether they want to be assigned there. Alex said that he thinks he sent such a query earlier this year but that he will check.
- Completing Statements of Results (SoRs). Bucky noted that there is some confusion on which officers should be completing SoRs and that the Code now appears to be silent on this issue. He proposed that two different people from two different parties (if possible) should do this. Rick said that this indeed is currently confusing to election officers. Bucky offered to write a policy statement on this issue.

The next meeting dates were set for: February 4 at 9 am and March 12 at 9 am. We proposed a general policy of holding meetings on the second Thursday of each month.

Executive Session. Bucky moved the following: RESOLVED, that the Board convene a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A of the Code of Virginia under subsection 1 to discuss and consider the appointment, assignment, and performance of current and prospective employees. The motion passed unanimously. The Board went into the closed meeting at 10:28 am.

The Board came out of the closed meeting at 10:54 am. (Board members and Andrea, Jonell and Alex participated.) Bucky moved the following: RESOLVED, that the Electoral Board certify by recorded vote that, to the best of each member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 am.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Heilman
Secretary, Albemarle County Electoral Board