

New Home for the Election Commission

Since the mid-1990s, the Election Commission has been headquartered in the old Lebanon Post Office just off the Lebanon Square. The building is the oldest public building in Wilson County having opened in March of 1915. From 1915 until 1964, it served Wilson County as the U.S. Post Office. In 2011, we renovated the building. After removing years of accumulated papers, new carpet was installed, the walls were painted, electricity was improved and the building was brought back to much of its former beauty and functionality. On the 100th anniversary of the corner stone being set (October 30, 1913) the renovated old Post Office was included on the National Historic Register. Two years later, on March 15, 2015 the 100th birthday of the buildings grand opening was celebrated with the unveiling of a Tennessee Historic Site Plaque. Thousands of Wilson County voters have visited the building to early vote. Being able to showcase this grand old structure to so many Wilson countians has been a great honor for the Election Commission.

The Wilson County Commission purchased the former Fred's Department store in 2019 with plans to renovate a portion for the Election Commission. The onset of the pandemic in 2020 caused plans to be shifted until the county's financial future was more clear. Renovations began in May and are moving forward at a reasonable pace. Hopefully, we will be able to move this Fall before the 2022 election cycle really heats up.

The Election Commission currently has two locations- the administrative office on East Main Street and a maintenance, storage and training annex at the Wilson County Schools Administrative building on Harding Drive. The renovation of the building on Gay Street, next to the Courthouse, will provide space for the Election Commission to operate in a single location.

In 2011, our voting machines and election supplies were stored at the Election Commission office on East Main Street. Setting up and testing before elections must have been an interesting dance in the cramped spaces provided. In 2012, we moved the logic and accuracy testing and machine set up to an off-site location. The county had purchased a garage building on Baddour Pkwy (it was torn down a few weeks after we used it). This space allowed us room to set up every voting machine, test them and keep them set up so the Commissioners and public could see the results of the testing not just on paper but on the actual voting machines.

In the elections that followed, the machine technicians set up in various places. One election we worked in an empty store building in a strip mall. No matter where or under what conditions we were able to provide transparency to the public and Commissioners regarding the readiness and reliability of the voting machines.

Poll worker training has been an adventure, also. Training for the first few elections was held in the Lebanon Chamber office and in the basement of the Mt. Juliet Police station. As we grew, more space was needed. When the old Lebanon High School was no longer in use, training and equipment storage moved there. In a room with no air conditioning and little heat you transitioned the way Wilson County voters registered to vote from the paper poll books to e-polls. You made a leap in technology in 2014- that was just the first improvement in our voting experience.

After moving from the old Lebanon High School to TCAT on Tennessee Blvd our training facilities began to look up. The use of their classroom was a much welcomed improvement. In this building, we retired the old voting machines and introduced the ExpressVote system we use today.

In 2018, we moved to the renovated old Lebanon High School where our training is today. Each of the five moves during these past 10 years has been an improvement.

The prospect of combining all the operations of the Election Commission under one roof is exciting. The new building is in a good location and well suited for Early Voting and voter access year-round. Having a facility dedicated to election administration will be a move that will serve Wilson County voters for decades.

We will all miss the charm of our current home and will forever have fond memories of the many elections administered there. If the walls could talk, there would be a century of stories to tell. We are proud to have been able to restore the old Post Office to its former grandeur and to have welcomed thousands of voters and to have contributed to its long history of service to Wilson County.