

TOWN OF ARLINGTON
TOWN MEETING ELECTRONIC VOTING STUDY COMMITTEE

June 19, 2013

Call to Order

The special meeting of the Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee was called to order by Committee Chair Eric Helmuth in the Second Floor Meeting Room of the Town Hall Annex on Wednesday, June 19, 2013, at 7:30 PM. A copy of the notice of this meeting is attached to these minutes.

Quorum

A quorum was present: Elizabeth Patton, Wes Beal, Steve Storch, Adam Auster, and Eric Helmuth.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION:

Postponement

Mr. Beal moved to postpone approval of the minutes of the April 17, 2013, meeting until the next meeting.

The motion passed.

Reports

Membership

Mr. Helmuth reported that Town Moderator John Leone is seeking a Town Meeting member to fill the vacancy on the Committee left by Raymond Charbonneau III's resignation.

Bid or Proposal Request

He said that Town Manager Adam Chapdelaine would like the Committee to consult with Town Chief Technology Officer David Good and other affected offices in town government to formulate a request for bids or proposals for the rental of an electronic voting system for use at Annual Town Meeting 2013.

One early decision, he said, will be whether to request bids or proposals.

He said that bids are often used to identify the least-cost product or service that meets minimum specifications, while requests for proposals are more formal and allow for an assessment of competing proposals that is more qualitative.

Mr. Helmuth reported that the Town Manager suggests issuing the request for bids or proposals in September.

He distributed the first draft of a list of tasks related to implementing and procuring equipment for electronic voting at Town Meeting. A copy of this document is appended to these minutes.

Finance

He noted that the capital-planning process will begin in August. The Town Manager will meet with the chairs of the Finance and Capital Planning Committees to discuss how to proceed.

DISCUSSION:
Implementation

Subsequent discussion touched on the interests to different Town departments, lessons to be learned from other towns, planning for the roll-out and immediate review of implementation, and the role of volunteers.

Some Committee members suggested that other Town departments, including the schools, might want to use the electronic-voting equipment for other purposes than voting, with implications for the financing and life of the equipment.

New Business

DISCUSSION:
*Close Votes
Bylaw*

Mr. Auster told Committee members that a provision in the new bylaw governing the use of electronic voting, which required a visual review for close votes, is flawed, as described in a memo that he distributed at the meeting.

A copy of this memo is appended to these minutes.

He said that the bylaw relies on the margin of difference between yea and nay votes to trigger the review.

For supermajorities, he said, the margin of victory of the prevailing side may diverge profoundly from the margin of difference, so the bylaw as written would not work as intended.

Mr. Auster said that the Committee should sponsor an amendment that would preserve the original intent of scrutinizing close votes, but redefine the test to apply to all majorities.

*Special
Town Meeting*

He said that the Committee should agree on the language for this change over the summer, so that a special Town Meeting, if one is called for other purposes, could act on the amendment in the fall.

MOTION:
Adjournment

Mr. Beal moved that the meeting adjourn.

The motion passed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

Corrections

The date of the previous meeting given on Page 1 is corrected to April 17 (from April 14).

APPROVED
as corrected
August 14, 2013

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

Eric Helmuth, *Chair*

Documents attached to these minutes:

1. Notice of Special Meeting
2. "Town Meeting Electronic Voting Implementation" draft of 6/19/2013
3. "Re: Fixing a flaw in close-vote provision of new bylaw" memo of 6/17/2013

Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee

Eric Helmuth, Chair | Adam Auster, Secretary

Wednesday, June 19, 2013, 7:30 p.m.

Town Hall Annex, 2nd floor conference room

AGENDA:

- 1 - Call to Order
- 2 - Review and approval of minutes
- 3 - New committee member
- 4 - Updates from the Chair
- 5 - Workplan for e-voting implementation
- 6 - Bylaw for close votes – Adam Auster
- 7 - New Business
- 8 - Adjournment

Town Meeting Electronic Voting Implementation scope of tasks and responsibility

1. Vendor selection and contract for rental

- a. Requirements definition: *Committee, in consultation w/ Moderator, Clerk, IT director*
- b. Bid or RFP released by September. *Town Manager, Purchasing Officer*
- c. Vendor demos –public? private?
- d. Vendor selection. *Town Manager, committee appointed by Town Manager*
- e.

2. Updated research on other towns

Committee

- a. Purchase and implementation process
- b. Vendors chosen
- c. Procedures
- d.

3. Preparing for potential purchase or continued rental of a system (FY 2015)

Town Manager, Finance committee, Capital planning committee

- a. Process begins in July. Town Manager will initiate
- b. How long will system last? (need to answer this)
- c. Tricky timing

4. Implementation

- a. TMM training and education - *Committee*
 - i. Training sessions – timing?
 - ii. Instruction Video?
 - iii. Document?
- b. Equipment – *Dave Good, new IT analyst, Committee, ACMi,*
 - i. Display size and brightness (ensure compatibility)
 - ii. ACMi broadcast integration
- c. Handset distribution and return procedures - *Moderator, Committee, Clerk (?)*
- d. Rules & procedures - *Moderator, Clerk, TM procedures committee*
- e. Public posting of electronic votes – *Clerk, town webmaster*
- f.

To: Electronic Voting Study Committee

Re: Fixing a flaw in close-vote provision of new bylaw

From Adam Auster

Date: June 17 2013

The Town's new voting bylaw includes the following provision governing close votes by electronic tally:

In an instance where the difference between the yes and no votes according to an electronic tally is less than 6 votes, then the individual votes shall be displayed.

To see the problem with this, ask yourself how it would apply to a vote requiring a two-thirds majority to pass.

The language we included assumes a simple majority, which is not always the required vote. Below is a provision that seeks a similar result but written to be majority-neutral (so as to apply to any majority requirement).

The individual votes shall always be displayed if the prevailing side of an electronic tally is within 3 votes of smallest number needed to prevail.

This will require the Moderator to determine the "smallest number needed to prevail" for close votes, and use that as the basis for applying this bylaw. (On the other hand a similar calculation is required to determine the supermajority threshold anyway).

Is there a majority-neutral way to word this that is easier to calculate?

We should resolve this by the fall so that if there is a special Town Meeting we can bring it there for action. Otherwise it can wait until the spring.