

Election Committee Meeting

7:30 pm, Thursday February 1, 2024

Agenda

AGENDA for the Election Committee Meeting, 7:30 pm, Thursday February 1, 2024

- 7:30 Call to order. Welcome to all participants.
Major duties now completed: the 2024 Election Schedule and the Election Regulations are done.
Contracts are in place for the mail vote (Electec) and the voter roll verification (Julian Lamphear).
- 7:35 Approve the December 18 meeting minutes. Check the Committee's email and website access.
Set the date for the next meeting. Residents' comments, questions, and suggestions.
- 7:45 **ACTION ITEMS** at this meeting:
1. Welcome the voter roll contractor and get the verification project underway.
 2. Approve the proposed 1-page VMA Voter Form, to submit for Council approval per the final 2024 Election Regulations.
 3. Answer any questions about the 2024 Election Regulations, and vote on the "Appendix" of items for future Council consideration in response to the Council Chair's request.
 4. Review the next steps for the election schedule:
Monthly: Public notices, newsletter articles, and reports for the Council meetings.
Feb 22: Official notice of nomination period. March 23: Candidate filing date.
March 26-27: Committee will have the VMA election info packet ready to mail to all households.
By April 7: Committee will approve the verified voter roll to send to Electec.
- 8:30 Residents' comments, questions, and suggestions.
- 8:45 Adjourn.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89731935548?pwd=ZEloQUd3UWRqMFFVRHNrZm1CZDVhQTo9>

Meeting ID: 897 3193 5548

Passcode: 876670

Dial-in: (301) 715-8592

Election Committee Minutes from the Meeting on December 18, 2023

The 2024 VMA Election Committee held its 8th meeting on Monday, December 18, 2023, by Zoom.

In attendance: Council chair Arthur Alexander, Council liaison Katie Howard. Committee members Naomi Naierman, John Sharrow, Paul Weller, and Marty Langelan. Resident Larry Wasson.

Marty, the Committee chair, called the meeting to order at 7:45 pm. The Committee approved the minutes from the December 6 and December 11 meetings.

Marty noted that the Council (1) approved the 2024 Election Schedule at the Council meeting on December 14 and (2) voted to introduce the proposed election procedures for adoption as “Regulations” rather than as an “Ordinance.” The adoption vote is scheduled for the January 18 Council meeting.

The Committee discussed the 30-day public comment period and asked whether the Council members could provide their comments to the Committee by January 8-11. The Council members present agreed to do so.

The Committee then voted to implement the Council’s December 14 decision to change the term “Ordinance” to “Regulations” throughout the proposed election rules document. The Committee also reviewed the public comments that various residents had submitted. The residents suggested a few minor wording changes. The Committee thanked the residents for providing comments, found that the residents’ suggestions would help to clarify the proposed regulations, and voted to accept them.

Having approved those few edits, the Committee then voted unanimously to recommend that the Council adopt the December 18 document as the official 2024 Election Regulations. The Committee provided the public mark-up to show the incorporation of the term “Regulations” and the handful of community edits, and submitted the recommended December 18 document to the Council.

The Committee agreed to schedule its next meeting for January 11, and voted to adjourn at 8:45 pm.

Note: The Committee subsequently canceled the January 11 meeting since no additional community comments came in. The Committee provided a summary and administrative analysis of the Council’s comments in a separate Committee Report on January 15, 2024.



DECLARATION OF ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE IN THE VILLAGE OF MARTIN'S ADDITIONS

I HEREBY AFFIRM THAT:

- The Village of Martin's Additions (VMA) is my primary residence and sole residence for U.S. voting purposes.
- I will be age 18 or older by Election Day for the Village Council election in _____ (year).
- If applicable:* I am temporarily residing elsewhere for work, military service, or other reasons, but I intend to return to my primary residence in the Village of Martin's Additions. I am a qualified voter as defined by the Village Charter, and I am filing this form to maintain my residential right to vote in the upcoming VMA Council election.

Signature

Date

Print name

Print address

Print phone number and email address

For Election Committee use:

If a new resident, what documentation did the person provide to confirm their name, age, and address in VMA?

- Driver's license
- Other documentation – describe:

The documentation was checked by:

Signature of Election Committee member or contractor

Date

In response to the request from the Council Chair, the 2024 Election Committee has prepared the following list of recommendations for Council consideration:

