

A Guide for Electing Officers in County Extension Councils

An election in a volunteer organization, such as the County Extension Council, is for the purpose of choosing officers/leaders who will keep the organization running smoothly and efficiently, help the group meet its goals, and work well with members and committees.

Most organizations provide for nominating and electing officers in their constitution or bylaws. The group will determine standing rules. The County Extension Council's guide is its "standing rules." Considerations in nominating and electing officers usually include eligibility, time of nomination, time of electing, method of nominating and electing, and time to assume office. These are matters to be decided through formal action of the council if standing rules do not cover them.

It is the chairperson's responsibility to conduct elections, but the chair should have no more influence over the election than any other member.

Nominations

A nomination is a formal presentation to the organization of a candidate for office. The nomination serves only to focus attention on certain members as nominees; no member is barred from election by a failure to be nominated.

Nominations may be made in three ways: from the floor, by ballot, or by nominating committee's report. Any method will be satisfactory if members think carefully about their choices for an office. Consider several important things about a person when selecting a nominee:

- Ability to fill the office;
- Willingness to work; time available to handle the office;
- How well the person has already worked in the organization;
- His/her interest; and
- Knowledge or willingness to learn about the organization.

In every case, the member should consent to serve before being nominated.

From the Floor

This method is democratic because every member has the opportunity to nominate someone. However, nominations should be thought out carefully and the person consulted before the nomination is made.

Nominations are in order as soon as the chair calls for them; no second is required. When a nomination is made, the chair repeats it and the secretary records it.

A member may nominate only one person for the same office.

When the chair asks for further nominations and none is made, the chair may then declare that nominations are closed.

A *MOTION* to close nominations requires a **two-thirds** vote. Before voting, but after the formal closing of nominations, nominations may be reopened by a motion that requires a **simple** majority to carry.

By Ballot

Nominations by ballot have the same opportunities and shortcomings as nominations from the floor. In addition, the ballot may persuade a reluctant but capable member to agree to be a nominee.

Before nominations are made, an understanding should be reached about whether nomination by ballot may constitute election, that is, if a person may be elected if he/she receives a majority of votes on the nominating ballot.

The chair appoints tellers and asks them to pass ballots to members. Each member writes beside each office the name of one person as a *nominee*.

If the organization has agreed that the nominating ballot may constitute an election and a nominee receives a majority of the votes, the chair declares the nominated person elected. If no majority is obtained, all persons nominated will be voted on.

Nominating Committee

The nominating committee may be a *standing* or *special* committee. A standing committee has members nominated and elected in the same way that officers are chosen; a special committee is either appointed or elected two to three months before election of officers.

A nominating committee is a completely democratic way of selecting nominees if members are elected rather than appointed, and nominations are also taken from the floor.

Nominations by a nominating committee have several advantages:

- A more careful choice can be made.
- The organizational needs can be studied and nominees found to fit these needs.

- The committee can consult nominees in advance and be sure they will serve if elected.
- The committee can prepare a list of nominees who can work well together.

The chair cannot be an *ex officio* member of the nominating committee or attend its meetings. However, the chair should give instructions about duties, including:

- Offices needing nominations to be made.
- Rules of eligibility.
- Obtaining an individual's consent to be nominated.
- When and how to present the committee's report or proposed slate.

Some organizations ask the committee to present two nominations for each office, but others select only one. The committee is permitted to nominate one of its own members, but should not nominate a large number. Serving on the nominating committee does not disqualify a member from holding office.

When the report is called for, the nominating committee's chair reads it and hands a copy to the secretary. The report is not accepted but is treated as if nominations had been made from the floor. The organization's chair then reads the nominations one by one and asks for further nominations after each, pausing a reasonable time to allow for nominations to be made from the floor.

Voting

The chair appoints tellers to count and report the votes. When no more nominations are made, members proceed to vote on names of candidates by the method given in the organizational standing rules.

Except when voting by *VOICE*, members may vote for anyone who is eligible, regardless of whether he/she has been nominated. Anyone who receives the necessary majority is elected.

If voting is by *VOICE* or *STANDING*, the vote may be taken on each office as soon as candidates for that office are nominated, or voting may be delayed until nominations for all offices have been made. If voting is by *BALLOT*, nominations for all offices are completed before balloting, so that only one ballot is needed. The chair votes when voting is by ballot.

Usually, the vote needed to elect is stated in the standing rules:

- A simple majority is required to elect any officer, unless standing rules state otherwise.

- Most organizations require that when no candidate receives a majority vote on the first vote, the next vote is taken on the two candidates who received the most votes.

- In cases of a tie, a new vote is cast.

The representative of tellers reports the following information: *number eligible to vote, number of votes cast, number necessary to elect, and number of votes for each candidate.*

The chair declares the person(s) elected. The number necessary to elect is based on the number of votes cast.

An officer assumes duties as soon as elected, unless another time is specified in the standing rules.

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