

1 VMA Elections Committee Meeting

2 December 13, 2021

3 Attendees:

4 Members: Peter Kahn; Paul Weller; Natalie Welle; George McAleese; Andrew Kauders; Leah Craft

5 7:33: Peter Kahn: Call to order

- 6 • Principal business of tonight is making some decisions on the details of what will be in the
7 Election Plan

8 7:34: Peter Kahn: Approving 11/15 minutes

- 9 • We'll have to pass on approving the minutes until the next time we have a chance to review
10 them
11 • George taking minutes tonight

12 7:36: Peter Kahn: Main issue before the committee is getting our election plan before the Committee.

- 13 • Peter: Feel like we have a good plan. Somewhat surprised at the level of comments.
14 ○ Going over the objections we got (specifically from one member of the Council), feel like
15 we're not too far apart
16 ○ Want to go through point-by-point
17 • Manager: Just has to introduce it at the meeting this week, so it can lay over and be adopted at
18 the January meeting.
19 ○ Changes and amendments can still be made after the introduction

20 7:38 Peter Kahn: Discussion of Election issues

- 21 • Peter: Still feel like a mail-in election is the best approach.
22 ○ Wherever mail-in is held, voter participation tends to be higher (including was also true
23 in VMA over the last 2 years)
24 ○ Not sure what COVID will look like in May
25 ○ Logistics & complexity of an in-person or hybrid election creates a higher chance of
26 error.
27 ■ Told that it is election fraud if there are 2 live ballots with a person
28 • Naomi – Wholeheartedly support full mail-in voting & also in the past, it helps alleviate concerns
29 around the physical counting of voting. Come together to celebrate the result of the election,
30 rather than the counting.
31 ○ Peter: In our plan, we had presumed having the sidewalk celebration with a drop box,
32 but that's another way to do it.
33 ■ Decision to have a Sidewalk Celebration is a Council decision, not an Election
34 Committee issue
35 ■ Both the Sidewalk Celebration and an in-person election are a significant
36 amount of work
37 • Natalie: I think we should forget the hybrid and stick to just by mail.

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- Paul: I think the Sidewalk event should be part of the voting & that we should continue that tradition & we can all volunteer and help
 - Peter: Think these should be discussed by the Council.
 - George: Could go to the approach where we go back to the approach where ballots are due on Election Day. Anyone whose ballot is received by the vendor by XX time on Election Day cannot vote in person.
 - Tiffany Cissna: I think returning to the traditional, in-person voting and using a vendor for either the in-person or the absentee/mail-in portion (or both) would alleviate burden on staff and Committee. Like the idea of being proactive in sending things to the Village about if they want a mail-in ballot, rather than the old system where people had to go and put together the request on their own. Also supporting Paul's position on the history and tradition of the event.
 - Peter: I think that we're kind of late to be taking on something that complex
 - We're 2 days away from having a proposal in place that the Council could discuss – feel like its just not feasible
 - Jeff Blander: Thanks for all the hard work by the Committee. First, background in public health – still looking at this through the lens of public health and safety. We're not in a post-COVID world. Personally think that overwhelmingly, the all-mail-in is the way to go. The survey said that overwhelmingly the last election was held well and easy. I think the community events are great. Would love to see an event being planned so as many people could attend the event as possible. Strongly support what the Committee has done thus far.
 - Lynne Welle: I see complications by a hybrid election. Laying out the guidelines and the rules puts an extra workload in developing language that can't be challenged. It adds the complication of who is voting by what process and by what time. Omni variant could still be in place in May. Cleanest, simplest is to go with one approach or the other. And public health and simplicity says going with mail.
 - Andrew Kaunders: The election vendor we used do statewide and big municipality elections. Sure they could handle any issues around voter fraud and monitoring the control numbers. Put our faith in the use of control numbers.
 - Could go both ways – like the idea of all-mail-in – defaulting to getting everyone a ballot. Or having the opportunity for having a drop-box to drop it off in person.
 - Peter: A lot of sentiment in favor of doing something in person. People want to show their kids – that's where the idea we had for the drop box to have a chance for people to deposit their ballots in person.
 - Arthur Alexander: You've made a cogent argument in favor of doing an all-mail-in. Complexity is there. Committees in the past managed to conduct the elections & get it all in that night and it all seemed to work. The complexities may not be as severe as pointed out.
 - Peter: Good to hear that there is some movement on your part.
 - Arthur: Concern with pure mail-in voting is the same concerns that others have had. Election Day is a tradition and brings us together. But also heard some good arguments.
 - George: Question about how people could go to the table and request that a new ballot be overnighted to the voter.
 - Peter: Feel like this is the best approach. Provides security and traceability.
 - George: Just have to make sure there is no postmark deadline & its just a ballot receipt deadline.