1. Include a reasonable procedure for recounts in the Election Regulations. Recounts are a normal election function. Without a pre-approved procedure, any VMA decision to either accept or reject a recount request could be seen as arbitrary and/or biased, which could create election turmoil and present a potential risk of litigation. See the Committee's 12/18/2023 document for the proposed language on recounts.
2. Include a reasonable procedure for referendums in the Election Regulations. Referendums are a standard component of local elections (e.g., in Rockville, Greenbelt, and other towns this past fall). See the Committee's 12/18/2023 document for a simple referendum procedure.
3. Update Section 602 of the Charter to provide a workable 4-week timeframe for run-off elections. It is not operationally possible to hold run-off elections by mail within two weeks, as the Charter currently requires.
4. Update Section 602 of the Charter to provide for a minimum of five members on the Election Committee. The Open Meetings Act now limits 3-person committees in such a way as to prevent any two members from communicating without a public meeting. VMA needs a minimum of five members on the Election Committee to stabilize the election process and enable the group to function.
5. Update Section 602 of the Charter to provide for the VMA election cycle to begin at least 75 days, not 60 days, before Election Day. The 60-day language dates back to the previous system of holding in-person elections; it's too short for mail-vote elections. That 60-day time period was sometimes difficult to manage even for in-person elections.
6. Update Section 602 of the Charter to remove the phrase that authorizes canceling some elections. The Council added that provision to the Charter under the Governor's temporary emergency COVID waiver in April 2020, without a hearing or public comment period. Canceling an election infringes on VMA residents' voting rights. There is no need to cancel elections when the elections can be held by mail.
7. Per the VMA Charter, clarify the separation of the election management process in the Election Regulations. The Charter assigns that management function to the Election Committee, to separate the Council members and VMA staff from operating the elections. The Council strictly enforced that separation for 35 years, from 1985 until 2020. A clear operational boundary is standard for most elections – e.g., the County government has a separate County Board of Elections for the same reasons. The Board of Elections, not the County Council staff, operates the Montgomery County elections.
8. Update the Election Regulations to reinstate the mandatory drop-box on Election Day, which the Council had previously approved. A drop-box for completed envelopes is a standard component of mail elections and makes it easier for VMA residents to vote.
9. Update the Election Regulations to reinstate the mandatory Election Forum. The Forum is an important source of information for VMA residents, and strengthens election fairness by providing an equal opportunity for all the candidates to present their views and answer the residents' questions. Requiring the Committee to hold the Forum benefits VMA voters.

**SOME NOTES ON THE VOTER ROLL VERIFICATION PROJECT:
POSSIBLE INFO IN THE SPREADSHEET COLUMNS**

<u>Column</u>	<u>Notes</u>	
1	Last name of potential voter	
2	First name	
3	Middle name or initial	
4	Address: street number	<i>Confirm that the address is within the VMA municipal boundaries.</i>
5	Address: street name	
6	Primary telephone number	
7	Second phone number, if any	
8	Primary email address	
9	Second email address, if any	
10	Date of birth?	<i>The County uses DoB to identify people when two different voters have the same name + address – we may not need the DoB for VMA.</i>
11	Person was listed on the 2023 VMA voter roll? Y/N	
12	Person is listed on the current 2024 County roll? Y/N	
13	Person is listed on the 2024 VMA Office List of current residents? Y/N	
14	Person is listed as a voter or current resident on the Feb 2024 voter roll survey? Y/N	
15	Is the family living at the address the same as the property owner in the County property records? Y/N/not clear	
16	Contractor has confirmed this person is a current resident [date]	
17	Contractor has confirmed this person is NOT a current resident [date]	
18	Person is a potential new voter, for Committee to follow up	
19	This person’s residency and voting status are still unclear	
20	Comment field, with any additional info from the contractor.	

How did the contractor determine that the person is a current resident?

1. The Committee members have first-hand personal knowledge that this individual lives here.
2. The Village Office List and/or the Feb 2024 voter roll survey say this person lives here.
3. The person replied to the outreach actions described in the VMA Election Regulations.
4. The person signed and submitted the VMA Voter Form this year, as a new voter or a qualified non-resident voter.
5. Confirmed by other means (describe).

How did the contractor determine that the person is NOT a current resident?

1. Public record of property sale, and contractor verified the new residents now living at this address.
2. Previous resident provided written confirmation that they have moved out.
3. Person did not reply to the EC letter and notice, did not challenge removal from the “qualified voter” list.
4. Mail was returned by USPS, marked “not at this address.”
5. Current occupants have confirmed that the previous residents have moved out.
6. There is a public death record to confirm that the person is no longer a resident of VMA.
7. The Village Manager has confirmed that the property is vacant or under construction, no residents.

Record of official Committee action after reviewing the contractor’s report:

1. The Committee voted to confirm this person as a qualified voter for the 2024 election. [date]
2. The Committee voted to add this person as a new voter. [date]
3. The Committee voted to remove this person or designate them as “not qualified.” [date]

FINAL PRODUCTS:

- A. The complete verified VMA voter roll as of 3/31/2024, for the 2024 VMA election. Per the VMA Election Regulations, the Committee will use this “qualified voter” list to operate the 2024 election.
- B. The list of people on the County roll who are no longer residents of VMA. Per the VMA Election Regulations and the request from the County Board of Elections, the Committee will instruct the Village Manager to send that list, with the documentation, to the County Board of Elections for their action to correct the County roll.

VMA ELECTION REGULATIONS

January 18, 2024

I. Purpose

The purpose of these Regulations is to implement the election provisions of the Village Charter and Code.

II. The Village Council Election Process

1. The Village of Martin's Additions ("VMA") Charter provides for a five-member elected Village Council ("Council"). Per Charter Section 602, Council members are elected to terms of two years. The number of seats open on the Council alternates between two and three seats every other year. Vacancies are filled per Section 408. Charter Section 301 defines the residents who are qualified to vote.
2. The Council annually appoints an Election Committee ("Committee") to manage the elections in accordance with the Village Charter, Code, and these regulations. The Council may appoint additional qualified voters as short-term assistant Election Committee members, as needed, at the request of the Committee. Committee members complete an Oath of Service and a Conflicts of Interest Questionnaire, as provided by the Village consistent with Village Policy. The Committee shall issue the election notices; manage, verify, and certify the Village's supplementary voter roll; accept nominations and verify candidate eligibility; conduct the public election forum, if any; prepare and authorize the ballots, subject to Council approval for absentee balloting; supervise the vote counting; certify the election results; and otherwise manage the annual elections according to these regulations.

