

Ad Hoc Voting Committee Minutes Jan 23rd - Final Meeting

All committee members present.

Approval of minutes of Dec 12th.

Approved Seconded with the amendment that Paul's Presentation be added to the minutes

Patrick moved to agenda highlighting that all Committee members seem to be in agreement that we don't want to go to the General Assembly.

6 of 7 committee members agree however Peter suggested we perhaps discuss first before going straight to motion.

Agreed to hold on voting on motion until Deming walked through options.

Deming walked through Options featured in the below grid

[Insert Grid shared with Committee]

Paul recounted historical account of the Charter and its amendments.

Peter Hark discussed how 40% is applied 100% vote. This distorts and gives a couple 200% voting power. This discussion has opened a broader host of questions. Voting is critical as what if our budget becomes a much larger budget. What if a capital project requires large pay ins. Perhaps we should amend the charter to have members pay in dues equitably.

Tom shared a desire to not go to legislature given danger that it draws attention - other fire districts have been under attack.

Bob Palumbo shared thoughts that we should clean up the by-laws.

Livia noted the 40% rule is obsolete and ideally we would evolve our charter to stay current, but agrees, it's not ideal to go to General Assembly.

Support for Option 3 shared by several members

Discussion moved to the topic of Proxy

Patrick walked through options

Tom shared his view that voting by proxy is necessary. Thinks that preserving old New England historical essence is important. Any proxy can represent any eligible voter.

Electronic meeting and electronic voting is only because of COVID, and shouldn't be expected going forward. We will go back to the historical set up. Thus we need proxy voting.

Others feel electronic voting should be a permanent feature that is embraced going forward when passed by the government. Proxy is necessary for matters that change on the floor.

Some members prefer 2 proxies, some prefer 1. Most agree, it should be less than 3.

Suggestion by Patrick to focus on voting on rows 1 and 2 and table Absentee voting.

Public Comment by Various:

Joe Rucci

In 1995, proxy amendment was made because community was trying to include people who couldn't come to the meeting. We are gathering as a legislative body to appoint the executives of Shelter Harbor. Would be sad to see anything diminish the importance of gathering at the annual meeting. Don't think there is authority to vote electronically. Question: Currently, can a renter and an owner vote?

Viv Duff

Quorum - would need to make sure that votes count for all items, and not just items in advance.

Ferris

1. Not sure proxies are included in quorum? Joe Rucci says he is not sure and not sure we ever needed the proxies to create a quorum.
2. What is the voting process? How are voters qualified?

Jack Waters

Wonder if we even need to change the by laws to enact 1 property 1 vote.

As far as proxies, limit of 1 per voter. Husbands and wives can come with 8 votes now.

Reducing that to 4 would be best. Absentee ballots would be best, but understand motions change on the floor. Electronic voting would be best.

Gigi

Commented on Election laws of RI

Conclusion - it's a felony to vote more than once. All qualified voters get only 1 vote for motions and ballot for board members.

Art Weiner

Underscore comments by Paul as to where the question fits in legally. It's clear that supreme court decisions and US constitution puts fire district in line with one person one vote decisions. Multiple votes per property invites law suits. Community would be well advised with what supreme court requires.

Rochelle

At this time can somebody who is not a property owner sit on the board of governors in our community? If that's not the case, Peter Hark highlighted the importance of property ownership.

Importance that person on the board and voting should have a dog in the fight. Request that we look into this and that our board members and voters represent our property owners.

Deming confirmed that if you are Westerly registered voter and resident in SHFD could vote in SHFD and sit on the board. Board of Governors will look into this.

Gail

We had this issue when a person wanted to be elected to the board, and their spouse was the property owner. Person might be very active in the community but the legal owner is the spouse. Joe Rucci will take a look at this.

No further public comment

Patrick shared concluding remarks and agreed to vote next time, following Peter Ruggiero's suggestion.

Paul read language for a motion to vote at our next meeting.

Meeting to vote to be scheduled.

Adjournment