



**2024 -2025 MCC Governing Board
Elections & Nominations Committee
December 11, 2024 – 6:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present:	<i>in-person:</i> Katie Gorka, Chair; Michael Monroe; Aaron Stark
Committee Members Absent:	Gloria Marrero Chambers
Other Board Members Present:	None
MCC Staff Present:	Betsy May-Salazar, Executive Director; Holly Novak, Executive Assistant
Guests:	None

CONVENE MEETING

Chair Katie Gorka convened a meeting of Elections & Nominations Committee of the Governing Board of MCC on December 11, 2024, at 6:34 p.m. It was open to the public attending in-person. No changes were requested to the Agenda; it was adopted by acclamation. Announcement was made about the meeting being audio-recorded for purpose of Minutes.

REVIEW PROPOSED KEY DATES – 2025 ELECTION

**remarks by Executive Director Betsy May-Salazar and Executive Assistant Holly Novak*

Key Dates for 2025 Election have been thoughtfully arranged across several weeks to produce a logical progression. The goal is to encourage maximum participation by the public without causing unrealistic deadlines or overwhelming workload for staff and board members. The candidates will have sufficient time to campaign out in the community. Some adjustments this year: slightly reduced periods of time for Candidate Packets/petitions and Absentee Voting (proposed now to be six weeks, with a later start date). The innovation of voting at Friday Night Rides was very successful and we will continue that for 2025 Election.

ELECTION PROCESS HAPPENS IN PHASES:

1. Encouraging candidates - people who are interested in running for the board (youth and adults). A February 18 start date to have the “Candidate packets” available gives adequate time for staff to prepare the packets. This provides 3-4 week period from when the Candidate packet is picked up to when it is due back with petition signatures. This shorter timing is more appropriate, less awkward than people being out there for 6 weeks or longer, trying to get signatures to qualify to become a candidate. Four weeks is plenty of time to get ten signatures.
2. Confirming official candidates: Once Candidate Packets/petitions are turned in on Monday, March 17, then it’s about one week to get things ready for the Candidate Orientation meeting. During this time, we will also structure the advance planning of promotion about the election (forthcoming publicity photos, personal statements, information on MCC website). Our PIO team needs time to compile all that information.
3. Candidate Orientation on Tuesday evening at MCC – March 25 (rather than on a weekend). Executive Director May-Salazar developed a comprehensive presentation that is appropriate for both adults and youth. Youth board member Aaron Stark confirmed that the Candidate Orientation was handled very well last year.
4. Preparation of public materials (Affidavits; ballots) for 2025 Election: Current board members will be asked to assist during this preparation time: proof-reading materials to make sure all the pieces are accurate. We always need another eye to catch things! It’s a detailed process to migrate the 2024 election materials to become templates for 2025 election, with all new dates accurately shown.
4. Start of Absentee Voting – Wednesday, April 2. After Candidate Orientation, people are ready and excited to be out there talking to people and encouraging voting. April 2 start date allows publicity photos to be formatted, the

bios (personal statements from candidates limited to 100 words only) and all public-facing voting materials to be completely finished – uniform and consistent (avoiding preliminary or ‘DRAFT’ versions).

5. Candidate Meet-and Greet: Spring Community Parking Lot Sale – April 19. Last year this was a good event for visibility of candidates to be able to interact with the public. People who visited the candidate area last year really wanted to talk with the candidates. A map of Small District 1A-Dranesville was displayed, which sparked interest and conversation. A few innovations were suggested for 2025 election:

***potentially allow candidates to walk around:** We can consider whether to adjust this annual event to allow candidates to walk around – perhaps sporting a special nametag to show they are running as a “Candidate for MCC Governing Board.” The caution to prevent campaigning onsite at MCC events is important because many people are passively here several times per week waiting for their kids and they don’t want to be constantly approached by eager candidates running for the board. However, perhaps we will broaden the opportunity at Spring Parking Lot Sale to still have a ‘home base’ while candidates can be allowed walk around. We may have coffee for the candidates, as well as being positioned near to the coffee vendor.

***moniker to designate them as a “Candidate for MCC Governing Board”:** We may introduce a ribbon or some kind of moniker that all candidates receive so when they are standing at Giant or out campaigning in the community, they can wear something that says “I’m a candidate.” We’ve never tried this, but it does provide some control and consistency: please always wear your candidate badge whenever you are campaigning. When wearing this plastic “Candidate for MCC Governing Board” badge, they know they must comport with proper campaigning behavior as was explained in the Candidate Orientation.