III. General Provisions

1. The Election Committee shall set the date of Election Day between May 1 and May 15 each year, on a date determined from year to year in accordance with Section 602 of the Charter.
2. The Committee shall, no less than six months before Election Day, submit the proposed Schedule for that year's election cycle to the Council for approval, showing the specific date for Election Day, the nomination period, candidate filing date, election forum date, ballot mailing date, and the due date for ballot receipt and vote counting.
3. Each year the Committee shall instruct the Village staff to publish the official notices of the election and forum and the details of the election cycle for that year in the Village newsletter, in the Village election information packet that is mailed to the Village households, on the Village website, and via the Village's email communication channels. The VMA staff shall post the Committee's election announcements throughout the election cycle.
4. No later than sixty (60) days prior to Election Day, the Committee shall open the nomination period by public notice and request that declarations of candidacy and nominations of candidates be submitted in writing to the Committee. Any qualified voter may declare their candidacy or be nominated by another qualified voter.

5. To be placed on the ballot, no later than forty-five (45) days prior to Election Day each candidate shall submit (a) a statement of interest and qualifications and (b) a conflicts of interest disclosure statement in a form specified by the Village, by email or other means to the Election Committee.
6. The Committee shall publish and mail the official Village election information packet to all VMA households no later than two (2) weeks after the candidate filing date, with the candidates' written statements of interest, the official election and forum notices, and general voting instructions.
7. The Committee may establish a venue, format, date, and time for an election forum for residents to hear from the candidates and ask questions. The forum shall be moderated by the Committee in accordance with the Forum Procedure specified herein.
8. Pursuant to the Charter and these Regulations, each qualified voter may cast a mail-in ballot provided by the Committee subject to and in accordance with the schedule publicly announced by the Committee.
9. Blank lines shall be placed on the ballot for the purpose of adding write-in candidates at the time of the election. A successful write-in candidate shall be required to submit a conflicts of interest disclosure statement no later than seven (7) business days following the election.
10. In the event that two (2) or more candidates receive the same number of votes where only one can be elected, there shall be a runoff election within two (2) weeks after the election. Runoff elections shall be held by mail.

IV. Qualified Voters: Who Can Vote?

1. Pursuant to Charter Section 301, a "qualified voter" is any natural person whose residence is in Martin's Additions and who is eighteen years of age or over, as of Election Day. As used in the Charter, "residence" means the location deemed the voter's primary residence (or "permanent abode" according to case law) and single domicile in the United States for voting purposes, and where the voter intends to return after a temporary residence elsewhere. The address shown on the resident's driver's license or a document used for other official purposes is generally considered the person's primary residence.
2. Students aged 18 or older who reside elsewhere during the school year but who maintain their primary residence in Martin's Additions are deemed residents and are entitled to vote in the Village Council election. Renters, caregivers, or others who reside in Martin's Additions are eligible to vote if VMA is their primary residence.
3. Voters in Martin's Additions need not be registered to vote in Montgomery County or in the State of Maryland and need not be U.S. citizens.
4. Property ownership does not confer voting rights in VMA. However, property owners and other residents who are qualified voters in VMA, who are temporarily residing elsewhere for work or other reasons, may maintain their residential right to vote in the next annual Village election by providing the Election Committee with a completed federal FPCA standard form 76, or a signed and dated declaration that states (a) that VMA is their primary residence and sole U.S. residence for voting purposes and (b) that they intend to return to VMA.
5. Residents who are temporarily deployed on military service in other locations retain their residential right to vote in Martin's Additions, and can receive a ballot by providing the Election

Committee with a completed federal FPCA standard form 76, or a signed and dated declaration that states (a) that VMA is their primary residence and sole U.S. residence for voting purposes and (b) that they intend to return to VMA.

V. Village Voter Roll

1. The Committee shall verify and certify the annual voter roll in accordance with the Voter Roll Verification Procedure in Appendix A, which is hereby attached to and made an integral part of these Election Regulations. The Committee shall utilize the most recent electronically available Village resident contact information, the County voter roll, and other appropriate sources to verify the names and addresses of the qualified voters for each annual election.
2. Residents who are not on the VMA or County voter roll may contact the Committee to request to be added to the VMA voter roll up until 8 PM on Election Day. To be eligible to receive a mail ballot, potential VMA voters who are not on the County voter roll must sign a short Election Committee form, approved by the Council, to confirm that VMA is the voter's primary residence, and show a driver's license, utility bill, or other documentation acceptable to the Committee in its sole discretion, to confirm the voter's name, date of birth, and current address in Martin's Additions.
3. The Committee is responsible for adding eligible voters, and is likewise responsible for removing from the voter roll the names of those who are no longer qualified voters, in accordance with the process specified in the Voter Roll Verification Procedure. The Committee shall confirm that the verified voter roll is used in operating the election, and shall certify the final official voter roll for that year after the Committee closes the voter roll on Election Day. The VMA voter roll is a public document; any qualified VMA voter may receive a copy by emailing a request to the Committee or the Village Manager.

