

Election Preparation for 2020 Presidential Election

Pandemic Election Plan- Albemarle County

Summary

This memorandum will outline election preparations in Albemarle County for the fall, 2020 presidential election cycle.

For Albemarle County voters, there will be three options for voting:

- 1) vote by mail
- 2) vote early in-person
- 3) vote in-person at your polling place on election day.

The Electoral Board is encouraging voters to vote by mail-in ballot, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Board and the voter registration department will use their best efforts to ensure safe and clean polling places for early in-person voting and on election day.

The Electoral Board is working in conjunction with the county Communications Department in a voter outreach program, so as to inform voters of the upcoming election, the registration deadline, the voting options available to voters, and COVID protocols.

Three Options to Vote

1) Vote by mail

All Albemarle County registered voters can vote in this election by mail. There is no longer any requirement to provide an absentee “excuse” (such as “out of town on election day”, “disabled”, etc.). To vote by mail, voters must apply for a mail-in ballot. For those who have a Virginia driver’s license, this can be done online at the Va. Dept. of Elections website. Otherwise voters can submit a mail-in ballot application to the voter registration office, either electronically, or by mail, or in person. The deadline for our receipt of an application is October 23, but we encourage all to apply at their earliest convenience. The voter registration department will begin mailing out ballots for mail-in voting no later than September 18. Voters who receive a mail-in ballot may return the marked ballot by U.S. Mail, by commercial carrier, in person to the voter registration office, or deposit in the mail-in ballot dropbox that we plan to set up adjacent to the parking circle outside at the 5th Street County office building (this latter option approved by the Gen. Assembly just this week in special session, and expected to be signed by the Governor next week).

In order to be counted, mail-in ballots must be either received by the Electoral Board by 7 PM on Tuesday, November 3, 2020, or, if returned by mail, must be postmarked by November 3, and received by the Electoral Board by noon on Friday, November 6, 2020.

2) Vote Early In Person at the 5th St. County Office Building

Early in-person voting will begin on Friday, September 18, 2020 in Conference Room A, at the 5th Street County Office Building, 1600 5th St. For early in-person voting, Conference Room A

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will operate just like a normal precinct polling place on election day. That is, a voter will come to Conference Room A, present acceptable ID, get checked in on the electronic pollbooks, be handed a ballot, and directed to a ballot marking booth; the voter will mark the ballot, and then insert it into a DS 200 ballot scanning machine.

Employees of other departments housed in the building will be asked to telecommute, to the great extent practicable. Those who must work on site will be asked to park in the lower portion of the parking lot, so that voters and other visitors have ample parking opportunities. Appropriate directional signage will be provided.

The days and hours of operation of early in-person voting will be as follows:

Starting Friday, September 18:

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, from 8:30 AM through 5 PM

Tuesdays, from 7 AM through 5 PM

Thursdays, from 8:30 AM through 7 PM

Saturday, October 24, from 9 AM through 5 PM

Saturday, October 31, from 9 AM through 5 PM

– THIS IS THE FINAL DAY OF EARLY IN-PERSON VOTING.

For early in-person voting, in addition to voting in Conference Room A, voters who are over 65 years of age, or who are disabled, may vote “curbside” from their automobiles at the 5th Street County Office Building. Election officers will be on the lookout for curbside voters, and will check their identification, check them in on the electronic pollbooks, bring them their ballots to their cars, have the voters put their marked ballots in security folders, and the election officers will then take those marked ballots into Conference Room A, and run them through the DS 200 ballot scanning machine.

The Voter Registration Department is working closely with the Facilities Department to post adequate signage approaching and at the 5th Street County Office Building to direct voters as to parking, handicap parking, dropbox location, and voting location.

3) Vote in Person on Election Day, November 3

Barring crisis or catastrophe, all 30 Albemarle County voting precinct polling places will be open on election day, November 3, 2020, from 6 AM to 7 PM. On election day, voters are required to vote in the polling place of their precinct of registration. Voters will present an acceptable ID, and then go through the process outlined above for early in-person voting.

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COVID 19 PRECAUTIONS

For early in-person voting, and for in-person voting at polling places on election day, the Electoral Board and voter registration department have developed the following protocols for maintaining safe polling places, and reducing the risk of COVID contagion – both to the voters and to our officers of election.

Overall Goal

Protect the health and safety of voters and election workers while ensuring that all eligible voters can vote at the polling place in accordance with Virginia law.

Election Officer Training

Training will be conducted virtually.

