

## VMA Election Committee Meeting Minutes March 6, 2023

Members: George McAleese, Eric Shaw, Ben Dunford, Alison Price

### 7:33 Opening

- George McAleese called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and noted the lengthy agenda.

### 7:34 Resident Comments

- Susan Kahn expressed appreciation for work of committee on election packet. She flagged the issue of curing ballots in package and the Maryland guidelines for same. She suggested that the vendor be instructed to “please inform the committee of any nonconforming ballots as they arrive.” She asked whether we have sufficient time to cure. Further, Susan mentioned for the celebration on the sidewalk event, including the artists’ interests and vendors’ interests.
  - George McAleese noted that the committee will get legal guidance from its lawyer on timing and ballot curing and that the committee will work with the vendor.
- Marty Langelan also thanked the committee for their work. She echoed the foregoing comments regarding ballot curing. Regarding vendor instructions, she raised the following: test mailing packets and invalid control numbers; early mailing for those leaving the country. Regarding the voter roll, she raised the following: certification should be done before names and addresses sent to vendor, with a final certification after the votes counted in May; advocated for “knock on door” to be added to section 3 (b); correct time to 8PM on May 10 in section 5(a); suggest change 5(c) to clarify email in writing by committee; recommend removing years so evergreen.
  - George McAleese noted that the voter roll sent to the vendor for mailing of ballots contains very specific language as discussed with village lawyer, and that the final certification and attestation comes at the end when voting closed and count final. He also noted that they are clearly labeled.
- Michael Silliman identified the vendor selected is ElecTech
- Lynn Welle noted the date typographical error in voter roll and asked about a planned mailing date; recommending that a specific date be provided.

- George McAleese explained that no date is set because we do not yet have candidates or a candidate forum date (after which the mailing can occur). He committed to communicating when the ballots are mailed. He noted that two weeks before there is an electronic copy sent to the committee for review; the 24 hours referenced refers to type of copy.
- Susan Kahn suggested the committee ask the vendor to inform the committee of nonconforming ballots one week prior to the count.
  - George McAleese said that the committee is working with the village lawyer on the flexibility in terms timing and curing.
- Marty Langelan raised the issue of 24 hours for ballot curing.
  - George McAleese confirmed this is an outstanding issue with the village lawyer.

#### 8:00 Review and Approval of Minutes

- Eric Shaw moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting.
  - George McAleese seconded the motion.
  - MOTION PASSES (vote 4-0)

#### 8:03 Celebration on Sidewalk Discussion

- George McAleese introduced the topic and handed the discussion to Katie Howard
- Katie Howard first congratulated the CEC on a successful community event at LaFerme. She then explained that the committee had discussed bringing back the celebration in tandem with the election day ballot drop off, or at some other time if the committee recommends. She described the event including vendors, artisans, shops ,etc. She stated that committee would like to do it on the same day but noted someone did have concern about electioneering and the zone around the table.
- Ben Dunford thought election day appropriate.
- Eric Shaw noted that did have 60+ drop off ballots last year.
- Alison Price noted it fits nicely as a celebration of the election process.
- George McAleese noted that it has worked in past and the committee was successful in preventing electioneering. He stated he would send an email to CEC recommending that the Celebration on the Sidewalk be held on election day.

#### 8:12 Instructions to the Vendor

- George McAleese thanked Eric Shaw for his work on the instruction. George McAleese noted the importance of being sure the procedures align with the language of this year's Election Rules & Procedures.
- Alison Price noted we needed a discussion of the dummy ballots.
- Michael Silliman noted that ElecTech would send a sample ballot with a water mark.
- George McAleese asked if it would be possible to have the sample ballots randomized so that the order of candidates is rotated.
- Michael Silliman will verify that with the vendor. He noted that there is a question as to whether we used prepaid return via vendor for all at flat fee or work out fee for only those that are returned via US mail via the post office.
- Eric Shaw raised the issue of whether we are permitted to cure the ballots early and what the cost would be for same.
- George McAleese rephrased in two parts: (1) can we cure early under the rules; and (2) if so, is it feasible as a cost?
- Michael Silliman will check to see what is included in the contract vs. what is in the instructions.
- George McAleese recommended that the committee follow the general practice of voting on the instructions drafted with changes discussed.
  - Alison Price moved to approve as drafted pending changes discussed.
  - George McAleese second.
  - MOTION PASSES (vote 4-0)

#### 8:24 Voter Roll

- George McAleese thanked Alison Price for first draft voter roll procedures and asked for any comments.
- Alison Price reported attempt to eliminate redundancy and make evergreen, noting challenges.
- George McAleese listed the challenges in original draft given the types of permissible challenges. George McAleese identified need to correct timing of challenges (8 PM not non). Asked to add whatever information village may have that we could use (e.g., moving truck permits and public records). Noted the need to not finalize given the village discussions about the potential for changing the charter as it related to qualified voters and how you identify them.