VI. Procedure for Voting

1. VMA's elections will normally be held entirely by mail, although other methods may be adopted in the future, subject to Council approval. The Committee may utilize the services of a mail-vote election contractor, subject to budgeting and approval by the Council. To protect election security, the VMA election contractor shall mail the ballots directly to the voters. Voters will mail their completed ballots back to the election contractor in the postage-paid envelopes issued by the contractor. To ensure that their ballot will be counted, voters must sign the brief affidavit form on the back of the official ballot return envelope.
2. On Election Day, the Committee may also provide an opportunity for voters to drop off completed ballot envelopes in a secure, accessible mail-vote drop-box directly supervised by the Committee. Voters may come to the Committee table in front of the Village Office to deposit their sealed ballot envelopes, containing a voted ballot and bearing a completed affidavit, in the Election Committee mail-vote drop-box between the hours of 5:00 PM and 8:00 PM on Election Day.
3. Promptly after 8:00 PM, the Election Committee shall open the drop-box, count and record the number of ballot return envelopes in the box, and ensure a secure Committee chain-of-custody procedure to promptly convey those completed ballot envelopes directly to the mail-vote contractor. VMA Council members, staff, and other unauthorized persons are not permitted to have access to the ballot envelopes. The election contractor shall securely hold all ballot envelopes received until the date for vote counting.
4. The Committee shall instruct the Village Manager to direct the contractor to mail the ballot

packets to the voters the day after the Election Forum. The contractor shall mail the packet via first class U.S. post or other secure tracked delivery system to each voter listed on the VMA voter roll at their address of record. Each packet shall include (a) a ballot, (b) the voting instructions prepared by the Committee in consultation with the election contractor, (c) a voting privacy envelope, and (d) a postage-paid ballot return envelope marked with the ballot security control number assigned to that voter.

5. Traditional absentee ballots will not be necessary because every person on VMA's voting roll will automatically receive a ballot packet by mail. The Committee will work with the election contractor to identify the projected dates when ballots will begin arriving and shall provide notice to the Village.
6. If voters are planning not to be at their VMA address during the voting process, they may elect to receive a ballot by mail at a different location by so informing the Committee no later than 8:00 PM on Election Day. No one may vote two ballots at two different addresses.
7. Subject to the terms and conditions of the service provider contract approved by the Village, and the availability of early ballots, voters may also request early ballots by notifying the Committee if they will be out of the country or otherwise unable to receive a ballot by mail during the regular voting period. Administrative delays may prevent the issuance of early ballots. The Committee shall instruct the Village Manager to direct the contractor to mail early ballots to such voters, if possible.
8. Voters whose ballots have been lost, damaged, spoiled, or for any other reason cannot be voted may request a replacement ballot by contacting the Committee no later than seven (7) after Election Day. On receipt of such requests, the Committee shall instruct the Village Manager to direct the contractor to cancel the previous ballot sent to that voter and mail the replacement ballot. The contractor must void the original ballot before a second ballot is issued to a voter.
9. All completed ballot envelopes must be received by the mail-vote contractor no later than 5:00 PM on the day of the vote counting session. The Election Committee shall post public reminders for all qualified voters to return ballots by mail sufficiently early to ensure that their ballot envelopes arrive by the vote counting date.

VII. Nominations and Candidate Filing Process

1. The Committee shall issue a public call for candidates no less than sixty (60) days prior to Election Day. Any qualified voter may run for office. Qualified voters may nominate themselves or be nominated by another resident, in writing. Nominations may be made only by qualified voters. Qualified voters who nominate candidates other than themselves must include an email or signed written statement from the proposed candidate expressing their consent to be nominated, and should make the nomination early enough to ensure that the nominee has time to prepare the candidate filing materials before the filing deadline. Anonymous nominations are not permitted.
2. To be placed on the official ballot, each candidate shall submit their filing materials to the Election Committee by email no later than forty-five (45) days before Election Day. Submissions are due by 6:00 PM on the filing date; a thirty-minute grace period will be allowed for email submissions to arrive in the Committee's email inbox. The required candidate filing materials are (a) a candidate statement of interest of up to 1,000 words, including their qualifications as well as any other information they deem relevant, and (b) a signed and completed conflicts of interest disclosure statement. The Committee may specify standard formatting for the candidate statements and any standard questions to which all candidates are requested to respond.
3. The Committee shall maintain a record of the date and time when nominations and candidate filing

materials are received, and shall promptly review the submissions. Candidates are eligible to be placed on the ballot if they are qualified voters in VMA and submit the filing materials on time. The Committee shall not edit the content of any candidate's statement; the candidate statements of interest and qualifications must be published as submitted. If a candidate's submission is incomplete, the Committee shall notify the candidate by email, and the candidate shall have 24 hours to correct the problem. Submission of corrected materials, requested by the Committee, will not be subject to the deadline for nominations.

VIII. Announcement of Candidates

The Committee shall instruct the Village Manager to promptly notify the Village of the candidates for office by email announcement, by posting on the Village website, and in the Village newsletter and the official election information packet that is mailed to all VMA households. The information will also be available for review in the Village Office throughout the election period. The Committee shall provide election updates and additional Information for inclusion in the Village newsletters, by email via the Village public communication channels, or by other means.

IX. Election Forum

The Committee shall host an Election Forum between April 16 and April 30 each year, no less than ten (10) business days before Election Day on a date agreed upon by the Committee and candidates, to allow qualified voters and other residents to hear from candidates and ask the candidates questions. The Committee shall ensure that the forum is impartial, and shall conduct the forum in accordance with the Forum Procedure in Appendix B, which is hereby attached to and made an integral part of these Election Regulations. The Committee shall ensure that the official Village election information packet containing the candidates' statements of interest is mailed to the residents in time to be received before the forum.

