



FREDERICK COUNTY ELECTORAL BOARD

Kay Dawson
Paige Manuel
Mary Strenko
343 Sunnyside Plaza Drive, Winchester, Virginia

Chairman
Vice-Chairman
Secretary
22603

Final Minutes

Frederick County Electoral Board
Tuesday December 9, 2025

The Frederick County Electoral Board met on Tuesday December 9, 2025. Those present were Chairman Kay Dawson, Vice-Chairman H. Paige Manuel, Secretary Mary Strenko, and Registrar Rich Venskoske.

Visitors' Present: Dody Stottlemeyer, Sara Eberly

- 1.) Chairman Dawson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
- 2.) Chairman Dawson made a motion to add Undeliverables to the agenda. Motion was seconded and passed.
- 3.) Vice-Chairman Manuel made a motion to accept the minutes from October 7, November 4, 5, 6, 7, and 14, 2025, the motion was seconded and the minutes were approved without dissent.
- 4.) Rules for proceeding with the meeting reaffirmed.
- 5.) **Old Business:**
 1. **Election Day Setup and Training Improvements:** Joe Dezarn developed and shared detailed phase-based assignment sheets for election set-up and closing. (Tasks were divided per team member (example: Joe organized equipment/load, Pete handled extension cords and certain devices, Rick and Tom for tables, etc.). The process included pre-assignment and pre-meeting dissemination for familiarity. Afternoon procedures covered the election closing, with reminders for everyone to go over the procedures in their manuals. Noted benefit: Clear instructions reduce confusion, ensure productivity, and prepare staff. Suggestion for further improvement: Formalize and incorporate Joe's assignment system into official training and possibly cue cards or

flowcharts. Other precincts provided a “flowchart” for key tasks during the day—suggested as another possible addition to training materials.

2. **Greenwood Road Barrier Relocation:** Previously discussed relocation of road barriers to allow closer parking but had not been implemented despite prior approval. Action: Will follow up and share the principal’s contact for further action.
3. **Voters at the Office of Elections:** Significant numbers of voters (500+) arrived at the election office on Election Day, confused about where to vote—most thought Early Voting continued, or didn’t know precincts. Existing signage (“Early voting ended on Saturday”) is often ignored. Issue: Frequent loss/theft of expensive (\$95) reflective precinct signs. Solution: New large “No Voting at This Location” A-frame signs with QR codes linking to the Virginia Election site for precinct lookup; three produced to be positioned in parking lot for greater visibility. Despite these measures, other counties report similar issues with voters not reading signs. Attempted solutions (e.g., street-file lookup laptop stations) constrained by limited resources versus high public demand.
4. **Voter Notification and Mailing Costs:** Discussed the idea of sending new postcards (reminders/updates with polling information) to all voters. Estimated cost: \$50-\$60k for 73,000 voters; possibly lower with bulk mailing, but concern raised about the cost of return postage for undeliverable. Undeliverable bulk mail is returned at first-class rate, adding additional fees. Undeliverable cards do trigger record flagging (mark as “undeliverable,” eventually “inactive” after further steps). Stressed the need to refine notification strategies due to changing precincts and demographics. It is acknowledged that information via website and media does not reach all voters.
5. **Election Cost and Turnout Statistics:** Presented numbers comparing 2020, 2024, and 2025 elections. Presidential year skewing costs and turnout due to COVID-related expenses. Cost per precinct, per ballot, and overall expenditures examined. Noted steady early voting (36% in 2024 and 2025) and discussed absentee/mailed ballots/unreturned numbers. Budget lines (postal costs, advertising, staffing) reviewed. Rather than direct effort to find “vote-by-mail requested but voted in-person” overlaps, the focus remains on improving the absentee list accuracy.