6. Absentee Voting ends on Friday, May 9. It’s a bit shorter (it went until Monday last year) in this key week before McLean Day. It gives ample leeway for League of Women Voters to choose when they will annotate all the residential printouts. They open thousands of envelopes, staple the ballot with the Affidavit, and then each one is noted in the residential computer printout (who voted at that residence). The ballots all go into a secure box that is locked (ballots are separated from the Affidavits). They have an organized system: pack ballots in groups of 25 with a tally sheet. They do not look at the votes at that point – all ballots are stored until Saturday night. The annotated computer printouts go to McLean Day to prevent duplicate voting. Also, for cross-reference, we have all the Absentee Voting Affidavits (adults/youth) to show who has already voted. It’s a check-and-balance at McLean Day that ensures we know which tax district residents have already voted, and those who still have yet to vote.

7. In-person voting at Friday Night Rides (May 16) – this was a huge success with youth. Last year it was well-received by the public and resulted in more total participation by students in voting for youth candidates. Everyone can vote (adults and youth) – either at Friday Night Rides or McLean Day Saturday, May 17.

8. Vote-counting by League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area – Saturday night, May 17: Absentee Ballots are securely stored until Saturday, May 17, when all the votes are tabulated, including in-person ballots cast at Friday Night Rides and McLean Day. There is no ‘advance’ counting of Absentee ballots; it is one combined effort on Saturday evening (onsite at MCC).

9. Changeover to new board: At penultimate meeting on Wed., May 21, we will recognize Aaron Stark and Sonya Thott who are graduating from high school! The newly-elected people will be invited to attend to observe this meeting. The final meeting (transition to 2025-2026 Governing Board with pledge) will be on Wednesday, June 4. Executive Committee (officers): Anyone interested in running for Board officer positions in 2025-2026 will have submitted their statement of interest. If ENC Chair is not able to attend on June 4, or chooses to run for the Chair position, she will assign a Designee to conduct the election for the Board Chair (as enumerated in Elections & Nominations Procedures). All board members will be reminded to inform ENC Chair or designee and executive director by May 21 if interested in serving as a Board officer for the coming year.

NEXT STEPS: These “Key Dates” for 2025 Governing Board Election will be shared with the full board in advance of January 29 Regular Meeting. This timeline will be the reference point for all printed materials, publicity, promotion and advance planning for 2025 Governing Board Election.

ADVANCE PLANNING FOR MCLEAN DAY EVENT **remarks by Ms. Novak*

Does anyone have questions about McLean Day or things that weren't clear to you?

***clarification is needed about adults voting for adults only /youth voting for youth candidates only**

It's all open, but youth only vote for youth candidates, and adults only vote for adult candidates. That's true for Absentee Voting and in-person voting at McLean Day.

***clarification about how youth age range is verified** The youth Affidavit has a line for 'date of birth' and LWV checks it to make sure it is within the specific date range. Yes – we have sometimes found non-youth trying to vote for youth candidates (if they are over 18 or under 14 their ballot can't be counted). It helps students to understand the process of voting and the window of age that is appropriate. If they don't put their birthdate on the Affidavit, their ballot cannot be counted. Also, the ballots are different colors: youth ballots are blue; adult ballots are yellow. During requests for Absentee Voting and in-person voting at McLean Day, adults and youth only receive the proper respective color ballot. A key purpose is to offer young people the experience of voting before they are age 18. They must comply with necessary requirements, checks-and-balance processes.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOARD MEMBER INVOLVEMENT - UNDER THE DIRECTION OF LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Emphasis on logistics for McLean Day is that we really need the entire board to participate; there are many shifts to cover on those two days. It's a great opportunity for board members to provide positive presence and support.

*assisting with validating Absentee Ballots cast

*assisting at Voting Tent, candidate row – Friday Night Rides

*assisting at Voting Tent, candidates row – Saturday McLean Day

*assisting League of Women Voters – Saturday evening at MCC (approx. until 9 p.m.)

***coordination with League of Women Voters; observing the vote-counting** The League of Women Voters truly appreciates the involvement of our board members! They were very impressed with all the board members helping out last year, particularly on the day with the huge stack of absentee ballot envelopes that came in! It's very interesting to be a part of the process. *Comment by Chair Gorka:* It's a lot of work!

Vote-counting goes until about 9 p.m. on Saturday night. They are very organized, especially with the help of board members: Anna Bartosiewicz and Rasheq Rahman assisted last year. LWV schedules a fresh team of volunteers; they were able to get it done very efficiently. At the conclusion of vote-counting on Saturday night, ENC Chair (or a Designee) will be calling the people who won and lost. The ENC Chair could only focus on being present for the vote-counting rather than being at the voting tent during the day (McLean Day Saturday). Other board members could handle those oversight hours at Lewinsville Park.

League of Women Voters welcomes board member support. It's under their direction, but you can be a partner at the table with them. This was an innovation last year = involving board members throughout the process. It was constructive and they appreciated it! And it also helps to address questions from the public: "How does that go?" 'Oh – we saw it. We opened hundreds of envelopes of Absentee ballots.' But you must always clearly state that it's "under the direction of" the League of Women Voters. As long as you abide by that, the participation and observation of Governing Board members is welcome.

Clarification by Chair Gorka: I think it builds confidence to have us be able to say: "Yes, we were there."

