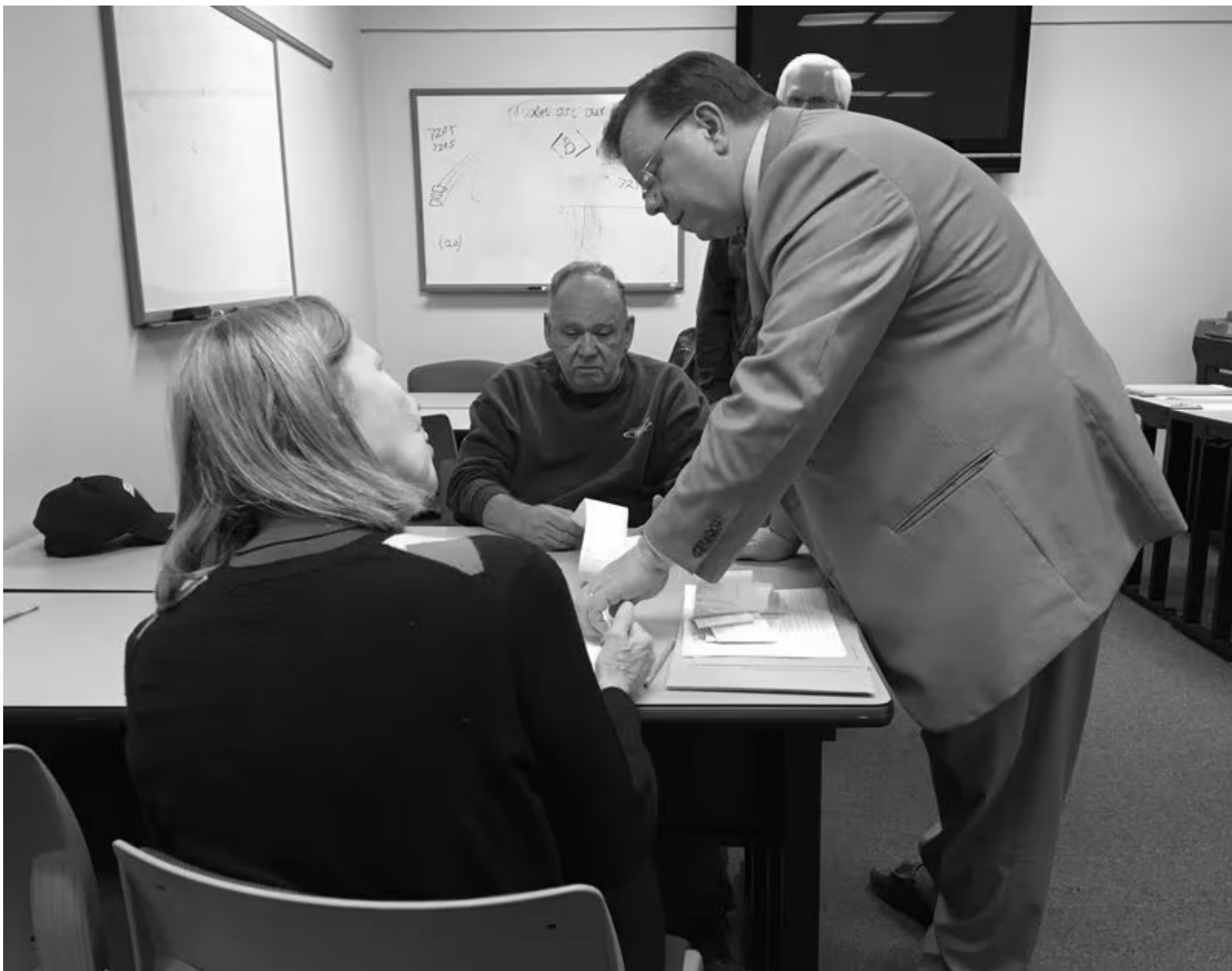


**ELECTIONS**

# Northampton County exec announces director's resignation, calls election 'failure' (UPDATE)

Updated: Dec. 14, 2023, 3:12 p.m. | Published: Nov. 24, 2023, 6:02 p.m.



Northampton County Director of Administration Charles M. Dertinger oversees a vote canvass and audit Thursday, Nov. 14, 2019, of the prior week's Municipal Election, inside the county courthouse in Easton. Kurt Bresswein file photo | For lehighvalleylive.com



By [Kurt Bresswein](#) | For [lehighvalleylive.com](#)

## **UPDATE: Northampton County acting director of administration appointed**

In the wake of what he now calls election “failures,” Northampton County Executive Lamont McClure late Friday afternoon announced the resignation of his director of administration, Charles M. Dertinger.