6.) **New Business:**

1. **Precinct Errors and Improvement:** Overall, precincts performed much better than in previous years; only minor errors noted (e.g., unsigned oaths, incomplete forms, mislabeled envelope contents). One chief (with previous experience) failed to sign an oath. Most improvements contributed to detailed training; suggestions were made to continue using enhanced visual aids (projector/annotation for form-filling procedures) for future in-person training. Provisional ballot handling was noted as a weakness, especially with interjurisdiction voters and missing logs. Action: Plan additional/training in the spring for chiefs/assistant chiefs, emphasizing recurring error areas.
2. **Technology and Equipment:** Needs for equipment refresh: Laptops (EPBs) have been used since 2015; currently at Windows 10 but anticipated future state system upgrades to Windows 11 will require new hardware. Cost projections: \$96,000 for 70-80 new laptops; Surface devices considered but determined less cost-effective than laptops. DS200 precinct scanners (from 2016) are still functional; newer DS300 models. Potential future hardware needs included in budget as capital expenditure as requested. Annual maintenance/license/warranty for all systems remains a significant expense and is reflected in both the Registrar's and Electoral Board's budgets.
3. **Budget Review:** Reviewed and discussed draft budget for the upcoming year: Total projected: \$580k with equipment, \$291k without new equipment. Noted slight decreases in several expense categories, but major capital investment could swing total. Officers of election pay unchanged for years; questions raised about possible increases (consensus: not likely a retention driver, as most not in for the money). Proposed budget draft motion passed to submit as "final" to the next stage of review.
4. **Staffing Updates:** David, staff member handling Logic & Accuracy testing with Jim, resigned due to time constraints; his role requires irregular hours, making recruitment challenging. Discussion about using current officers of election with tech skills as potential recruits; to circulate the need.
5. **School Precinct Use:** Meeting Planned Notified about a meeting with school system officials, maintenance, and facilities regarding election protocols at schools (scheduled Dec 10, 1:30 PM). Purpose unclear, possibly about signs or use of space. Noted that 26/29 precincts are in schools; loss of such sites would be significant. Recent anecdote: Winchester precinct lost polling space unexpectedly due to sale of facility.
6. **Anticipated 2026 Election Schedules & Redistricting:** Expecting up to four elections in 2026 (April, June, August, November), largely because of potential General Assembly action on election timing and possible redistricting. Discussion of how Congressional/Senate district shifts may (or may not) impact local Districts; current analysis suggests minimal change for

Frederick County, but possible changes in surrounding areas. Anticipated stress on resources if timelines are compressed (early voting overlaps, equipment recall times, etc.). Noted possible legislation to reduce early voting window, but not in effect for upcoming year.

7. **Discussion about early voting Saturday volume:** Last two weeks/Saturdays see a significant bump, lines out the door in high-turnout elections. Demographics: Many early voters are elderly/retirees.
8. **Detailed state-mandated process for marking and handling undeliverable mail.** Chairmen Dawson lead a discuss on her concerns on the amount of returned mail and her thoughts on how she would volunteer to create a database and research returned mail to determine which absentee voters would need to have their accounts canceled. Suggestion to use local research (public records, tax info) on undeliverable to expedite cleanup not adopted, as all purging/state action must follow rigid state processes. Ongoing discussion about more proactive follow-up on undeliverable addresses and information sharing with the state. Suggestion to advocate for improved feedback and information sharing from the state's voter system (VERIS), as no direct feedback is given after scanning undeliverable. The Registrar informed her that there are already steps in place within VERIS to handle this situation and that no other action is needed from her or anything additional that staff would need to do. Each undeliverable message is scanned and flagged, with multiple step follow-ups by state "list maintenance" typically peaking in January. Local adjustments continue year-round for deaths, felons, etc.

6.) **Citizen Comments & Suggestions:**

1. Suggestion to formalize Joe's assignment sheets and make them part of standardized training.
2. Question raised about ability to check with USPS to verify change-of-address for undeliverable; discussed that the post office does forward for a period before returning, and processes are in place.
3. Discussion on lack of reporting/feedback from voter information system after scanning undeliverable; suggestion to advocate for better feedback/reporting with State Board.
4. Noted rising costs of obligatory advertising (Winchester Star), digital subscriptions, and the challenge this poses to budget.

7.) **Closed Session** to review OOE Applications, (VA. Code 2.2-3711(A)(1).

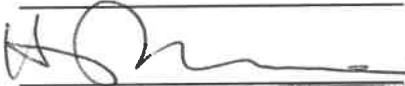


8.) **Closed Session** to review OOE Evaluations, (VA. Code 2.2-3711(A)(1).

9.) Vice-Chairman Manuel made a motion to adjourn; motion was seconded and passed.

10.) Closing - Meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully,

Mary Strenko,
Secretary

	_____	Chairman
		_____ Vice-Chairman
		_____ Secretary
	<u>1/6/26</u>	_____ Date