2026 - 2027 MCC Governing Board
Elections & Nominations Committee
October 14, 2026 – 5:30 p.m.
MINUTES

Committee Members Present:	*in-person:* Pascale Siegel, Chair; Doug Jeffery; Bryn Smith
Committee Members Absent:	Liz Lawson
Other Board Members Present:	Michael Solomon; Ron Keesing
MCC Staff Present:	Betsy May-Salazar, Executive Director; Holly Novak, Executive Assistant; Jonathan Melendez, Deputy Director; Matt Hockensmith, Comptroller; Jessica Wu, Director of Marketing & Communications
Guests:	None

CONVENE MEETING

Chair Pascale Siegel convened a meeting of Elections & Nominations Committee of the Governing Board of the McLean Community Center on October 14, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was open to the public attending in-person. No changes were requested to the Agenda; it was adopted by acclamation. A courtesy announcement was made about the meeting being audio-recorded for purposes of Minutes.

REFLECTIONS ON 2026 ELECTION EXPERIENCE; SUGGESTIONS FOR 2027 ELECTION

Reflecting back on the experience of the 2026 election offered an opportunity to think about possible improvements or changes to recommend for 2027 Governing Board election. Bryn Smith was encouraged to share her perspective from the teens' experience. Several suggestions were expressed:

1. Request for a more explicit definition of tax district boundaries and a crisp, modern map of the tax district – visible on MCC website.
2. Language explaining the voting process was confusing and hard to summarize on a postcard or campaign flier. Request re-writing this language to be easy to explain to voters.
3. Acknowledgement of MCC policy does not permit use of MCC logo for candidate campaign materials. Request to clarify what images are appropriate to use, (if include building with logo on side, etc.) An option is for MCC to provide a set of 3-4 pictures for all candidates to use in campaigning.
4. Yard signs – need clear rules. Though this election is not governed by the Virginia electoral code, yard signs are free speech – protected constitutionally. Anyone seen tampering with yard signs should face repercussions.
5. Develop opportunities for 'meet-and-greets' in front of stores. MCC could work with local retail stores for Gov. Board candidates to have permission to campaign there so the opportunity is open to all and not dependent on an individual's personal connections.
6. Expand the candidate statements – a short blurb is hard to distinguish yourself from someone else. Suggest having a Q & A format (2-3 questions) for candidates to differentiate and explain their positions (similar to Reston CC).
7. Clarify MCC policy to not tag candidates' profiles on social media; could create more buzz about the election.
8. Election Day (McLean Day): explain respective focus on teens/adults. Is everyone allowed to vote on both days? *Clarification by Executive Director Betsy May-Salazar:* We've only added voting on Friday night in the past two years based on suggestion from youth board members. Logistics: now teen candidates are featured on Friday night; adult candidates featured on Saturday (adults don't get much traffic on Friday night and youth don't get much traffic on Saturday). Bryn confirmed that Friday night is good for youth candidates. Teens are the biggest crowd at Friday Night Carnival Rides – more so than on Saturday. **The League of Women Voters requires that voting for adults <u>and</u> youth must be available on <u>both</u> Friday and Saturday.** Having a separate day for *featuring* teen and adult

campaigns is ideal because if adult and youth are at candidate tents simultaneously, the presence of adults can obscure the fact that there is also a teen election going on. Space capacity for all of the candidates is also an issue and dividing the two campaigns helps. Some people were confused last year that there was also a youth election going on.

This aspect is complex (different views were expressed in this discussion):
Comment by Board Chair Ron Keesing: Adult campaigning is not supposed to happen on Friday night at Lewinsville Park - only youth. Yet, there is some concern that the adult candidates were on premises too. To have both adults and youth able to vote, but not able to campaign on the respective Friday night/Saturday is counter-intuitive.
Another board member sees the opposite view: Having adult candidates present also may inhibit the intent of Friday night being to highlight the teen candidates. Chair Siegel likewise expressed support about keeping teen campaigning designated on Friday night – to facilitate teens relating to teens.

ACTION: We can look at this further; however, it's a matter of total space necessary for all the tents that would be required for adult and youth candidates.

ACTION: We've also thought about having one large tent with tables where you can come in and talk to all the candidates who are present in one place.

*There was hesitation about mixing all candidates together in one tent space.

Summary: Clarify that both adults and youth are able to vote in person on both Friday and Saturday of McLean Day.

9. Clarify on a map of McLean Day about where to campaign and a broader expanse to place candidate signs beginning at the entrance area to Lewinsville Park. Ask the county if political candidates (and our candidates) may have permission to campaign all the way from the roadside entrance to Lewinsville Park and on down the road into the candidate tents.

10. Allow candidates to campaign within the festival event – actually inside Lewinsville Park.
Clarification by Executive Director May-Salazar: The reason campaigning is limited to the booth/tent is because that roadway is the main entrance into McLean Day and the majority of the people are *NOT* coming for the election. In past years when candidates campaigned outside of their booths event attendees got upset. It's a balance. It's designed to be limited to your campaign table; sign placement follows the same rules – no signage inside the park (a limit). It is a balance of everything we are trying to offer to the public at this one event (McLean Day festival).
Clarification by Comptroller Hockensmith: In my previous role at MCC, I was in charge of McLean Day preparations. We received complaints from people about being harassed and approached too much by candidates. A policy of McLean Day (as a permitted event): Fairfax GOP, Democrats, all elected officers are restricted to the same rules.