- 82 ○ Peter: Its my understanding that the plan only has as receipt deadline. There has to be
83 some deadline. It has to get there in time.
84 ○ Paul: We're all within 3 or 4 blocks of the Village Office – why not have a lockbox in the
85 Village Office rather than rely on the mail? I think a dropbox by the sidewalk would
86 mean we don't have to depend on the US Mail. Giving you the choice.
87 ○ Peter: Let me think about that a little bit.

88 8:20 Peter Kahn: Ballot Curing

- 89 ● Peter: Making an effort to address issues that have arisen with regard to an envelope. Peter:
90 those seem like issues that are predictable and easy to fix. Feel like its easy and something
91 worthwhile. Want to hear Arthur's opinions on this.
92 ● Arthur: There's all kinds of curing. The ones you mentioned are curable – signatures that are
93 hard to make out. Committees in the past have worked that through by trying their best to
94 address the will of the voter. There are occasions where there has been a spill and smear.
95 They've happened in the past & been fixed.
96 ○ We've had legal counsel in the past that spouses using each other's ballot envelopes is
97 something that the Committee can vote to accept.
98 ○ Have issues with the lack of signatures.
99 ○ Feeling is that we have a regulation that we need a signature and an address – tie that
100 into a code on the envelope. For something that clearly doesn't have anything on it, my
101 feeling is that you should reject it.
102 ○ Good idea is to use education to try to fix this for people – go through and teach people
103 how to fill out the ballot.
104 ● Peter: Think that the process that we're proposing that is one that can well address the
105 problem. At that point, we identify that as a problem ballot that may be curable. The next
106 morning, after we go through the list and start calling the people who have been identified as
107 their ballot needing to be cured. Next morning, we get the control number and call the voter
108 and ask "Did you send in your ballot? We have a ballot without a signature." If they say yes, we
109 bring a new affidavit that you mailed in your ballot and the Committee goes to their house with
110 a new affidavit and checks their ID and then signs the new affidavit.
111 ○ Leah: I can't think of any election that goes door to door to validate voters.
112 ● Susan Fattig: At the last Council meeting, you said something like "we should cure the ballots,
113 even if we know the person and how they voted." That introduces an element of partiality, but I
114 think that's a problem. Anytime we expect to override rules, we run the risk of creating serious
115 problems.
116 ○ Peter: I do not intend to know how anyone in the community voted. Trying as hard as
117 possible to run a fair, unbiased election.
118 ○ Susan: When you start stepping into new areas, you run the risk of tarnishing a good
119 track record.
120 ○ Peter: This is not a new thing – people have been curing ballots in Martins Additions for
121 a long time. Happened to talk to Ted Stoddard the other day and he told me very clearly
122 that with respect to absentee ballots, they attempted to cure absentee ballots without
123 clear identification.

- 124 • Katie Howard: I'd have to disagree. It sounds like its reinventing the wheel. Also, curious to hear
125 from Leah on her opinion on the mail-in vs. in-person voting.
126 ○ Leah: Not on board with the current curing proposal. Could be persuaded one way or
127 the other on the voting method.
- 128 • Arthur's proposal is not to cure unsigned ballot envelopes but to do what we can on the other
129 ones.
130 ○ Arthur: In this case, the instructions should be followed.
- 131 • George: I think that we should go forward with not curing unsigned ballots.
- 132 • **Proposal is to remove the language that allows curing of unsigned ballots. Committee would**
133 **continue to take all reasonable steps to address other issues (such as smudged or water-**
134 **damaged signatures, family members using the wrong envelope, etc.) George moves. Leah**
135 **Seconds. Vote is 4-1 (P Kahn votes No)**

136 8:43 Allowing 13 days after Election Day for ballots to get to the contractor