X. Instructions for the Mail-vote Election Service Contractor

1. The Village Manager issues and administers the contract. The Election Committee manages the election process.
2. Election schedule: Prior to the issuance of the notice of election, the Committee shall notify the contractor of the dates for Election Day and the VMA election forum, and determine the date for the vote counting session in consultation with the contractor and VMA staff. The vote counting shall take place no less than two weeks after Election Day.
3. Mailing date for the ballot packets and final received-by date for the completed ballots: The contractor shall mail the ballot packets to the voters the day after the VMA election forum in late April. The ballot receipt deadline is 5 PM on the day of the vote counting.
4. Voter roll: The Election Committee shall instruct the Manager to send the verified voter roll to the mail-vote contractor in early April. Voter roll changes: Pursuant to the Election Regulations, the Committee may add or remove voters until 8 PM on Election Day. The Committee shall instruct the Manager to direct the contractor in writing, by email, to add new voters as warranted, or to void a voter's ballot security number if the Committee determines that a ballot was sent to someone who is no longer a qualified voter.
5. Approval of ballot packet: The contractor shall provide the draft ballot packet (including the voting instructions, ballot format, and envelopes) to the Manager for review by the Committee at least two weeks before the planned general mailing date. The Committee shall check the content, format, clarity and accuracy of the draft documents and vote to approve the packet

before authorizing the contractor to send it to the voters.

6. Specifications for the ballot packet and equipment on Election Day: The contractor shall:
 - a. Rotate the candidates' names on the ballot format to prevent positional bias.
 - b. Include the blank lines on the ballot for the write-in votes.
 - c. Provide postage-paid ballot return envelopes, and the inner envelopes to protect voting privacy.
 - d. Assign a random 6-digit security control number to each voter and print that number on the voter's ballot return envelope.
 - e. Print the affidavit/affirmation form on the back of the return envelopes.
 - f. Put tracking codes on both the incoming ballot packets and the return ballot envelopes.
 - g. Send a test mailing to the Committee before the general mailing to the Village, and correct any problems discovered by the Committee.
 - h. Provide a small secure mail-vote drop-box on site in Martin's Additions on the afternoon and evening of Election Day for the completed ballot return envelopes, and provide a secure means to promptly convey those completed ballot return envelopes to the contractor's location for the subsequent vote counting session. The Election Committee shall supervise the drop-box to ensure its security.
7. Early ballots: The Committee may instruct the Manager to direct the contractor to mail early ballot packets to voters who will be unable to receive mail during the general mailing to the Village.
8. Replacement ballots: The Committee may instruct the Manager to direct the contractor to issue replacement ballots no later than seven (7) after Election Day. The contractor shall cancel the original assigned ballot security control number to void the original ballot before sending a voter a replacement ballot with a new control number.
9. Ballot records: All ballot instructions shall be sent to the election service contractor in writing, via email. The contractor cannot issue ballots without written instructions. The contractor and the Committee shall each keep a record of all ballots issued, all ballots voided, all replacement ballots sent, and all emails received, to maintain a complete record that can be audited and verified.

XI. Vote Counting Procedure

1. The Committee and contractor shall schedule the vote counting session to be held no more than two weeks after Election Day, after 5 PM on the designated date. The contractor shall make arrangements with the Martin's Additions Village Manager to enable the Committee, the candidates and/or their representatives, and residents to view the vote counting process by Zoom or other remote means, and shall record the vote counting session.
2. The contractor shall include all ballot return envelopes that are received by 5 PM on the date of the vote counting. Prior to the start of the vote counting, the contractor shall inform the Committee of the total number of ballot envelopes received and the number that are still in postal transit as of 5 PM on that date.
3. On the Committee's instructions, the contractor shall begin the vote counting session by presenting any non-conforming envelopes for Committee adjudication. A return envelope that is unsealed, was not issued by the contractor, does not have a valid control number, or does not have a signed affidavit, is non-conforming. If voters within the same household have switched their return envelopes, those envelopes are valid and shall be included in the count. The contractor shall set aside, unopened, any ballot return envelopes the Committee determines to be non-conforming.
4. On the Committee's instructions, continuing the vote counting session, the contractor shall:

- a. Open the valid envelopes and tally the votes by machine count.
 - b. Present any non-machine-readable ballots for Committee adjudication, to complete the vote count.
 - c. Provide the Committee with the preliminary tally of the votes for each listed candidate, the name and number of votes for each write-in candidate, the number of envelopes, ballots and/or votes that were disqualified, and the reasons for the disqualifications.
 - d. Work with the Committee to resolve any questions about the vote count.
5. Candidates or their designated representative(s) — only one per candidate — may observe the tallying, review, and adjudication process, and may raise objections during the process. The candidate or designated representative must identify the challenge at the time of vote counting. Other residents and qualified voters may also observe the process, but they may not raise objections, participate in, or disrupt the counting of the ballots.
 6. If candidates or their representatives raise objections during the envelope adjudication or ballot review process, the Committee shall resolve such objections by Committee vote during the session and instruct the contractor to include or set aside the envelope, or include or disqualify the ballot or vote, accordingly.
 7. The contractor shall set aside, unopened, any ballot return envelopes the Committee determines to be non-conforming; if an envelope problem is correctable, the Committee shall notify those individual voters by email, telephone, or in person within 24 hours after the initial vote counting session, to give them a chance to “cure” the envelope. Voters shall have five (5) business days to cure their ballot envelopes. If a voter cures a non-conforming ballot envelope, the Committee shall instruct the contractor by email to open that envelope and include those votes in the final tally. The Committee shall notify the contractor about any cured ballot envelopes no later than six (6) business days after the initial vote counting session.
 8. At the conclusion of the public vote count, the contractor shall within 24 hours provide the Committee with the contractor’s complete certified Official Count of Ballot Report on all votes received, including the number of votes for each listed candidate, the name and number of votes for each write-in candidate, the total number of ballot envelopes that were received, the number of envelopes, ballots and/or votes that were disqualified, and the reasons for the disqualifications. After reviewing the contractor’s Count of Ballot Report, the Committee shall vote to officially certify the election and shall promptly provide a complete written report of the election results to the Council, the candidates, and the residents of Martin’s Additions, by email via the Village public communication channels.
 9. The contractor shall securely return all ballots, envelopes, and other election materials to the Martin’s Additions Village Office by mail or courier.

XII. Election Interference

The Committee shall document and promptly report to the Council any interference with the election process. The Council shall take action to prohibit any person or organization from interfering with the election process, including any interference with the Election Committee officials in the performance of their official duties or interference with persons acting under the instructions of the Committee in the performance of those official election duties.

XIII. Electioneering

1. Residents may distribute candidates' information to Village residents, provided that such distribution complies with applicable laws, including Sections 7-208 and 9-106 of the Village Code and the United States postal service regulations (for example, no unstamped non-postal material may be placed in residents' mailboxes).
2. All candidates' brochures and election materials must prominently state that they have been paid for by, or on behalf of, the candidates.
3. Use of the Village logo and/or letterhead on election campaign materials is prohibited. Candidates' materials shall not imply, suggest, or give the impression of any official endorsement by the Village of Martin's Additions.
4. Candidates' campaigns may give residents token gifts that display candidate information, provided that such gifts do not exceed \$1 in fair market value.
5. On Election Day, the Committee shall set and enforce a reasonable "No Electioneering Zone" around the election table, if any, where voters may place their ballot envelopes in the Election Committee ballot drop-box. That zone shall prohibit electioneering within a 50 foot radius of the election table. Sound amplification systems such as bullhorns will not be permitted.

XIV. Election Committee Meetings and Public Comments

All Election Committee meetings shall comply with the Open Meetings Act. VMA elections are voter-friendly, and all VMA election procedures are public documents, available on request, provided, however, that the voter roll may not be requested for commercial purposes. Where reasonably-possible, the Committee shall provide public mark-ups to show proposed regulatory changes and shall allow a reasonable opportunity for public comments on each meeting agenda item before the Committee makes its decisions. Voters have the right to receive timely, accurate election information and provide public comments about the VMA election rules and regulations.

XV. Election Records

All election records, including nominations, candidate statements, ballots, envelopes, and all materials pertaining to voter rolls and the voting process, shall be securely stored at the Village Office, in accordance with the Village's Document Retention Schedule.

APPENDIX A: VOTER ROLL VERIFICATION PROCEDURE

The Election Committee shall implement this procedure to verify the Village residents who are “qualified voters” as defined by the Charter. The Committee shall update and certify the voter roll for each annual Village Council election, consistent with Maryland Code, Elections Law Article, Section 3-403, and the Village Charter and Code of Ordinances. The VMA voter roll is an official government document. The Committee must have a clear, auditable factual basis for its decisions about who receives a ballot.

Upon approval of the VMA voter roll, the Election Committee shall instruct the Village Manager to send the VMA voter roll to the mail-vote contractor in writing (by email). The mail-vote contractor sends the ballots directly to the qualified voters.

The VMA staff assists the Committee by posting the Committee’s notices and communications to residents, hiring election service contractors, and providing the standard electronic government data: (1) the current Village Office List of VMA residents; (2) the certified VMA voter rolls from prior years; and (3) the current County voter roll for the addresses in Martin’s Additions. The VMA staff does not verify the voters, make decisions about who shall receive a ballot, or manage the election process. The Election Committee is responsible for the voter roll and the ballots.

The Committee shall exercise due diligence to maintain the accuracy of the voter roll. The Committee shall not remove potential voters from the VMA voter roll without due process, which includes (1) a documented factual basis for the decision, (2) written notification, and (3) a reasonable procedure for the individual to challenge the decision if the person wishes to do so.

A. Voter Eligibility

The Committee shall apply the definition of qualified voter in Section 301 of the Village Charter as further explained in these Regulations.

B. Timing

The Committee shall approve the verified updated voter roll by a Committee vote and instruct the Village Manager to submit it electronically to the designated mail-vote contractor no later than April 7 each year to allow time for the printing and mailing of ballots to the qualified voters.

C. Voter Roll Verification Process

1. The Committee may utilize the services of a temporary contractor to assist in the voter roll verification process, provided the cost of which has been budgeted and approved by the Council.
2. Acknowledging that there is no single, perfect way to update and verify a voter roll, the Committee shall update the VMA voter roll, beginning in January each year, by using the following procedures and consulting other sources of relevant information the Committee deems appropriate:
 - a. Compare the prior year’s VMA voter roll with the VMA Office List of current residents and notifications of move-ins/move-outs in the Village, and resolve discrepancies by verifying current residency as defined in the Village Charter, by applying the steps below.
 - b. Compare the County voter roll for VMA’s addresses, as provided to the Committee by the VMA Office, with the prior year’s VMA voter roll, and resolve discrepancies by verifying current residency as defined in the Village Charter, by applying the steps below.