Strategies to Reduce COVID Risk

- All election officers will wear masks while on duty within the polling place. (You may remove masks when on breaks AWAY from other people).
- All voters will be asked to wear masks. Disposable masks will be available for voters who do not have one.
- Signs detailing polling place COVID-19 procedures will be posted.
- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet.
- Control the number of voters admitted into polling room in order to maintain social distancing. Use common sense; school gymnasiums can hold more voters at 6-foot intervals than small church social halls. Two household members who arrive together can come in at the same time or wait in line together but must stay 6 feet apart while voting. Singles with children must be allowed to enter with caution that the children should not touch anything.
- **Health officers/pages:** new position created to make sure other officers (check in, ballot table, DS200, etc.) can concentrate on voters and not have to stop and clean. A regular election official or an election page can be a health officer.
- All polling places will be provided with necessary PPE, as follows:
 - Sneeze Guards** — (similar to bank teller Plexiglas) for each check-in station, ballot table, and chief/research table. Most are 36" tall use where voters are standing and officials are seated.
 - "Social Distance Dot" stickers:** Round stickers to mark 6-ft distance for lines.
 - Face Shields** — (like a welder's mask) one for each election official. These are personal items so election officials will take them with them at end of day.
 - Spray disinfectant and paper towels**
 - Masks** — please bring your favorite personal mask, we will have a supply of disposable masks for voters or officers who need one. There are additional cloth masks for officers if needed.
 - Gloves** – optional for election officers. Suggest use while cleaning.
 - Disinfectant wipes:** use for cleaning surfaces and pens as needed
 - Alcohol wipes:** Can be used for booth surfaces, dries faster than disinfectant spray

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Hand sanitizer:

Note: Make sure your hands are completely dry before handling thermal paper or ballots as moisture and chemicals may degrade legibility or cause ballots to jam

- Do not hand "I voted" stickers out; cut them apart and leave some near exit for voters to pick up (or not) as they see fit.
- Wash your hands at least every two hours, and do not touch your face.
- Everyone should bring their OWN food and plates, cups, etc. No sharing, no potluck.
- Cleaning and sanitizing surfaces will help minimize risk and limit the possibility of catching or spreading the virus:
 - Wipe down hard surfaces hourly, using the spray disinfectant provided and paper towel or microfiber cloths.
 - The DS200 scanner and Automark screens may be disinfected using an alcohol wipes provided. Do not use bleach on DS200 or Automark screens.
 - Clean marking stations every 15 minutes.
 - Wash your hands after cleaning.

Set Up

Voter processing areas (check-in table, marking booths, etc.) should be spread out as much as possible; remember to leave space for authorized representatives. This may involve setting up check in tables farther away from the walls than normal.

- ☐ Wash hands per CDC guidance before opening cages and other equipment (gloves not needed) and wash again after setup is completed.
- ☐ Exterior signage: place a copy of the sample ballot on exterior, near entry door. Place "Wait for Greeter Officer" sign and "Social Distancing Guidelines" sign on exterior.
- ☐ Interior signage: Place second copies of sample ballot near entrance but before check-in table.
- ☐ Electronic Pollbook Stations: Place one sneeze guard at each pollbook; use the tallest ones here.
- ☐ Ballot Table: put a tall sneeze guard here as well
- ☐ Measure and put Social Distance Dots 6' apart on floor along the flow-through path for voters. Place similar markings outside the entrance in case lines develop. If you need more, use blue tape to make X's at proper distance.
- ☐ Set up table with disposable masks near entry door to offer to unmasked voters.
- ☐ Prop open doors used by voters unless inclement weather prevents. Greeter officer should open doors for voters if they can't be propped open. Wooden door wedges will be in cage for the purpose.
- ☐ Marking stations: in addition to booths, set up extra cardboard carrels on tables.
- ☐ Scanner: set up at least 6 feet away from marking station.
- ☐ Chief's area: set up the shorter sneeze guard here to separate chief/research officer from seated voters filling out forms or provisional ballots.
- ☐ Break table: should be as far away as possible from the voting area.
- ☐ Cleaning station: set up a table with spray disinfectant, paper towels, sanitizing wipes, gloves, etc. health officers have easy access to cleaning supplies.
- ☐ Set up hand sanitizer near exit so voters can sanitize before they go back in their cars.

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Operational Tasks

The following is not intended to replace the operational instructions of the Election Officer Manual. The intent is to capture the basic tasks and how those tasks are impacted by the current environment.

Greeter/Doorkeeper: Greeters are very important; their job has evolved into being directors not just information-givers.

