



Election Modernization Committee

Date: **January 5, 2021**

Time: **7:30-9:30pm**

Location: **Conducted by Remote Participation**

Minutes

Members in attendance: Adam Badik, Juli Brazile, Joseph Curro, Greg Dennis, Walter Horn, William Logan, Patti Muldoon, James O'Connor, Maxwell Palmer, Paul Parravano, Juhan Sonin, Jennifer Susse

1. Executive Order on Remote Participation

Jim reviewed the executive order on remote participation.

2. Introduction of New Members

Jennifer Susse has been re-appointed by the School Committee as their designee on the committee. No under-25 member has yet to be appointed by the Select Board. The designee of the League of Women Voters is being chosen in a meeting held concurrently with this meeting.

Patti Muldoon, the new designee of the League of Women Voters, joined later at around 8:30pm and introduced herself.

3. Election of Chairperson and Clerk

Jim opened up discussion about the possibility of electing a new chair and clerk. Although he is resigning from Town Meeting and moving his primary residence to Ayer, Jim is willing and allowed to continue serving on the committee, including as its chair. There was some discussion as to whether we should elect a new chair and clerk, and if so what the timeline of that should be. We decided to wait until after the April Town Election to elect new officers, at which point the composition of the committee will likely have changed somewhat.

4. Review of Goals, Objectives and Mission for the EMC

We discussed some of the topics we wanted to study in the coming year and whether the current [mission statement](#) adequately reflected those goals. Walter noted that there had been past talk of voting at home and approval voting. Greg said we could put forward recommendations for polling locations and potentially study election timing, including the idea of coinciding the town election with the state election in even-numbered years. Joe felt that the

existing mission statement covered those topics, and given that's what Town Meeting approved, did not need to be changed.

Jim said he heard the oversight of election workers may be transitioning from the Select Board to the Clerk's office. Juli said she wasn't aware of anything happening immediately and that such a change would take some time.

5. Public Comment and/or Questions

Greg noted that there were two guests who showed up specifically to discuss Ranked Choice Voting, and in light of that, made a motion to table this topic until after we discussed item 6 in the agenda. Juli seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

6. Ranked Choice Voting

Guests Adam Auster and Lynn Rosenbaum introduced themselves. Adam is a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting, but is not in favor of electing the Select Board in a proportional way and put forward an amendment at the Special Town Meeting that would have altered our proposal to a winner-take-all variant. Lynn is also a supporter of RCV and was present to learn how she might help advance it in Arlington.

Greg gave a slideshow presentation walking everyone through the original motivation for Ranked Choice Voting in Arlington and discussed the rationale for the proportional election of multiseat offices. He noted that two primary criticisms and corresponding amendments were offered to our proposal: (1) Paul Schlichtman [criticism of proportionality in concept](#), which the committee had read and rejected his arguments at an earlier meeting; and (2) Adam Auster's [criticism of proportional election of executive offices](#) like Select Board. Greg described Adam's proposed winner-take-all RCV variant and how it was tabulated.

Adam Auster then elaborated on his criticism and field questions from the committee. In the application for grants, Adam argued, a divided Select Board can lead to rejected grant applications, potentially giving undemocratic "veto power" to a minority viewpoint. For example, if the Select Board had a member who opposed the Mass Ave rebuild, we may have lost that grant to another community. There was a lot of debate and questions as to whether his objection was a principled one or outcome-oriented.

Greg made a motion to resubmit the same Ranked Choice Voting warrant article text for the Spring Town Meeting as we included in the November Special Town Meeting. He clarified that this is not a motion to advance the same main motion as we did in November — we can continue to have that discussion — but the existing warrant article text is sufficient to cover both our original version and the Auster amendment, whichever we decide to pursue. Jennifer seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

We then returned to agenda item 5, public comment.

5. Public Comment and/or Questions (revisited)

Patti noted that the Housing Authority election is still up in the air.

Juli informed us the state has so far only authorized additional mail-in voting options due to COVID until March 31st, so the legislature will need to act in order for those options to be available for the upcoming April town election.

7. New Business

We scheduled the next meeting for February 9th at 7:30pm.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:17pm.