The resignation follows the Nov. 7 municipal election in which a human error in programming the county’s voting machines led to incorrect paper-record printouts of votes for Pennsylvania Superior Court.

The [Northampton County Election Commission Board on Tuesday nevertheless certified the election results](#), making them official. The results of two types of post-election audits on Friday matched the election results, county spokeswoman and Deputy Director of Administration Brittney Waylen told [lehighvalleylive.com](#).

Referring to Dertinger, McClure’s announcement described “his Election failures of 2019 and 2023.” The November 2019 election was the first time the county used ExpressVote XL touchscreen voting machines made by Omaha, Nebraska-based Election Systems & Software (ES&S), and they malfunctioned.

Earlier this month, in the wake of the election, McClure said his administration was “very confident that the vast majority of people who wanted to vote on Election Day cast a vote.”

“Based on everything we know, [there was a legal, fair and accurate election](#) and no races were materially affected” by the voting machine problems, McClure had told [lehighvalleylive.com](#).

In a news release sent out at 4:22 p.m. on Black Friday, McClure, a second-term Democrat re-elected in 2021, stated: “Mr. Dertinger has spent nearly six years honorably serving the people of Northampton County in my Administration. While the 2019 and 2023 Elections were failures under his leadership of the Elections Division, the ‘20, ‘21, and ‘22 elections were nearly flawless, as any complicated human activity can expect to be.”

McClure was not immediately available for additional comment. Dertinger, reached at his Slate Belt home, declined to speak with a reporter other than to say, “Have a good weekend.” County Council President Kerry Myers did not immediately return a call for comment.

In 2019, Northampton County purchased 320 of the ES&S ExpressVote XL machines under a five-year \$2.88 million contract, now in its fifth year and with renewal periods. During their first use Nov. 5, 2019, an estimated 30% of the machines were improperly calibrated by the company, leading to “hypersensitivity” problems in registering some voter choices.

The problem on Election Day 2023 in Northampton County involved whether to retain U.S. Superior Court Judges Jack Panella and Victor Stabile for additional 10-year terms. Votes of yes or no to both were fine, but one yes and one no created problems. That’s because the names were switched on the printout versus the touchscreen — a human-error, data-entry mistake that was not caught in testing until it was noticed the morning of Nov. 7, executives with ES&S said.

About 2,400 voters in Northampton County used paper ballots on Election Day as the county and workers at the polls grappled with the error, county officials previously said. Some 100 voters told Northampton County Republican leaders they were impacted by the mistake.

On Election Day, ES&S Senior Vice President for Customer Operations Linda Bennett said her company deeply regretted the coding error on the part of an employee. Adam Carbullido, ES&S’s vice president for account management, apologized Nov. 16 before the county council and on Tuesday before the election commission.

McClure’s statement Friday continued to say:

“Mr. Dertinger has had many accomplishments, great and small, as Director of Administration. Specifically, he led the team that built the new Forensic Center during a global pandemic. Mr. Dertinger brought that project in on time and under budget. A feat that’s normally impossible to achieve, let alone during a time of stay-at-home orders and massive supply chain disruptions.

“Mr. Dertinger and I have been working together on a shared vision of county governance since at least 2005. Many of the things I care about, he cared about first. The preservation of open and green space comes to mind. Many of the successes of our Administration have come due to his efforts in helping implement our initiatives.

“Despite his Election failures of 2019 and 2023, the foregoing reasons stated is why his resignation is regrettable. I wish him well in his future endeavors.”

Friday’s election audits conducted at the county courthouse and government center in Easton included one required under Pennsylvania law, to perform a 2% statistical sample audit. The recount is conducted using manual, mechanical or electronic devices of a type different than those used for the specific election.

The Northampton County Elections Office randomly selected five precincts within each four county council districts to meet the 2%, according to a news release from the county. The precincts selected were Allen Township South, Lower Saucon Township 1, Palmer Eastern, and Lower Mount Bethel Township Upper. These precincts' ballots were run through a DS950 scanner again to make sure the results matched the initial count.

Additionally, the Pennsylvania Department of State selected Northampton County at random to participate in a Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA) for the state Superior Court race.

The RLA is a procedure that uses statistical methods to confirm election outcomes and to detect possible interference. RLAs examine a random sample of paper ballots, comparing the votes on paper to the totals reported by the vote-counting machines to ensure that the reported outcome of the contest being audited is correct.

The Department of State selects the random batch of ballots for the RLA. The batch of mail-in ballots was run through the DS450 and counted by hand for the four candidates for Justice of the Superior Court.

The official results for all races in the 2023 election are available on the Northampton County website at [NorthamptonVotes.com](https://NorthamptonVotes.com).

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