- When receiving voters, the Greeter Officer may wear a face shield in addition to their mask for added protection. The Greeter Officer should offer a disposable mask to any voter not wearing one and encourage them to wear it. A supply of disposable masks (for voters to keep) should be kept outside the door, weather permitting. A sign with "COVID-19 Procedures in Place" should be displayed. If a voter declines to wear a mask, offer the voter the option to vote outside the precinct, from their car.
- Greeter Officer should control access to the polling area to maintain social distancing. Members of household may wait in line together.
- Greeter Officer should tell voter to please have valid ID ready, and to please observe social distancing while inside the polling area.
- If entrance door cannot be propped open due to inclement weather, the Greeter Officer should open it, not the voter, whenever possible.
- Greeter Officer may direct voters with completed mail-in ballots to the drop-off box located near the entrance.
- Larger precincts may have additional Greeter Officers to help with mail-in ballot drop-off, or curbside voter assistance.

Health Officer: This position may be filled by a regular election officer, or an election page.

- The health officer is responsible for ensuring that surfaces such as marking booths, door handles, and other frequently touched surfaces are periodically sanitized.
- They will collect pens from the "used pen" collection containers, wipe them down with sanitizing wipes, and get them ready to be re-used in the "clean pen" containers at the ballot table.
- Remind voters to maintain 6-foot social distance while in line for booths, scanners, etc.

Check-in Table:

- Place the taller sneeze guards in front of each electronic pollbook.
- Place the "check-in receipt" printer to the side or in front of the sneeze guard, facing the voter.
- Place a blue tape line down on the floor in front of the check in table to remind voters not to get "too close."
- Voters and pollbook officers need to exchange information, and ID needs to be checked, so some interaction is required, but try to make it as safe as possible:
 - Virginia Drivers licenses can be scanned through the plexiglass
 - Voters can hold up other forms of ID for officer to check without the officer touching the documents

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- EPB officer will check in voter and then produce a check-in receipt.
 - Receipt can be torn off the printer by the voter
- Direct voter to ballot table.

Ballot table:

- Place one of the taller sneeze guards here.
- Place a "Clean Pens" container in front of the sneeze guard where voters can take one.
- Ballot officer (wearing gloves) will take receipt and give voter a ballot.
 - Voter can hand receipt through the opening under the sneeze guard
 - Office can slide ballot back through the opening
 - Try to avoid hand-to-hand contact.
- Nearby on the table, Ballot Officer will have a pile of privacy folders and the "please take a privacy folder if you like" sign.
- Ballot officer directs voter to marking area.

Booth Officer:

- Check booths after each voter to make sure no papers or other debris has been left.
- If a line forms, remind voters who are waiting to keep at least 6 feet away until booth is ready.
- Set up extra tables with cardboard carrels as space permits to cut down of wait times.
- Pens left by voter should be put in a used pen container and sanitized for later use.

Scanner Officer:

- The Scanner Officer needs to stand 6' away from the voter and machine
- Place a "wait here" sign on a chair, or a tape line on floor so voters know where to line up for the scanner.
- Voters will most likely never need to touch the DS200, but if they do touch the screen (to return a ballot or cast a ballot) officer will clean with soft cloth and alcohol, NOT SANITIZING WIPES WHICH MAY CONTAIN HARSH CHEMICALS.
- Only need to clean the bottom of screen where voters have touched, not the whole screen!

Chief/Research Table tasks:

- Voters with ID, address, or other issues should be handled by the Chief or research officer.
- Place the shorter sneeze guard here, since most often both parties will be seated.
- Provisional balloting should be accomplished with absolute minimal touching of materials.
- Use gloves and discard after you are done handling the paperwork
- Remember to wash hands or use hand sanitizer after interacting with voters.

Curbside Voting Inside Voter's Car:

- Curbside voting teams will be established for the November 3 election. The Greeter officer(s) will alert the officers inside that there is a curbside voter, then:

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- Officer will approach car; if there is only a driver, the officer should approach passenger's side to maintain distance.
- Officer will:
 1. Check Voter's ID,
 2. Ask Voter to state name and address,
 3. Write down name/address on a paper pad.
- Officer will go inside and present information to the EPB Officer.
- Once the voter is checked in, the curbside officer will go to the ballot table:
 - Ballot officer will prepare a clipboard with a privacy folder, ballot, and fresh pen.
- The officer helping the curbside voter will take all of the above to the voter's car and hand it as safely as possible to the voter, instructing the voter to put the voted ballot into the privacy folder when done.
- After the voter marks his/her ballot, the Officer will
 - tell the voter to please wait until it is certain that the scanner has accepted the ballot
 - take the ballot back inside (in its privacy folder).
- The Officer will feed the ballot from the privacy folder into the DS200.
- Assuming the ballot is accepted, the officer will go out and tell the voter they have successfully voted and are free to go.
- All clipboards and pens should be cleaned before next use.