- 137 • Peter: Question about the duration allowed after Election Day.
- 138 • Arthur: Post Offices gives special treatment to ballot materials, so you shouldn't be looking at
139 "average" delivery times for ordinary mail. Would be something that you'd have to check with
140 the Post Office. No ballots appeared at the vendor after the designated time.
- 141 • Tiffany: Agree with Arthur. If its going to be a 2 week period, just get the ballots mailed to them
142 earlier. No reason to have the ballots delayed by a long period.
143 ○ Peter: we want to give people an opportunity to be informed by the forum. We could
144 move it up a week. Also, we'd be handing out ballots on the day after Election Day.
145 ○ Tiffany: If you have the candidate forum earlier, you can have people ready to mail their
146 ballots in earlier. Wouldn't it make more sense to have a single received by deadline for
147 either taking it to the drop box or having it received by the vendor.
148 ○ Peter: People aren't getting their ballots until April 20th.
149 ○ Niles: Currently, nominations are due on March 18th and COI forms due the 25th of
150 March. Announce the candidates shortly thereafter. You could change that date to get
151 the ballots to the vendor by earlier in April. The only thing that would have to be done
152 at the end is the names on the ballot – the Committee can approve everything else in
153 advance of that deadline.
154 ○ Peter: Concern about compressing the timeline.
155 ○ Tiffany: Late April starts running to school breaks, which can make it difficult for people.
156 If you do the Forum on the 9th or the 10th, you'd still have a month. It would give people
157 more lead time to get ballots mailed in.
158 ○ Andrew: In my experience, post-Forum, more and more residents wanted to follow up
159 with the candidates, so that would give people more time to follow up on the issues.
160 ○ Peter: People are just getting to know candidates and a later forum date gives them
161 more time to get to know people.
- 162 • Arthur: You'd want to have ballots in the hands of the candidates at the time of the Forum.
163 Want to give people the opportunity to cast their ballots shortly after the Forum. As Tiffany
164 says, we have Easter/Passover/Good Friday in the middle of the month. Our option is to go
165 before or after.

- 166 • George: In favor of getting ballots in peoples’ hands as quickly as possible. I think it gives us the
167 maximum flexibility.
- 168 ○ Peter: Question about the election process and ensuring people have an opportunity to
169 get to know the candidates.
 - 170 ○ Arthur: Not sure why we’re seeing resistance on this front. You can do things pretty
171 soon – lets let people take care of things up through the final day.
- 172 • **Paul: Paul motions to send out the ballots no later than April 11 (it’s a Monday) – we can send**
173 **them out before if we wanted to. George seconds. Motion passes (5-0).**

174 9:10 Other Outstanding Issues

- 175 • Arthur: Charter amendments will have to be taken up by the Council at their will. One is well
176 taken – if we happen to have a tied election and given vote by mail, it would be hard to do a
177 runoff in the time allowed. The others seem not needed. The others seem well within the
178 existing governance of the Charter and Charter amendments are complicated.
 - 179 ○ Peter: My view is that all of these are good ideas. Cancelling uncontested elections is a
180 bad idea and we shouldn’t put ourselves in that position.
 - 181 ○ Peter: Business about consulting with the Committee – would like to change that to be
182 about announcing all Charter amendments to be announced publicly and opportunity to
183 have public comment on them.
 - 184 ■ That raises a question of how much time for public comment on Charter
185 amendments.
 - 186 ○ Tiffany: It seems like something that is already being publicized.
 - 187 ■ Arthur: The timing is different under emergencies.
 - 188 ○ Peter: Things happened in 2020 that were done under the guise of emergencies that
189 should have been done publicly with reference to the election.
 - 190 ○ Tiffany: They were discussed publicly at Council meetings.
 - 191 ■ It included the amendment to get rid of requirements that we have in-person
192 voting to allow for a mail-in election.
 - 193 ○ Arthur: They were direct and to the point.
 - 194 ○ Peter: There should be a public comments period.
 - 195 ○ Leah: I feel like we’re doing a lot of reinventing the wheel. I appreciate public discourse
196 if it improves the process.
 - 197 ○ Peter: I feel like you don’t understand the process.
 - 198 ○ George: This seems to me to be getting into an area outside the scope of elections and
199 things being worked by the Committee.
 - 200 ○ Peter: It is my opinion that these amendments are directly linked to elections work and
201 we’re the ones situated to address these issues.
- 202 • Andrew: Focus of the Committee is to get an election plan in place. Lets focus on things not
203 related to development and adoption of that plan at a later date.
 - 204 ○ Katie: I agree with Andrew.
- 205 • Peter: Lets postpone discussion of the Charter Amendments. We can call another meeting to
206 discuss Charter Amendments.
- 207 •

208 9:26: Natalie moves we adjourn. Paul seconds. Motion passes (5-0).

DRAFT