

Anderson County Election Commission Minutes

Friday, January 31, 2025
3:00 p.m. ET, Room 206, Courthouse

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 p.m. by Chair Jane Miller. In addition, to Miller, Commissioners Mary Matheny, David Bradshaw, Bill Gallaher and Bear Stephenson were present along with Election Administrator Mark Stephens, Chief Deputy Kim Eby, and Deputies Tina Price and Shawn Rogers.

Visitors:

Attending from the public were Lou Ann Cristy, Stephen Cristy, Liz Ibbotson, Chase Lindsey, Marion Stanford and Robert Walker.

Attending from the AC Finance Department was Payroll Manager Paul Richardson.

II. Public Comment (Previously approved motion limits each speaker to 3 minutes)

Public comments were made by Robert Walker regarding the website and budget.

Chair Miller responded that she and Stephens had worked on the website and made significant progress. Meeting minutes and agendas are accessible from any page on the website under the Commission section at the footer of each page. Additionally, both the commission meeting agendas and minutes are now displayed on the website as “most recent at top” of the respective lists.

III. Administrator’s Report

• 2025 Budget Information/Discussion

Miller asked Stephens to discuss the schedule regarding next year’s budget. The budget call was expected to have been sent out on January 27th per the schedule contained in AC Budget Committee meeting agenda. Richardson said that the packet and calendar that Stephens has is from the last budget committee meeting. Budget committee did not approve the calendar at its last meeting, so that same packet will go back to the February meeting for approval with some date changes. Due dates will be pushed back and those should be approved at the February budget meeting.

Bradshaw asked Stephens if it came out February 1st and its due on February 17th, then that means you and your staff have already been working on the budget because it will be a very quick turnaround. Stephens said yes, that is pretty much what we have done in the past since there is a no increase budget. The only thing we did not get last year was the part time money. He said he was unaware that he did not get it, as there was no communication from Finance that part time help was changed/reduced by 45%. We have a pattern of knowing the numbers we have and can reuse those although we know cost/prices increase each year. Bradshaw said, but you are going to go through those numbers and have them ready. He asked Stephens if he is going to do this without an increase. Stephens said he is going to get input from the board. We are all accountable for this.

- **Current Budget Year Update**

Chair Miller stated that she had been working on the budget with Stephens to get a better understanding of the current budget status. Miller also reported that they had a Zoom call with CTAS to get more information on best practices in dealing with Finance/Budget department. Stephenson thanked, on behalf of the rest of the board, Miller for assisting Stephens with the budget.

Gallaher asked if the budget that was submitted last year was approved. Stephens said that code 169 Part Time was cut 45% over amount requested. (note: This is the code that is out of money today and has been frozen by the AC Budget Committee.)

Stephens distributed a budget comparison to the board (attachment A – Anderson County Election Commission (ACEC) *Budget vs Spend History 2013-2024*). He said since 2013, \$635,634 had been returned back to the county by the ACEC. Matheny asked what happened to those returned funds, and Richardson said that they were placed in the counties undesignated fund.

Miller said that per TN Code Annotated law, all TN counties are required to fund the Election Commission at a Maintenance of Effort (MOE) status, and provide additional funding if required to conduct election business. Miller also stated that she had reached out via email to the County Commission in follow-up to their “No Confidence” motion, and had only received 2 emails back from Commissioners,

one of which was scathing. She also said the County Commission Chair called her via phone, but he was not receptive to further discussion.

When asked about communication between the Election Office and the Finance Department, Richardson said that communication was made through emails or in person. Finance Director Holbrook sent emails about any increases needed in the budget but never received any response and Stephens didn't attend any budget hearings. He also said that there were more codes projected to be in the red. He said that Part Time had been an issue over the last several years and that Stephens had consistently been asking for more money. Matheny asked why the Machine Technician codes were over. Stephens replied that they assisted at the precincts when needed and that because our storage facility was in Oak Ridge that it increased the time needed for them.

Bradshaw asked the question whether our budget is over in its entirety or just in those two codes (189 Other Salaries and Wages, and 193 Election Workers). Richardson said they are over in those two codes and there are more than just those two. Matheny asked how many more codes are over. Stephens said we are also projected to go over in 201 Social Security and 212 Medicare. Additionally, per the December 3, 2024 Holbrook letter, codes 106 Deputies and 169 Part Time were projected to overrun before June 30th.

Bradshaw asked if we can solve this problem with transfers between codes within our department. Richardson said he thinks so. Bradshaw asked Stephens what he thought. Stephens said I think we can, we have not received all of our bills yet. We received a lot of our bills for the November election in January and February but there are some still not yet received. Chair Miller asked Stephens to take an **action item** to contact any vendors that have not yet invoiced ACEC for their services to ask them for their outstanding invoice amounts.

Walker asked about vendors that had not billed yet and does it put them at risk of not getting paid if they haven't sent in a bill before the budget meeting on February 6th.

