**Brunswick County Board of Elections**

**February 20, 2017 – 2 p.m. Bolivia**

**Observation notes by Gail Bromley**

**This is the regular monthly meeting for the Board of Elections**

**Meeting attendees**: Board members included: Stuart Smith, Chair and Randy Pelton. Absent: Boyd Williamson. Staff were represented by Sara Knotts, Director; Melissa Monroe, Deputy Director and staff who oversee data management. The only public present was Gail Bromley, LWVLCF.

**Highlights:** County Boards of Elections are to have new voting machines in place by the 2019 Election cycle, which will give the voter a paper ballot to review. The expense of replacing current and relatively new electronic equipment will be substantial. The Brunswick County Board members plan on asking for more time for equipment replacement. They will also be advocating for legislation that takes away out-of-precinct voting requirement on Election Day during General Elections. We may want to help support these moves as LWV.

**Public Comments:** Gail mentioned that the League would be offering workshops on doing voter registration drives and hoped to promote contacting and using Board of Elections as a resource. She also asked for any new information on changes to daily activities, especially pertaining to the law and regulations. At this point, there is little evidence to think that the redistricting issues will be resolved in time to affect Fall elections. We are likely to have only municipal elections. Currently that law is to be reviewed by the U.S. Supreme Court. Other items that are not at the U.S. Supreme Court change daily and last week while Board members and staff were at a training, one day a new procedure was announced by the State Board of Elections(for changing Boards of Elections) and then the following day that was changed yet again. This frustrates local Boards tremendously as they cannot plan.

**Equipment Replacement:** The local Boards have until the Elections in 2019 to change all of their voting equipment to comply with the law demanding that a paper backup ballot be available. The State has not certified any equipment to date. Counties are allowed to purchase ONLY equipment the State certifies. A trial run or testing of potential new equipment during an actual election cycle is needed before the 2019 implementation occurs which means they must do some testing in 2018 to see if machines they intend to purchase will work in the 2019. These machines would give the voter a paper ballot marked up to indicate how they voted using the electronic keypad. If the voter does not feel that the paper ballot is correct in some way, they could address this at that time. How is unclear. If they find it okay, the ballot would be placed in another machine to be tabulated beyond the electronic tabulation. Now, tabulators of this type have been less than accurate in the past. If there is any slight irregularity in the marking on the paper or in the paper itself (a slight fold), it could be tabulated incorrectly or not tabulated properly at all. This concerns the Board. They do not agree that the machinery we now have should be replaced.

Any testing in 2018 would probably occur at one voting precinct. No matter what, replacing Brunswick’s machines for this paper ballot backup system will cost the county at minimum, 1.3 million dollars. The county has some hope for a delay in implementation statewide, but meanwhile, they are planning for this.

**Our Board of Elections and the State Legislature:** Board and staff members discussed the idea of advocating for elimination of OUT-OF-PRECINCT voting on Election Day. They feel that voters should be able to vote as they do during Early Voting, at any precinct in the county. They would like to see less need for provisional ballots and an openness to the system so that those registered in the county could vote at any open precinct without issues. As it is, some of our precinct poll locations are just outside the precinct lines, due to a lack of facilities appropriate for voting. In the future, our Board is hoping to bring up the idea of super voting centers throughout the county, thus eliminating so many precincts, many of which fall short of convenience for voters. These sites could be used for Early Voting and then on Election Day, reopened for voting again. This means selecting good sites with good parking scattered strategically throughout the county. This is an interesting concept that is NOT new but deserving of consideration. Randy Pelton asked that the League think about these ideas and if we agree, could we support these ideas as a group. As a Board, they will try to set up a meeting with our county’s State Legislators to discuss.