- Michael Silliman clarified that he has had discussion with the county voter roll registration and he will ask for their process and often we can give us updates. Michael Silliman asked if we do a call/email for those who turned 18.
- George McAleese suggested that we should do an email call asking for new voters and the committee members agreed.

#### 8:33 Candidate Forum Planning

- George McAleese articulated the need for procedures, moderator and process for this event, including how we accept question, validating the question hosting details, and format.
- Ben Dunford agreed to take on this piece of the committee's work.
- Michael Silliman noted that the Election Plan allows the committee to decide on the format.
- Arthur Alexander suggested we look to hybrid format rather than just zoom given the benefits of being in person.
- George McAleese cautioned about mixed modality creating an equity issues.
- Eric Shaw does not think candidate preference (other than health) should determine modality.
- George McAleese noted the benefits of zoom in scheduling.

#### 8:44 Ballot Packet & Instructions

- George McAleese noted that the packet and instructions need to be updated from last year, e.g. vote for 2, not 2 plus write in, dates. He emphasized that more information is better than less when it comes to instructions.
- Alison Price agreed to do the ballot packet and instructions if someone would forward last year's information to her.

#### 8:46 Tracking Planning System

- George McAleese emphasized the need for a tracking system for such things as replacement ballots, different addresses, early mailing. He volunteered to handle this as has done in different context.
- Eric Shaw noted that not many people requested new ballots last year.

#### 8:42 Communications Planning

- George McAleese emphasized the need for communications plan for the two weeks leading up to nomination period and including the Friday emails and stand-alone emails; the need to emails to candidates (nominations received; materials received). He suggested using much of the language that was used last year. He also noted that the committee needs to stay on top of communications, having them locked and loaded until deadlines come.
- Tangentially, George McAleese requested that folks document travel plans as, for instance, he will be out of country for next council meeting and needs someone to report.
- Alison Price volunteered to attend and report at next council meeting.

#### 8:43 Resident Comments

- Marty Langelan thanked the committee for a clear & well-organized meeting. She noted that people original charter is from 1985 and the focus on who is a resident for voting purposes should not be on disenfranchising people. She checked with Delegate Moon's chief of staff and the weighs and means committee does not have the issue coming up anytime soon.
- George McAleese noted that he is not advocating for a change and that he was just flagging that the council is considering a change to the charter that could impact the voter roll.
- Marty Langelan raised the candidate forum procedures and hopes that live questions will come back, noting that they can work in a hybrid format where the questions alternate from list, to live and back again, to help people get acquainted with the candidates. She noted that the anonymous question process is also important.
- George McAleese responded that the election plan calls for anonymous questions and that the committee just need to figure out the submission and tracking system for the same.
- Marty Langelan mentioned the potential for a locked mailbox. She also asked about how the committee would treat questions, whether they would all be kept secret in advance or all made public. Finally, she requested that the committee post meeting packets online earlier.
- George McAleese responded that it is the committee goal to get them up earlier.

- Marty Langelan noted that earlier is better. She again raised voter roll procedures requesting that knocking on doors be included if needed. She also asked about new voter notification.
- George McAleese noted that the committee had more than enough questions for the forum last year and some were inflammatory or prejudicial. The committee will discuss, but has not decided, if the candidates will get the questions in advance or perhaps just topics.
- Arthur Alexander noted that live questions make the event livelier. He also wanted to request that the committee make people aware of who is eligible to vote, not just resident owners, but people who are away but maintain their residence here.
- Ben Dunford noted the combat exemption and the need to list the residence in the combat zone.
- Susan Kahn raised curing issues ahead of time again and she emphasized the Maryland state election curing guidelines process timing. She recommended that the committee be proactive in letting the village attorney know what Maryland law allows. She noted the \$4 million surplus of the village as a basis for removing cost from consideration of an early curing process.
- George McAleese assured all that the committee will obtain specific legal guidance that includes state and county laws, as well as village election plan. We will be abiding by and in compliance with the appropriate regulations and want to ensure a fair election process

#### 9:15 Closing

- Ben Dunford moved to adjourn.
  - Alison Price seconded motion.
  - MOTION PASSES (vote 4-0).