



Office of the Chancellor

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October 16, 2014

Ms. Kim Strach, Executive Director  
North Carolina Board of Elections  
PO Box 27255  
Raleigh, NC 27611-7255

Dear Ms. Strach,

On Monday October 13, Judge Donald Stephens directed the State Board of Elections "to adopt an early voting plan for Watauga County for the 2014 November general election that includes at least one early voting site on the ASU campus." We appreciate your seeking our input on identifying a voting place on campus that meets all requirements of state law, including accessibility and adequate parking.

The Watauga County Board of Elections has used two campus facilities for voting places in the recent past: the Plemmons Student Union (PSU) and Legends, a campus entertainment venue and nightclub. Legends was the site for the 2014 primary and run-off and is the site for the 2014 General Election on November 4. The PSU has been used in the past for both early voting and the General Election. Below is a description of each. Maps of each facility and adjoining parking are attached.

#### **Plemmons Student Union**

The PSU is the most accessible and central facility on campus. It is operated and managed by the Office of Student Programs. Thousands of students, staff, faculty and visitors access the building each day. The Linville Falls Room and the Price Lake Room (room #201A on the map) have been used for early voting in the past. Voting materials can be secured in these rooms. Both rooms have easy access from the parking lot located off East Howard Street. Both rooms are located on the second level, but second level is the same level as the parking lot. In the case of both rooms, egress can be limited to the main entrance and access to the rooms limited to voters only. During past early voting, the local Board of Elections has

established a 50 foot perimeter from the main entrance of the rooms. A summary of the benefits and challenges of this space is below:

### **Benefits of PSU**

- This building is in the heart of campus, is recognizable and well-known, and will be convenient to many students, faculty and staff. Many members of the community use this facility on a regular basis and know its location.
- The Howard Street Parking Lot can provide ample parking (up to 60 spaces) and ease of access to the building. Howard Street is a town maintained street and runs parallel to and one block south of West King Street, Boone's main downtown street.
- Multiple building entrances are fully ADA compliant. The entrance closest to the Linville Falls Room opens automatically with the push of a "Handicap" button.
- Linville Falls, Price Lake, or any other room in PSU can be made available and secure for the purposes of this election.
- Modern lighting, air conditioning, newer furniture and decor all make this a welcoming building to visit.
- Existing meetings scheduled for the Linville Falls Room, Price Lake, or any meeting room in the PSU, can easily be re-located.

### **Challenges of PSU**

- The building is located in the heart of campus and may not be as obvious to locate as Legends for some members of the community.
- Questions have arisen in the past regarding the 50 foot barrier and whether this applies to the entire building or the voting enclosure. Should this site be selected, we request that the State Board of Elections clarify its interpretation of whether the 50 foot line applies to the voting enclosure (i.e., the specific room within PSU) or the entire voting site (i.e., the PSU building as a whole).

### **Legends**

Legends is also operated and managed by the Office of Student Programs. Legends is a former grocery store that was converted to an entertainment venue for campus in the 1980's. It is used for large student gatherings – concerts, dances, student talent shows, large student clubs such as Campus Crusade for Christ and Greek organizations. Legends is the voting site for the 2014 November general election. The main entrance to Legends is at street level. There are three additional entrances/exits that all lead to the

parking area. The doors to these other entrances are often left open to provide air flow, because Legends is not an air conditioned building. Legends is located on the edge of campus and, as a result, is visible from a primary thoroughfare, Hardin Street; however, it is less accessible to campus pedestrian traffic. A summary of the benefits and challenges of this space is below:

### **Benefits of Legends**

- Building is located directly off Blowing Rock Road. It is visible to the public.
- The Hardin Street Parking Lot beside Legends can provide ample parking (up to 60 spaces) and ease of access to the building. Hardin Street is a town maintained street and runs perpendicular to West King Street, Boone's main downtown street. Legends is located about one block south of West King Street.

### **Challenges of Legends**

- The building is not located in the heart of campus, and is not as convenient a voting site as the PSU for students or university employees.
- The building, its restrooms, furniture and lighting are all dutifully cared for, but are aged. It is simply not the most inviting facility to use for hosting our local community.
- During the period of early voting, three large events are booked for the facility. One event is booked for the night prior to early voting. Due to the size of the event, there is no other venue on campus suitable for relocation. Student Programs has already encumbered and committed \$9200 in student fees for these events.
  - 10/22 - Ben Miller Band
  - 10/23 - NOUN Improv
  - 10/24 - Contra Dance
  - 10/31 - Your Big Mama's Booty Band
- Because the building is in a low-lying area with poor storm drainage, it is susceptible to flooding. There are two concerns with this: first, because early voting is a multi-day event as opposed to voting on Election Day, there is increased risk of flooding; second, some community members are likely to raise concerns regarding air ventilation and dampness in the building. The rear entrances of the building are surrounded by sand bags year-round to prevent water coming into the building.
- This building is not air-conditioned and can indeed smell musty.

Either location is accessible for curbside voting to any voter who is elderly or has a physical impairment or disability that would make it difficult for him or her to physically enter the voting enclosure. Either facility has excellent access to parking. Each is ADA compliant and meets building code for accessibility; however, the PSU is significantly more modern, because it has benefitted from recent renovations.

Appalachian State University will provide traffic officers to assist with parking and to ensure that spaces are available for voters. They will also monitor access to the handicapped parking spaces. We will provide the support necessary to the NC State Board of Elections and the Watauga County Board of Elections to facilitate voting in compliance with state law.

In consultation with my leadership team and the leadership of the Student Government Association, I recommend that the Linville Falls Room or the Price Lake Room in the Plemmons Student Union be used for the 2014 early voting site on the Appalachian campus. Since I became Chancellor of Appalachian State University on July 1 of this year, I have heard from many students about the importance of voting on campus. Appalachian welcomes the opportunity to serve our entire community, and promoting civic participation is core to our mission of preparing students to be responsible and engaged members of society. I hope you will seriously consider my recommendation, and I pledge my support to accommodate your final decision.

Sincerely,



Sheri N. Everts  
Chancellor

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| Attachments | 1. | Map PSU and Legends -- this map locates each proposed site  |
|             | 2. | PSU Building Directory -- this map locates the Linville Falls Room Price Lake in the Plemmons Student Union |
|             | 3. | Linville Falls -- outline of the Linville Falls Room (#226)   |
|             | 4. | Price Lake -- outline of the Price Lake Room (#201A)  |
|             | 5. | Campus Map with East Howard Street and East Howard Street Parking Lot identified                            |