A few years ago, there was no observation; it was a rather 'closed room' operation. But that led to a lot of confusion and wondering by the public. We were very pleased last year in the way it was appropriately involving board members. We don't have a problem with that and they [LWV] don't either. League of Women Voters are always open to being observed. It is a hand-counting, manual system of paper tally sheets. They have double-checks in their process (not electronic machines). It's always a hand-count; total = about 2,500 ballots. We provide advance information of candidate names appearing on the ballot; they prepare tally charts ahead of time. League of Women Voters has been doing vote-counting here for the last ten years. They are one of the only organizations that do what they do, and they are very proven. We've had a huge success with them – they are experienced and knowledgeable of MCC operations and our annual Governing Board election. Several agencies in Fairfax Co. have this kind of vote-counting (including Reston Community Center) and they use the League of

Women Voters; so, there is precedent. Much of Reston's election is online but they still have an in-person option which LWV handles.

ACTION: Holly Novak will put out a schedule to get people to sign-up for the various shifts. Chair Gorka will assist by calling board members to fill out the scheduled shift hours.

Comment by Ms. Novak: It's just an awareness that once we get into Spring 2025, Governing Board election becomes the heavy focus. But what makes me excited is the quality of our board members! You all are here because of this process! You are part of it – and you are the end result. That makes me very happy! Because of how we do this complex process, you all are gathering more voices and facilitating capable people to fill this volunteer role.

REVIEW OF PLEDGE **remarks by Executive Director May-Salazar*

The current Pledge that is affirmed annually by the newly-elected Governing Board is in need of updating. Several board members have commented over the years that the Pledge language needs to be refreshed. It is cumbersome and dated. It is also very cumbersome trying to recite it word-for-word. It has been suggested that, rather than board members saying every word, the pledge should be read aloud in phrases in a 'responsive' style, with board members saying: "I do" after each section. Committee members reviewed suggested revisions as well a response version that is proposed to be used for the swearing in of the new governing board each June.

We propose a careful revision to a new, updated Pledge, for consideration by the entire current Governing Board. The revised version should be ready for the newly-elected 2025-2026 Governing Board to affirm at their oath ceremony on June 4, 2025.

McLean Community Center

2024-2025 Governing Board Members Annual Pledge (showing mark ups)

As an MCC Governing Board Member, I Pledge to:

- Support the mission of the McLean Community Center
~~The McLean Community Center:~~ to provides access to inspirational arts, cultural experiences, learning opportunities, civic engagement and recreational activities; supports community organizations, and; offers facilities for all MCC tax district residents.
- ~~Comply with the Code of Conduct.~~
- Support the executive director in his/her executive role.
- Respect and support the MOU, Policies, Operations, and Board decisions.
- Conduct myself in a spirit of collegiality and respect for the collective decisions of the Board and subordinate my personal preferences to the best interests of the MCC.
- Honor confidentiality regarding discussions, comments, and deliberations.
- Comply with all applicable laws. ~~Comply with laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, including the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act as it applies to the Governing Board.~~
- Exercise the above responsibilities at all times in a reasonable and prudent manner.

Edits were made for clarity and to remove duplicative or unnecessary item. For example, The Code of Conduct is one of many policies that are included further down in the pledge. "Comply with all applicable laws" is all encompassing and supersedes specific reference to Virginia law.

We felt it important to retain the section about "the spirit of collegiality" as it encompasses the spirit of how MCC wants to operate. There was further discussion of the need for the later part of that bullet, particularly the reference to "collective" decisions and the "subordination of personal preferences". Decisions made by the Governing Board are by their very nature "collective" so that does not need to be said. Once individual viewpoints

are heard and discussed, and a decision is made, that decision is respected by the full Governing Board. It was determined that the statement would retain its intention if this bullet was further reduced to:

- **Conduct myself in a spirit of collegiality and respect for the decisions of the Board and to the best interests of the MCC.**

Once approved, this pledge will also be written in a responsive format led by the Dranesville District Supervisor and responded to in sections by the Governing Board with “I do”. This will be provided in writing to all Governing Board members so that the swearing in process will be seamless.

There were no further suggestions. Executive Director May-Salazar feels these are minimal changes that streamline the pledge and process of the swearing in.

Once approved, this new official pledge will be included in the Candidate packet – so that people will know what they will be adhering to if they decide to run for the MCC Governing Board. We want to encourage folks who want to conduct themselves in a spirit of collegiality! This is why we have discussed these pledge revisions in this ENC meeting.

NEXT STEPS: Executive Director May-Salazar will make the recommended changes and take it to the Executive Committee and we can bring it to the board for a vote.

OLD /NEW BUSINESS

Chair Gorka opened the floor for any other topics to consider this evening. Nothing was mentioned as a further topic for discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Gorka expressed appreciation for positive conversational dialog in this very efficient discussion. She thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Holly Novak - Executive Assistant