Bradshaw asked Richardson if other departments have issues where they must move money around between codes. Richardson replied "yes". So what ACEC is doing is nothing unusual, it just feels like the level of scrutiny this has got is

nowhere commiserate with the opportunity we have to solve this. It just feels like there is something else out there that is kind of a bee in someone's bonnet. This is what I wish would be communicated to us. We are now going to look at this budget on a monthly basis. The Chair has communicated that to Stephens. We are going to be able to predict these things ahead of time. We recognize that it needs to be fixed and we are working on that. There are some things that Stephens can do better, and the chair has communicated that to him.

Miller said Stephens has explained the process to her regarding staff timesheets. Stephens took an **action item** that timesheets back to December 16, 2024, and going forward will be submitted to Payroll with the summary sheet.

Richardson gave an example if there is a discrepancy he can go search it out and correct it before payroll is done. Part time help has been the big issue. A number of raises have been given to the part time help. This is the biggest problem area for going into the red. Our big concern this year is that in September, just three months into the budget year, Stephens was having to request more money and we're sitting with \$155 in the code and there is five months left in the budget year.

Stephens replied he is not going to use any more part time help this budget year, that the Election office only needed part time help during the election. Richardson said that the reason he projects that out is because in the past years, the part time help has not stopped after the election.

Bradshaw said what the Chair has said is we as a board are going to be more involved. We're not going to micromanage Stephens, but we're going to pay attention to that and hold Stephens accountable.

Stanford asked the question, if you are transferring money to a deficient code from another code, won't that code become deficient. Richardson said that it can, for instance money was transferred from the deputies' code to cover part time, so that code is now projected (per Robby Holbrook, Director of Finance) to be \$3,000 short. So, we will have to work on finding money somewhere else to work that out. However, Finance doesn't know what budget committee and county commission is going to approve or disapprove. We have seen it go either way. That is out of our hands.

Miller stated that things are getting fixed and ACEC has not overrun our budget. We have returned money to AC Finance each of the last thirteen years. The AC Election Office budget has been overall managed efficiently. The Election Commission is going to be more involved as stated at the beginning of this meeting.

- **Office News and Notes**

Miller said she wanted to share with the Election commission that she had a conversation with Stephens about the meeting they had last year with Law Director Jay Yeager and Human Resources Manager Kim Jeffers-Whitaker. The AC Election Administrator's job description was discussed and we will be doing a performance review. Stephens was receptive to the recommendations from the Legal/HR meeting. Stephens was also directed to do a performance review for each of his staff during this year to coincide with the AC HR annual performance review schedule. The Election office job descriptions are each on file in HR. Miller will provide a copy of the AC performance review form for the commission input.

IV. Review of Previous Action Items

1. The Commission at the January 16, 2025, meeting approved and directed Stephens to prepare and submit to Finance a Budget Amendment Request to correct the overrun in budget codes 189 Other Salaries and Wages, and 193 Election Workers, for consideration at the February 6, 2025, AC Budget Committee Meeting. **COMPLETED 01-17-2025.**

V. New Action Items

1. Miller asked Stephens to contact any vendors that have not yet invoiced ACEC for their services to ask them for their outstanding invoice amounts.
2. Miller requested that each of the commissioners attend the AC Budget Committee meeting on February 6, 2025, at 4 p.m., where the ACEC Budget Amendment Request to correct the two overrun codes will be considered.
3. Stephens will submit Election office timesheets back to December 16, 2024, and going forward, to Payroll with the summary sheet biweekly.

VI. Set Next Meeting

The next meeting was changed and set for February 13, 2025 at 4 p.m. This was due to a need to address the new 2025-2026 budget submittal schedule.

VII. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Stephenson with a second by Matheny. All voted in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 4:18 p.m.


D. Jane Miller, Chair


Mary Matheny, Secretary


David Bradshaw, Commissioner


William T. Gallaher, Commissioner


William "Bear" Stephenson, Commissioner

Attachments

1. ACEC Budget vs Spend History 2013-2024

BUDGET: ELECTION COMMISSION

Fiscal Year	Proposed Budget Original	Final	Actual Budget	Variance positive OR (negative)
2013	\$454,154	\$483,878	\$466,236	\$17,642
2014	\$463,236	\$508,769	\$423,290	\$85,479
2015	\$487,941	\$498,589	\$443,979	\$54,610
2016	\$444,238	\$445,626	\$382,275	\$63,351
2017	\$488,726	\$466,014	\$414,512	\$51,502
2018	\$430,312	\$430,312	\$369,246	\$61,066
2019	\$489,282	\$489,282	\$454,084	\$35,198
2020	\$438,004	\$439,769	\$402,012	\$37,757
2021	\$484,120	\$617,121	\$576,576	\$40,545
2022	\$460,993	\$463,493	\$389,152	\$74,341
2023	\$523,928	\$523,928	\$490,054	\$33,874
2024	\$502,345	\$1,296,267	\$1,215,998	\$80,269
Total Variance				\$635,634
Reimbursement			16 x 18,000	\$288,000