



Election Modernization Committee

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Conducted by Remote Participation

Minutes

Attendance: Greg Dennis, Juli Brazile, Maxwell Palmer, Juhan Sonin, Lesley Waxman, Paul Parravano, Jennifer Susse, Walter Horn, Adam Badik, Patricia Muldoon, Len Diggins, Rebecca Gruber

1. Executive Order on Remote Participation

Greg reviewed the remote participation rules and took attendance of voting members.

2. Draft Minutes for Review, Edits, and Approval - Oct 19 & Nov 16, 2021

October meetings were approved with a correction. November meetings were approved with a correction to label them "meeting notes."

3. Status of Home Rule Petitions

David Swanson in Cindy Friedman's office told Greg he is still hopeful that the TMM election change could happen by mid-January. Ranked Choice Voting by mid-February. Juli confirmed that timing works for her (last day to add ballot question by vote of Select Board is February 25). It's a significant issue because Juli is under the impression she can't let any town meeting pull papers until this is resolved. Greg asked if we could have two different forms since the precincts electing all 12 are already different from the precincts electing the people up in 2022, plus filling any vacancies. Juli will inquire.

4. Youth Voter Engagement

Giovanna has sent emails to Administrators and Student Council to ask permission to email the student body. She's created a google form to collect ideas and emails from interested students. They are looking for some students to advocate on behalf of the issue. Juhan suggests that he and EMC reach out to the wider community to build more support. As important as having youth advocates is, we can't assume they can carry the entire load. He will draft a summary of a proposed plan for the next meeting. The effort is in two phases: Town Meeting has to vote to submit home rule legislation. If the legislature approves, then the voters must approve it on the ballot. Jennifer reminded the group that the legislature probably won't pass it, unless many more towns also submit home rule legislation on this issue.

5. Town Clerks Association on HAVA funds & negotiated pricing

Last month Greg brought up the fact that Sec. Galvin is sitting on Help America Vote Act funds. Many other states have spent their funds. MA has lots of old voting machines. Other states manage pricing and bulk purchase to help towns. Juli attempted to reach out to MTCA but hasn't connected with the president yet, though he seems willing to talk if we can schedule time. Walter wanted to know what MMA thinks on the issue. Lesley will talk to Jeff Silvestro at LHS (voting machine vendor) to see what he knows.

6. Reprecincting Update

Map submitted. OCPF has granted Juli permission to gather and publish statements from town meeting candidates on the Elections page. Discussion of the somewhat confusing rules about running as an incumbent in a new precinct. If the precinct number changed, the Member must pull papers and run and won't have "Candidate for Re-Election" on the ballot.

Juli will talk to Steve DeCoursey to suggest the Select Board decide on polling locations by early February in time for a mailing. Greg proposed a sub-committee to draft a recommendation from EMC to the Select Board. Adam thinks this is important enough for the entire committee. Patti supports the sub-cmte idea for efficiency. Due to quorum concerns, we can't invite the entire committee to discuss this. Our next meeting is Jan 11. Juli proposed holding Jan 18 open for an additional

meeting just in case. She will schedule it in Zoom, but not post it unless we need to. Greg moved to form a sub-committee consisting of Juli, Jennifer, Max and Len and invite Adam to meetings if he's available. Because it's an important topic, the sub-committee should meet soon and forward thoughts to the full committee in time for a detailed discussion on Jan 11. Unanimous vote. Len notes his availability is limited and the sub-committee should meet without him if necessary.

7. Town Warrant Discussion

Warrant is open until noon on Friday, Jan 28. Are there issues the EMC wants to put on the warrant? Possible article ideas:

- Youth Voting. We need to determine in January, but likely.
- Greg brought up early in-person voting. Right now the only option is to vote absentee at the counter for local elections, which is not the same "no-excuse" concept as early voting. If we did home rule, it could end up in conflict with eventual state law regarding local elections. Other towns have passed home rule proposals that the legislature has not acted on. Jennifer thinks the state is most likely to write a law that allows towns to opt in for in-person early voting. Lesley will review what Cambridge and other towns have drafted and we will pay close attention to wording an escape clause. Juli notes the option is a convenience, but voters who vote early lose the chance to change their mind. Lesley confirmed that many Cambridge voters return mailed ballots to the drop box on election day, but not before for this reason. Counting these ballots is much more cumbersome than if the same voters just went to the polls on election day.
- Jennifer brought up the idea of holding the town election in the fall. Len will talk to Doug to find out for sure if that's an option.
- Patti asked about converting to an appointed Town Clerk. Juli said she's working on a study using funds Town Meeting authorized and she'll report back to Town Meeting. Since the study won't be done by the January cutoff, Juli won't put an article forward on the issue this year.

Rebecca wants to know why EMC is dissolving in 2022. Members felt that the new Civic Engagement group could absorb EMC members who want to continue to discuss and work on election-related issues.

8. Public Comment and/or Questions

None.

9. New Business

No new business.

10. Adjournment

Next meeting on January 11 to discuss polling locations and vote to approve any warrant article submissions.

Meeting adjourned at 9:02.