**Pender County Board of Elections**

**July 5, 2015 – 10:00 a.m. in Burgaw**

Donna Howard and Gail Bromley attended from the League of Women Voters of the Lower Cape Fear. This was a meeting that was preceded by several meetings where discussions occurred around Sunday voting. All members of the Board were present as was an observer from the Democratic Party. Dennis Boyles, Director, was also present and helped guide the meeting when things got heated. Dennis takes minutes as well.

I had asked Dennis in advance to address the Board at the meeting. The League was clearly put on the agenda but we were placed after all the business of the meeting was concluded. I asked if we could be moved up as part of my presentation included some comments on Sunday voting. The Chair, Bette Fennell said “no”. All comments from the public would be at the end of the meeting. However, Dennis let me distribute my written comments once they got to the part of the agenda that included another discussion about Sunday voting. It was clear that the Board was very divided about Early Voting Hours in general and Sunday voting specifically.

This Board is split strongly along partisan lines about issues pertaining to Early Voting and had strong divisions about the minutes that were distributed on previous discussions. After the minutes were amended to satisfy the minority member, the group moved on.

Dennis reported that he is unable to secure any additional voting equipment for One Stop. Staffing is an issue too. In order to meet the mandated hours from 2012, they must provide 577 hours of voting and even with adding Sunday, they cannot get to the mandated hours without an additional site. They also missed the July 1 deadline for appealing to the State Board of Elections for relief for fewer voting hours. The minority definitely wants to hit the target and add Sunday. The majority is concerned about the age of poll workers, the skills needed to do polling duties these days and two weeks of managing the polls by staff and poll workers with no breaks in days. They are deadlocked. In the end, the majority decided to consult with a lawyer in the county to see what options they have. A plan must be submitted to the State by July 29.

Since Dennis had distributed my written comments to the group in advance of my time to speak, we discussed things of mutual concern. I did not repeat much in my written comments and Donna and I talked a little about our desire to do vote registrations in the county. I suggested that they might still try to appeal to the State with a compromise One Stop plan, but neither Dennis nor the Board members felt they would be heard. We left on congenial terms and they are very open to Voter Registration activities on our part.

Submitted by: Gail Bromley