11. Clarify rules about who you can bring to help: appropriate number of people. People were bringing friends, parents, siblings to help out with their campaign. Those additional people representing a candidate must receive clear guidance about where they may campaign; they are subject to the same rules.

Clarification by Executive Director May-Salazar: We will make appropriate adjustments for 2027 election: 1. we will create stricter criteria to limit number of additional support individuals and they must understand and agree to rules of campaigning. 2. For 2027 we will create two separate orientations for adult and youth candidates. Details will be thoroughly explained: campaign protocols, perception, appropriate giveaways; no quid pro quo; limiting number of people in the candidate tent, etc.

12. Teens lack experience in campaigning. The youth board member pointed out that before the 2026 Gov. Board election she had never done any other campaigning and lacked relevant experience in campaigns. Youth candidates may not understand proper campaign etiquette.

13. More explanation in Candidate Orientation about what is expected of board members once they are elected. After being sworn-in, there should be transition training for the entire board to gain understanding about MCC Governing Board's history and the annual budget process.

ADVANCE FOR 2027 ELECTION
Key Dates for each phase of the 2027 Governing Board Election are being developed in coordination with MCC's programming calendar of events occurring in Q1 and Q2. **2027 Key Dates will be shared at Elections & Nominations Committee meeting on December 9.**

THOUGHTS ON IMPROVING PUBLIC COMMUNICATION DURING CANDIDATE PHASE

GOAL: Implementing continuous improvement

Every year we try to enhance public communication about the MCC Governing Board election - envisioning new, more effective opportunities for adult and youth candidates to interact with the public during their campaigning. Jessica Wu and the PIO team will continue many successful, well-honed publicity efforts: candidate appearances at MCC events; MCC website and social media messaging. These have yielded successful communication outcomes.

Some proposed adjustments to enhance public communication about 2027 Governing Board Election include:

* individual candidate videos (MCC will coordinate/arrange) either to be filmed individually and shared on website, or at a designated public forum, then shared on website.

Background: Reston Community Center's election process is very different, but they do have a video-taped public forum where people speak about their candidacy. We attempted having candidates speak this past year at our April Governing Board meeting. It was not sufficiently attended by the public and we don't intend to repeat. Going forward, we propose creating individual candidates videos shared on our website. We could plan the videos for two weeks out from Candidate Orientation so they feel comfortable doing a video.

*We can revisit the option of offering an event for candidate presentations, though it has never been successful. Our Spring Community Parking Lot Sale has worked out best for candidate visibility; it is well-attended.

Clarification by Executive Director May-Salazar: We don't allow campaigning inside MCC facility because it is a government building (Fairfax County). Also, people are here for other reasons such as waiting for classes – so it's too much to constantly have people approaching them about campaigning. **All campaigning must take place elsewhere – *NOT* at MCC events… and *NOT* on MCC grounds.**

* simple one-page flier for candidates to distribute in the community: ways to vote; election process timing.

One pager: We have several different collateral explaining ways to vote. A large pictorial poster is visible in our lobby throughout the voting cycle -with all candidates' pictures and bio profiles. It is also in the form of a printed one-pager showing all the candidates. We can create a one-page flier for candidates to use but not personalized for every candidate; it must be more generic. MCC has many ways to market the candidates on several platforms. **The entire range of promotional efforts planned for 2027 election will be shared at 12/9 ENC meeting.**

RECOMMENDED CHANGE TO ENC POLICIES & PROCEDURES **remarks by Executive Director Betsy May-Salazar*

Every year we review our Election Policies & Procedures to make sure this document reflects how we are operating and if anything should be changed or revised. In the election of executive committee officers this year, we discovered language that needs revision. The intention is that the sitting board is considered first for the respective officer positions (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary). If we don't have enough candidates, the policy is for the ENC Chair to reach out to all board members and the newly-elected people to see if they are interested in running for those positions. There is a hard date (names must be announced 6 days before June meeting) so candidates cannot submit their name at the June meeting when the vote is taking place.

There is a strong suggestion that candidates for officer positions have experience on the board for one year – this is very valuable. Within the 3-year term there is opportunity to rise to the executive committee officer positions. Other options for leadership also exist for all board members – committee chairs. Everyone submits their preferences for committees; the Board Chair and Executive Director develop the composition of the committees.

Another useful detail: clarify that you may put yourself forward for multiple officer positions. This will help ensure having more than one person available for each position. It's OK to submit your name for all four officer positions.

Clarification by Executive Director May-Salazar about the process:

Goal: The April meeting includes a "Call for Officers." The current board is required to announce in the May meeting that they want to run for an officer position – their personal interest statement is read aloud in that meeting. Newly elected board members (not yet sworn in) are invited to attend the May meeting. Following the May meeting, if there is still a need, the ENC chair reaches out to all board members (including those newly elected) for the vacant officer positions. A published list is communicated to all board members six days before the June meeting when the officer election takes place.

