



County Board of Commissioners

Chairman
Brownie Newman

District 1
Jasmine Beach-Ferrara
Al Whitesides

District 2
Ellen Frost
Mike Fryar

District 3
Joe Belcher
Robert Pressley

August 1, 2018

NC Board of Elections
PO Box 27255
Raleigh, NC 27611-7255

Dear members of the NC Board of Elections,

I write to you today to express support for plans to assure accessible Early Voting services in Buncombe County in the elections scheduled for this Fall. Early voting is popular in our community and helps assure citizens with busy schedules may find a convenient time and location to participate in exercising their civic duty.

I understand there are two plans being considered by the board, one of which would have 10 Early Voting locations and the other would have 11 locations. One of the differences of the plans is that the plan with 11 locations includes an Early Voting site at the Dr. Wesley Grant, Sr Southside Center. This community center has been a valuable site for early voting in recent elections. A high percentage of the African American community in Buncombe County have utilized the Dr. Wesley Grant, Sr Southside Center as their early voting location, which is within convenient walking distance of several neighborhoods.

We understand that if the Early Voting plan with 11 sites is selected, some additional investment would be needed for implementation. The County Commission is willing to invest additional resources for this purpose.

Thank you for your service on the state board of elections. Thank you for your consideration of these plans to provide for Early Voting access in our county.

Sincerely,

Brownie Newman

Brownie Newman,
County Commission Chair





Election Services

CHAIRMAN
John D. Watson III

VICE CHAIRMAN
Lucy Smith

SECRETARY
Stephen G. Duncan

MEMBER
Jake Quinn

DIRECTOR
Trena Velez

September 18, 2018

Buncombe County Commissioners
200 College Street
Asheville, NC 28801

Dear County Commissioners:

This letter is to apprise you of the need to provide additional funds to the Buncombe County Board of Elections for an additional early voting site. The basis for this request is as follows.

On August 5, 2018, at a hearing in Winston Salem, the State Board of Elections rejected the ten sites one stop/early voting plan approved by a bi-partisan majority of the Buncombe County Board of Elections, and ordered that the BCBOE implement an eleven sites plan put forth by member Jake Quinn. The addition of the eleventh site will require minimum expenditures of approximately \$40,000.00 that are not in our current budget. Within approximately 45 minutes of the BCBOE meeting of July 19, Mr. Quinn had contacted our Director by telephone and notified her that the additional funds had been approved. At the hearing on August 5, Mr. Quinn represented to the State Board that additional funds had been approved by the County Commissioners, and presented a letter to that effect signed by Chairman Newman.

At the hearing of August 5, and in statements following, representations have been made that the addition of the eleventh site was necessary to preserve the Wesley Grant site as a voting location. That is simply not true. For clarification, please note that the original plan proposed by staff, and which the undersigned members were ready to approve, did include the Wesley Grant voting location. At the meetings of the BCBOE on July 17 and July 19, Mr. Quinn would not agree to any plan that did not add an additional, fourth, downtown voting location. Indeed, on July 17, our initial deliberations on adding a fourth downtown site – while Wesley Grant was still included in the plan -- focused on Pack Library. Mr. Quinn even suggested eliminating the Leicester community voting site in order to fund a fourth downtown voting site. Only after Mr. Quinn refused to approve a plan that did not include a fourth downtown site at the July 17 meeting, was staff instructed to look into the feasibility of adding an additional downtown site. The Valley street location was identified, and, considering all objective criteria, was considered a better location, which would serve more minority precincts and downtown communities, and is within approximately two miles of the Wesley Grant site. At our July 19 meeting, in an effort to stay within budget constraints and still serve the same, and more, voting communities as



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served by the Wesley Grant site, a majority of the Board approved a revised plan that substituted the Valley street site for the Wesley Grant site. Mr. Quinn refused to approve the revised plan as well, and insisted on a fourth downtown voting location. Subsequent representations that a fourth site was added to preserve the Wesley Grant site as a voting location are simply not true and misrepresent the deliberations and actions of the BCBOE.