- c. Conduct a check of relevant property records and other public records as necessary to resolve questions of current residency and property ownership.
 - d. Conduct an inquiry in person or in writing with the occupants of any given property to resolve questions of residency.
 - e. Send an annual notice to each voter by first-class U.S. mail and use the returned mail to help identify persons who may no longer be current residents.
 - f. Distribute information to all VMA households regarding the procedure to sign up to vote in VMA, and inform residents and qualified voters that they should contact the Committee if they have a question relating to their status on the voter roll, or if they or other members of their household have undergone a change in status affecting their eligibility to vote in VMA.
 - g. Check the working draft of the VMA voter roll to delete duplicate entries.
3. Based upon the review conducted in Section C.2. above, the Committee shall identify any names and addresses for which (a) owners or residents cannot be verified; (b) conflicting information has been identified during the review of the voter roll, the Village Office List of residents, or County voter records; or (c) issues that have been identified by the Village Manager with respect to the current status of an address.
4. The Election Committee shall then vote to either (a) begin a further review of any name and address identified as having an outstanding issue or (b) decline to conduct further review and leave the status unchanged. Where the Election Committee votes to continue review, the review process is as follows:
 - a. The Election Committee shall use the most recent contact information from the Village Office to contact the potential voter by email or telephone to communicate the issue that has arisen as to voter eligibility and to gather additional information. If there is no response within ten (10) calendar days, the Committee shall instruct the Village Manager to send a written notification via U.S. mail to the potential voter, to say that a question has arisen related to their eligibility and request that the individual contact the Committee to resolve the question. The person shall have ten (10) days to respond to the written notification, to provide additional information to the Committee.
 - b. If the issue concerns a person who is not on the VMA or County voter roll and the additional information confirms that the individual is eligible to vote and would like to be included on the VMA voter roll, the Committee shall add the person to the voter roll upon receiving a written request from the individual that includes the documentation specified in section E.2. below.
 - c. If the issue concerns a previously qualified voter who is already listed on the VMA voter roll, and the additional information confirms that the individual remains eligible to vote, the Committee will add notes to the voter roll detailing the steps taken to confirm eligibility.
 - d. If the issue relates to a previously qualified voter and the additional information demonstrates that the person is no longer eligible to vote in the Village Election, the Committee shall take the following action:
 - i) If the person does not appear on the County voter roll, the Committee shall remove the person from the VMA voter roll upon receiving written confirmation from the person verifying that they

are no longer an eligible voter in VMA, or documentation from public records that the individual is no longer a qualified voter in VMA.

ii) If the person appears on the County voter roll, and the Committee confirms that the person is no longer an eligible voter in VMA, the Committee shall notify the Village Manager (and provide the basis for and evidence supporting removal), who shall inform the County Board of Elections. When the County notifies VMA that the person has been removed from the County voter list for VMA, the Election Committee shall remove the person from the VMA voter roll. If it is not possible for the ineligible individual to be removed from the VMA voter roll prior to Election Day, the Committee shall vote to designate the individual as “Not Qualified.”

e. If there is no response to the Committee’s outreach efforts within 30 days after the date of the Committee’s initial written notification regarding the questions about eligibility, the Committee may vote to declare the individual “Not Qualified” and remove them from the list of qualified voters. Individuals deemed “Not Qualified” will not be mailed ballots nor included on the version of the voter roll submitted to the election service contractor.

f. Any voter removed from the VMA voter roll or designated “Not Qualified” shall be notified of that decision, in writing, by the Election Committee. The Committee shall instruct the Village Manager to mail the notice to the last known address of the voter, and include information describing the challenge process set forth below.

D. Transmitting the Voter Roll to the Contractor

Upon conclusion of the process delineated in Section C, the Committee shall vote to approve and instruct the Village Manager to send the updated, verified voter roll to the election contractor. The Committee shall duly mark the copy of the verified voter roll designated by the Committee for transmission to the election contractor, record the time and date of its approval and transmission, and confirm that the verified voter roll is used in operating the election.

If, following the transmission of the voter roll to the election contractor, (1) an individual states that they are no longer a qualified voter or requests to be taken off of the voter roll, or (2) the Committee receives documentation from public records that a person is not a qualified voter (e.g., a County death record), the Committee shall instruct the Village Manager to instruct the election contractor to cancel the ballot sent to that individual.

E. Adding to the Voter Roll

1. Eligible voters may contact the Committee to request to be added to the VMA voter roll up until 8:00 PM on Election Day.

2. Voters who are not on the County voter roll and are seeking to be added to the VMA voter roll must sign a short Election Committee form, approved by the Council, to confirm that VMA is the voter’s primary residence, and show a driver’s license, a recent utility bill, or other documentation acceptable to the Committee in its sole discretion, to confirm the voter’s name, date of birth, and current Martin’s Additions address.

3. If a new voter provides the required documentation after the transmission of the voter roll to the contractor, the Committee shall provide written instructions by email instructing the Village Manager to direct the election contractor to send a ballot to the new voter in time for that ballot to

be voted and returned prior to the deadline for ballot receipt.

