

One Burke voting precinct damaged in storm

SHARON MCBRAYER
smcbrayer@morganton.com

With early voting for the November election starting next week and multiple counties in western North Carolina still reeling from the effects of Hurricane Helene, election officials are working to make sure people get to vote.

In Burke County, one Election Day precinct was damaged in the storm, while McDowell County will not hold early voting in Old Fort because the early voting site there is unsafe after damage from the storm.

On Monday, the North Carolina State Board of Elections approved a resolution to exercise emergency powers in 13 counties affected by the storm to conduct an election. McDowell County is one of the 13 counties. The other counties are Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey.

The state elections board said infrastructure for elections administration and voters' accessibility to polling places and mail service in those counties remain severely disrupted as a result of the storm and will continue to be disrupted throughout the election.

The resolution gives those counties the ability to establish

Election Day precincts in other counties, potentially in a neighboring county. Those counties can also establish more than one voting location in a precinct.

The resolution allows local boards of elections to make other changes for the general election, including reassigning poll workers to other locations, appointing emergency Election Day assistants and appointing registered voters of other counties to be election officials for early voting and Election Day voting sites.

The state board said the storm forced some voters to relocate to other parts of the state or outside the state, which will increase demand for absentee voting among voters who are not used to voting that way.

Voting absentee after Hurricane Helene

Kenny Rhyne, director of elections for Burke County, said voters living in those 13 counties who have been displaced by the storm can drop off absentee-by-mail ballots to any board of elections office in the state. That board of elections office will be responsible for time-stamping it and getting it to the voter's home board of elections before deadline on Election Day, he said.

Rhyne said he had someone come into his office from Bun-

combe County but is staying in Burke County who wanted to vote in Burke. Because the person hadn't lived in Burke County for 30 days, the person couldn't vote in Burke but Rhyne helped the voter request a mail-in-ballot from Buncombe. The deadline to request an absentee ballot is Oct. 29.

If someone, for instance, is from Caldwell County but is living in Burke because of the storm, and it hasn't been more than 30 days, they will need to vote at their regular precinct in their home county on Election Day. Or go to an early voting site in their home county, Rhyne said.

The same is true for someone who was living in Morganton but was displaced by the storm and is living at another address in the county. If it has been less than 30 days, the voter will need to return to their regular precinct to vote on Election Day, Rhyne said.

Early voting in NC

People can register to vote or update voter registration before the election until 5 p.m. on Friday. People also can register and vote during early voting.

People can register to vote online or in person at the DMV. People living in Burke County also can register at the Burke County Board of Elections, located at 2128 S. Sterling St.,

Morganton.

Those living in McDowell County can register at the McDowell County Board of Elections, located at 2458 N.C. Hwy. 226 S., Marion.

McDowell County Board of Elections has made the decision to eliminate the early voting site in Old Fort due to the damage suffered in the town, according to Deputy Director Jane Dale. Dale said the county emergency manager said it was not safe to vote at the Old Fort site, which was the Old Fort Depot.

Early voting will be held at the McDowell County Board of Elections office, located at located at 2458 N.C. Hwy. 226 S., Marion. Early voting starts Thursday, Oct. 17, and ends Saturday, Nov. 2.

Early voting sites in Burke County are:

■ Burke County Elections Office, located at 2128 S Sterling St., Morganton.

■ Glen Alpine Town Hall, located at 103 Pitt St., Glen Alpine

■ Burke County Senior Center, located at 501 N Green St., Morganton.

■ Rutherford College Town Hall, located at 980 Malcolm Blvd., Connelly Springs

■ East Burke Senior Center Library, located at 101 Main Avenue West, Hildebran.

In Burke County, early voting

weekday hours are from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., and Saturday hours from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be three Saturdays during the early voting period.

New voting precincts in Burke County

Kenny Rhyne, director of elections for Burke County, said there is one precinct, Upper Creek at Smyrna Baptist Church, that suffered damage during the storm. He said the board of elections is trying to figure out whether that precinct will have to move to another location.

Other Election Day precinct locations that have changed are:

■ Icard 1 has permanently moved from Friendship Methodist to Ray Childers Elementary.

■ Lovelady 1 has permanently moved from the Old Rock School to Valdese Elementary School.

■ Quaker Meadows 2 has permanently moved from the Burke County Fairgrounds to Faith Presbyterian Church.

■ Lovelady 4 has temporarily moved from Valdese Town Hall to the Valdese Park and Rec Splash Pad due to temporary housing of the police department at the town hall.

To see other information on the election and impacts from Hurricane Helene, visit ncsbe.gov/Helene.

PETS OF THE WEEK

SHARON MCBRAYER
smcbrayer@morganton.com

The following are the Pets of the Week at Burke County Animal Services:

Blondie: A 2-3-year-old spayed female dog who is the shelter's longest resident. Come meet her, as she is dog-friendly and people-friendly. She is in foster so we will set up a meet and greet with you. She loves a couch and loves to play and cuddle.

Jack: A 10-month-old male dog

who loves to play. He loves other dogs and is an amazing playmate in play groups. Come meet him and fall in love with this spunkiness.

Scott: A 3-month-old male kitten who was found with his two other siblings after the hurricane. He is super sweet and snuggly and is learning to play. He is currently in foster



Jack



Scott



Jewel



Blondie

and a meet and greet can be set up.

Jewel: A 3-month-old female cat who is Scott's sibling. She is also in foster so we will set up a

meet and greet if you are interested. She is becoming super snuggly and is also learning to play.

All adoptions include up-to-date vaccines, preventatives, a spay or neuter, and dogs will be heartworm tested.

Animal services is currently in need of food donations for its community pet food bank, which

goes to help pets of those in need. Donations can be dropped off or mailed to Burke County Animal Services at 425 Kirksey Dr., Morganton.

Those in need of pet food can stop by animal services and fill out a one-time informational form and let them know what you need.

Call animal services at 828-764-9588 and view more animals up for adoption at www.burkenc.org/2444/Animal-Services.

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