



NORTHAMPTON MASSACHUSETTS RANKED CHOICE VOTING COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 12/16/2021

Meeting Time: 4:00pm

Meeting Minutes

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: At 4:02 pm Chair Boulrice called the meeting to order. Present at the meeting were: Robert Boulrice, Chair; Councilor Bill Dwight; and members Catherine Kay and Mark Ventola. Attorney Seewald was also present. Member John Crowley arrived at 4:30 pm. The meeting was held via teleconference and was audio and video recorded. All votes of the committee were done by a roll call vote.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

3. APPROVE MINUTES OF NOV. 17, 2021 MEETING: A motion to approve the meeting minutes was made by Councilor Dwight and seconded by Mark Ventola. The minutes were approved on a roll call vote of 4 Yes (Boulrice, Dwight, Ventola, Kay), 0 No, 1 Absent (Crowley).

4. 200 Ballot Mock Election

Objective: Conduct a mock election using 200 ballots with various RCV Profile Settings

The committee evaluated the differences in the outcomes of various races based on different profile settings as follows:

1. A multi-seat race using IRV vs. STV options;
2. A multi-seat race with "Skip Overvoted Rankings" box Checked vs. Not Checked; Question: is it possible to mark the ballots in such a way that it will influence the outcome of an election if the box is checked or not checked?
3. A multi-seat election where there are three candidates on the ballot and two strong write-ins. What is the outcome if the box "Exclude Unresolved Write-ins" is checked vs. not checked.

In addition to using the IRV & the STV methods, the committee would like to understand the outcome of this mock election using majoritarian and proportional methods.

A. Mock Election Results

The Chair noted that no threshold was calculated when looking at the STV method. Voter Choice MA representative Greg Dennis pointed out that the results of the STV method did not include surplus transfer votes because the fixed precision decimals for the tabulation options was set to “0”. In order for the transfer of surplus votes to take place, the tabulation option needed to be set to a number greater than “0”, and he suggested at least “5” or “6”. Only then, he believes, would the threshold be calculated.

It was unclear what method was used to break a tie. When looking at IRV vs. STV, the following tabulation options were selected:

Previous rounds evaluation method	<i>Backwards from previous round</i>
Elimination type	<i>Single</i>

In Round 2, Bluto the bulldog is eliminated because the candidate “had the least amount of votes” however, in the previous round, Bluto and Dixie had the same number of votes. The committee speculated that a tie-breaker was chosen at random (not allowed under Massachusetts law) and this exercise points out the need to define how ties will be broken during an election.

If setting the option, “declare winners by threshold” to “true”, as soon as a candidate crosses the threshold, they are “elected” and no more rounds are done. If set to “false”, the rounds will continue until all candidates are exhausted. It doesn’t change the winner; however, choosing “false” will show at what level of certainty the winner is elected.

Chair Boulrice explained that in order for the group to understand the entire process, members need to see how votes are transferred at each step. Given that so many pages need to be in front of the members, he wondered if it would be worthwhile to have an in-person meeting.

Greg Dennis shared a mock RCV election that was also tabulated by LHS Associates.

Town Council	<i>3 Winner election</i>
School Winner	<i>2 Winner election</i>
Library Trustee	<i>Single Seat election</i>

STV election with tabulation option set to “5”. What was observed was that the threshold was established as 16.00000 (# of ballots divided by [number of seats +1]) or $60/4 = 15 + (1 \text{ more to win}) = 16$

Fractional votes are transferred once a candidate reaches the threshold value. In each round the candidates are evaluated against the threshold. If a candidate reaches

threshold, the number of votes above the threshold are transferred at a fractional level. In the next round, if no candidate reaches threshold, then the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated and those votes are redistributed to the remaining candidates at a whole vote level. This process continues until all of the seats are filled.

If Majoritarian method is used, each seat is filled as if an individual IRV single seat race. Profile settings will be different. In each round the lowest vote getter is dropped, until there is one candidate in the final round. To determine the second seat results, the first seat winner votes are eliminated, and the voter's second choice is transferred in its entirety.

To the question about whether the Majoritarian method was of interest to the group, Councilor Dwight noted that this method would be easier to explain to voters; member Kay stated that she is skeptical of surplus transfer of voters to the extent that it encourages running slates of candidates, and the predetermining a certain proportional outcome is concerning to her. Member Crowley states under the majoritarian method, if he is able to vote for the most popular candidate, then during the second seat determination, his second choice will be assigned to a candidate at the whole vote level vs. at the fractional vote level. His votes will have more weight under the majoritarian method.

5. NEW BUSINESS – None

6. FUTURE MEETING DATE(S): The committee discussed an in-person meeting. The plan will be a hybrid meeting so that the public can participate remotely, while the committee can meet in person. The next meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2022 @ 4:00 pm.

7. ADJOURN: At 5:10 pm Councilor Dwight moved to adjourn the meeting; Catherine Kay seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 5 Yes (Dwight, Kay, Ventola, Crowley, Boulrice), 0 No.

For Questions, please contact City Clerk Pamela L. Powers @ (413) 587-1223