Clarification by a board member: Basically, the existing board has a right they are waiving – if a position is still open in May, then it is open to everyone – but the current board has the right of first refusal.

ACTION: Executive Director May-Salazar will make another effort at further revision to share at December 9 ENC meeting.

NEXT STEPS: The ENC Policies & Procedures will need to be revised and finalized by a vote of this committee and then forwarded to the full board for approval.

ONLINE VOTING – INTEREST; FEASIBILITY

Interest has been expressed about online voting as a way to facilitate increased public participation in the MCC Governing Board election. Chair Siegel opened a discussion about whether to study this method as an option?

DISCUSSION:

*There are definite concerns out of the gate – How is it audited? How is it controlled? We would have concerns about people collecting User ID's and scamming the voting process.

*There is an 'old-timey-ness' about paper ballots – it deliberately requires personal interaction with the MCC. Benefit: it encourages public engagement with MCC through our current traditional method of in-person voting.

*Reston Community Center uses an online voting method. There is one vote per household (based on address/tax I.D.). Reston CC also now uses ranked-choice voting.

Background about Reston Community Center online election process:

In order to institute online voting, our understanding is that Reston CC had to eliminate youth board members. Their annual election allows only one vote per household. A legitimate online voting system is managed by a contract vendor with a code assigned for each address in the Reston tax district. Each household votes online using that unique code. The League of Women Voters also works with Reston CC to rectify any hand-submitted ballots.

*Could we continue a traditional voting process for youth and have a separate online voting process for adults?

*Online voting potentially may increase overall participation in the election. There are 30,000+ taxpayers in MCC's tax district; yet our MCC Governing Board elections are decided by 500-1000 voters. If there is a way to improve participation, we should explore other methods. We would be interested to know how the voting patterns changed for Reston (request for data). Inquire > Did Reston reach more total households through online voting?

*Online voting works against the goal of community engagement if people vote but never come here. It feels like the vibe is different than the intention. We require people to come here and their vote is valid. Yet, if a person votes online but never comes here, that is still a legitimate voter even if they pay taxes but never come here.

Summary: Chair Siegel's view is that online voting is an option used in other elections and we should explore to see if it's feasible.

Topics for a future ENC meeting:

*Explain: Why the one-week black-out period between the conclusion of Early Voting and McLean Day?

*Tent placement as you walk into McLean Day: People tend to have perceptions of which is the 'good' tent side. Maybe have only one side of the street with all the tents. Or one big tent with all candidates present in proximity – which may create tension. Perhaps look at past election results in relation to where the respective candidates were positioned in those previous years.

Clarification by Executive Betsy May-Salazar: We always think through carefully about the candidate tent placement keeping in mind the tight space limitations in that area of Lewinsville Park entrance.

*When space allows for one tent per candidate the tents are assigned randomly. When tents are shared, due to number of candidates running, more thought is put into who is paired. If we are aware that people are running together as a platform, we give thought to pairing them in a candidate tent.

* It's not a political election and this board was not this way historically – now it is frequently a case of individuals running as a small group. MCC's role is to publicize ALL candidates equally. We do not recognize or promote any platforms. Very strong individual candidates choose to run for all the right reasons while not understanding that platforms exist and then they don't get enough votes because they are not part of a platform. No party affiliation is sanctioned in our election process, yet political labels continue to be thrown around.

*Maintain vigilance about absolute limit to the number of absentee ballots that can be requested per household. There was concern last year about certain households requesting a high number of mail-in ballots.

*There is current language regarding supporting existing Governing Board policies which you must agree to if elected. This is a typical 'legacy' aspect; however, it is valid for a person to run for the Governing Board if they don't like the direction of the Strategic Plan, or specific MCC policies. It's important to adjust such language in the Candidate Orientation and Candidate Packet.
Clarification by Executive Director May-Salazar: New board members must agree to adhere to existing MCC policies determined by the Governing Board. However, once elected to the board, a person can then work to try to change policy through the committee and board process.

*Consider having current board host a pre-candidate meeting to explain to interested people how to run for the MCC Governing Board. Offer a candidate recruitment orientation about the process – how to collect signatures and deciding whether or not to run. Folks typically have a lot of questions before proceeding to collect signatures.

*Role of outgoing board members contributing to an effective transition for the newly elected board. This is very important; Chair Ron Keesing and Executive Director Betsy May-Salazar have conferred about this. The transition process should include changing the June meeting to include articulating all takeaways and accomplishments, priorities, and unfinished work of the outgoing board and to facilitate expanded training for the new board.

OLD /NEW BUSINESS
Chair Siegel appreciated the thoughtful discussion and feedback contributed by everyone. She opened the floor for any other business matters to be considered this evening. Nothing was mentioned as a further topic for discussion.

ADJOURNMENT
With all business matters concluded, Chair Siegel thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Holly Novak - Executive Assistant