F. Challenges to Removal from the Voter Roll

1. Whenever any voter is removed for any reason from the VMA voter roll or declared “Not Qualified,” the Committee shall instruct the Village Manager to send a written notice of the action and the reason for the action to the last known address of the voter. Individuals may challenge their removal or designation as “Not Qualified” by notifying the Committee via its email inbox, or by certified mail addressed to the Election Committee at the Village Office, within 30 days of the date of the notice.

2. This challenge may only be brought by the individual whose eligibility is at issue or their legally designated representative. At the time of the challenge, the challenging party shall present evidence to the Committee as to why a decision removing them from the VMA voter roll or declaring them to be “Not Qualified” is improper, inaccurate, or otherwise in need of reconsideration.

3. Based on the totality of the evidence, including the applicable public records, the Committee shall vote to determine whether the individual should be restored to the voter roll, and shall provide written notice of the decision to the person. If the individual is restored to the voter roll, the Committee shall instruct the Village Manager to instruct the election contractor to mail a ballot to the individual with sufficient time to return it prior to that year’s deadline for receipt of ballots.

G. Challenges to the Inclusion of a Voter on the Voter Roll.

1. A qualified voter may raise a challenge to the inclusion of a name on the VMA voter roll no later than April 1. The challenging party must provide notification of a challenge to the Committee via its email inbox, or by certified mail addressed to the Election Committee at the Village Office, and include (a) the name and address of the voter whose place on the voter roll is being challenged, and (b) any evidence that the person believes supports the challenge.

2. The Committee shall notify the individual whose eligibility is being challenged, who shall have the right to respond and present any relevant information to the Committee to support its decision-making. The Committee shall review the public records, to gather additional information relating to the voter’s eligibility.

3. After review of the information presented and the applicable public records, the Committee shall vote on whether the individual will remain “qualified,” or be removed from the voter roll or designated “Not Qualified.” Any voter removed from the voter roll or designated “Not Qualified” shall be notified in writing, as required in section C.4.f. above.

H. Final Certification and Record-Keeping

After the conclusion of the Election Day deadline for changes to the voter roll, the Committee Chair and Vice- Chair shall review the current copy of the voter roll to confirm that it reflects any updated information and present the roll to the full Committee for a vote to certify. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall then certify the final voter roll by signing and dating a copy of the updated voter roll, initialing and dating the pages, and completing and signing a voter roll certification form attesting that it is the final official version being used for that year’s Village Council Election. Voting records shall be preserved according to the Village’s approved Document Retention Schedule.

APPENDIX B: ELECTION FORUM PROCEDURE

1. The election forum shall be held between April 16 and April 30 each year, at least ten (10) business days before Election Day. The Election Committee shall finalize the venue, date, time, and details for the forum after consulting with the candidates about their preferences and availability. The forum shall run for at least ninety (90) minutes, and may run for up to two hours at the moderator's discretion. The Committee shall ensure community access to the forum by Zoom or other remote means, to make the forum readily accessible for the candidates and residents. Subject to Council approval of the cost and use of staff, the Committee may hold more than one forum after April 16.
2. The election forum shall be strictly impartial: (a) the forum must cover a broad range of issues, with questions applicable to all candidates; (b) all candidates must have equal time to present their views; and (c) the moderator and Committee members must remain neutral and in no way indicate or imply approval or disapproval of any candidate.
3. One member of the Election Committee shall moderate the forum; a second member shall serve as the timekeeper. The VMA staff shall assist the Committee in setting up the technical logistics.
4. All VMA residents are welcome to participate directly (by Zoom, or via a call-in number). Residents may email questions to the Committee in advance at VMAelections@martinsadditions.org or submit questions to the Committee by other means. Residents may ask questions when called on during the forum. No candidate is permitted to see the questions prior to the forum. The Committee shall compile the advance questions from residents and provide the list to the forum moderator.
5. VMA forum structure:
 - a. A 1-minute welcome and introduction from the moderator or Committee chair.
 - b. A 2-minute opening statement from each candidate.
 - c. Residents' questions:
 - 1 minute for each question from a resident. A 2-minute answer from each candidate.
 - Each candidate is allowed a 1-minute follow-up round on each question if a candidate wants to respond.
 - d. A 2-minute closing statement from each candidate.
 - e. The moderator thanks the candidates and residents for participating and closes the forum.

The Election Committee may revise the specific format timing elements at its discretion, provided that all candidates shall have equal time to make their statements and respond to each question.

The moderator:

- a. shall rotate the order of calling on the candidates to respond to the residents' questions.
- b. shall include both live questions from residents and questions submitted in advance.
- c. shall keep the time balanced fairly among all the candidates to maintain a level playing field.
- d. shall have discretion to choose which questions to ask.

The timekeeper shall hold up "15 SECONDS" and "TIME" cards, as needed, for the candidates, the moderator, and the residents to see. The timekeeper may also use a bell or other means to signal when time is up.

6. The VMA staff shall record the forum and post the audio and video online, to be readily accessible to VMA residents.
7. Public notice: The Election Committee shall publish the formal notice about the venue, date, time, Zoom link and call-in number for the forum by email via the Village public communication channels, in the VMA newsletter, and in the official VMA election information packet that is sent by mail to all VMA households. The Committee shall post an additional forum notice by email two days in advance, and again on the morning of the forum. The Committee may also post informal reminders on the village listserv.