

Concerns have been raised about a letter written by a member of the Board of Elections on July 8, 2020, to the ASU Chief of Campus Security. These concerns are valid and deserve to be addressed.

The letter suggested possible safety issues surrounding voters and poll workers as a result of demands for change at the University made by the Black@App State organization. This letter was not authorized by the Board of Elections. It was the action of one member acting on his own. The letter does reference “our board” and “our agenda” and is signed by the individual as “Member, Watauga County Board of Elections”. A reader could certainly infer that it was written on behalf of the Board. It was not.

Members of the Board of Elections are nominated by political parties, but we are then pledged to work in a non-partisan manner. When this letter was written, we were working together on plans for holding an election during a pandemic. To some of us, it seemed the better course not to publicize a letter with which we disagreed, but rather to move on. We knew that the writer did not speak for the Board, but we failed to make that clear to the public we serve. Avoiding conflict then has allowed for misunderstanding, suspicion and pain now. Our neglect was wrong, and we apologize.

Let us be clear. This Board recognizes and supports the Constitutional right of peaceful protest. It does not believe the exercise of Constitutional rights threatens the electoral process. The Black@App State letter to the Chancellor stated that if their demands were not met in 36 months, then they would take non-violent actions to disrupt university operations. Nothing in their letter suggests disruption of the 2020 election, and nothing even hints at harm to any voter or poll worker.

We ask that all community members remain vigilant to our actions. We are fallible. But we will continue to make voting accessible and safe for Watauga County voters of all races, religions, ages, genders and party affiliations. That is our duty.

Sincerely,

Watauga County Board of Elections