With an election pending, the undersigned officers of the BCBOE request, pursuant to the action of the State Board of Elections and Chairman Newman's letter of August 1, that the Commissioners take such action as may be necessary to fund the eleventh site. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Buncombe County Board of Elections

By: John D. Watson, Chairman

Lucy Smith, Vice Chair

Steve Duncan, Secretary

CC: Jake Quinn, Member
Interim County Manager
County Finance Office



428 Sunset Drive
Asheville, NC 28804
September 20, 2018

Buncombe County Commissioners
200 College Street
Asheville, NC 28801

Dear County Commissioners:

This letter is to correct the inaccuracies and mischaracterizations contained in my three colleagues' letter to you of the 18th, and to apprise you of the fact that the Buncombe County Board of Elections has neither discussed nor requested additional funds for this year's general election. A careful reading of their letter reveals that my colleagues believe that we may need a budget amendment in the future. Should that need arise, I am confident that the Board of Elections will submit a formal, dollar-specific request, supported with the details about how, exactly, the additional funds would be spent.

Early voting for this year's primary election failed to include a site downtown. On July 17, the Buncombe Board of Elections was presented with staff's early voting proposal for the general election, and it again failed to include a downtown site. I pointed out the deficiency and was joined by my colleagues in asking staff to explore finding a site that we could use for early voting downtown. We recessed for two days to give staff a chance to find a suitable location. When we reconvened on the 19th, two possibilities had been identified: Pack Library, which was used in 2016, and 30 Valley Street, a new site. Staff listed the pros and cons of each, and the Board quickly developed a consensus that the Valley Street location would be a good site for early voting this year. At that point, my colleagues opted, upon staff's recommendation, to substitute early voting at 30 Valley Street for voting at the Dr. Wesley Grant Sr. Southside Center, while I chose to view Valley Street simply as an additional early voting site. We presented our respective cases to the State Board of Elections on August 5th, and mine was approved.

With respect to correcting inaccuracies, their letter states that "[w]ithin approximately 45 minutes of the BCBOE meeting of July 19, Mr. Quinn had contacted our Director by telephone and notified her that the additional funds had been approved." For the record, I made no phone call to Director Velez on July 19 or any other date to report that the Commissioners had taken any action on anything. I cannot begin to imagine upon what my colleagues have based this claim.

Similarly, my colleagues claim that “Mr. Quinn even suggested eliminating the Leicester community voting site in order to fund a fourth downtown voting site,” when nothing could be further from the truth. As the minutes to our meeting of July 19th clearly report, staff proposed dropping the Grant Center or the Enka Candler Library to add 30 Valley Street. When that proposal was made, I immediately and vocally dismissed the notion of eliminating the Library, and only then proceeded to advocate for both the Grant Center and 30 Valley Street. And at our meeting on the 17th, even before noting the failure to plan for an early voting site downtown, I lamented not having a site planned at the Bee Tree Fire Department. Whatever concerns I may have about my colleagues’ memory, I will not allow mischaracterizations of my advocacy to go unchallenged.

I remain puzzled by references to “a fourth downtown voting location” in my colleagues’ letter to you. With 30 Valley Street, Buncombe will have one early voting site in downtown Asheville. The next closest sites to downtown will be the Grant Center in the Southside neighborhood (1.9 miles away), and the Asheville Mall on South Tunnel Road (2.1 miles away). We will have 11 early voting sites across Buncombe this fall; only one of them will be in downtown Asheville.

In her presentations of July 17 & 19, Director Velez estimated that the additional cost of having 11 early voting sites instead of ten may be as high as \$40,000. We have not been briefed on what the actual costs will be, and do not yet know if there may be ways to cover those costs short of requesting an amendment to our budget. Should the need to submit such a request become apparent, I look forward to offering as much detail as we can about all aspects of the request. In the meantime, thank you for your continued support of the outstanding election services that Buncombe County provides its citizens.

Sincerely,

Jake Quinn, Member
Buncombe Board of Elections

cc: Jay Watson
Lucy Smith
Steve Duncan
Trena Velez
George Wood
Eric Hardy