

## Tab 6

# Adding Electronic Voting as an Option for LHCC Elections

April 27, 2021

### ISSUE:

The Nominating Committee would like to pursue adding electronic voting as an optional method of Absentee voting in LHCC elections. The existing options of voting by paper ballot (either absentee or in person) would still be available for members who prefer to vote that way. But electronic voting would offer a very convenient, cost-effective, and secure method of voting for those who wish to utilize it. We would also like to offer members the option of receiving their election materials electronically. Of course, anyone who prefers to vote by paper absentee ballot, would need to have their ballot mailed to them. But just the absentee ballot and its envelopes would be much cheaper than the full Election package.

### BACKGROUND:

House bill 1816, signed into law by Governor Northam on 2/24/2021, amends the Virginia Property Owners' Association Act to permit virtual meetings, electronic voting, and electronic communication on a permanent basis unless they are expressly prohibited by the Association's governing documents. Our Bylaws do not expressly prohibit any of these. The law takes effect on 7/1/2021. Therefore, we would like to add electronic voting as an option for our 2021 Board Election in October.

### ADVANTAGES:

1. **Convenience** - Electronic voting allows a voter to cast their vote at any time, from anywhere. All a voter needs to vote is a notice containing their voting credentials, a device that can connect to the internet, and an internet connection.
2. **Efficiency** – Traditional paper-based voting is very labor intensive. Our office staff spend many hours each year assembling the paper packages that are currently mailed to each property owner prior to the Annual Meeting and Election. Each package must contain the meeting notice, the absentee ballot, the absentee ballot envelope, the absentee ballot mailing envelope, voting instructions, candidate resumes, explanation of any proposed bylaw changes and any other necessary information. All of this must be printed, assembled into 1000+ sets, put into 1000+ envelopes, and mailed out to the community. Once the ballots are returned, either by mail or in person at the Annual Meeting, they must be opened and tallied by hand. It must also be manually verified that everyone who votes is eligible to do so. Allowing people to receive their Election materials electronically and employing electronic voting would greatly reduce this labor.
3. **Cost Savings** – The cost of administering electronic communication and voting are considerably less than the labor, printing, and mailing costs of paper ballots and their accompanying material. For example, electronic voting for up to 1,000 people would be around \$100 per election. In addition, if enough people choose to vote electronically going forward, we may no longer require the voting administrator whom we pay about \$1800 each year. (We would want the vote administrator for at least the first couple of years of electronic voting to be sure all controls are acceptable.)
4. **Election Integrity** – Electronic voting helps protect elections from a major risk to their integrity: human error. Ballots can get lost, mistakes can be made while calculating results, and humans can be influenced to tamper with an election. Software can protect the electronic voting process by ensuring that each voter

is eligible and limited to the proper number of votes, verifying that the number of candidates selected doesn't exceed the maximum allowed, and displaying results that can be manually calculated to verify the computer calculation. Every detail is verifiable, and election integrity is maintained. We assume that many of our members would choose electronic voting if given the option. This would greatly reduce the number of paper ballots and the risks associated with them.

5. **Timely Communication** – We've all seen delivery by the Postal Service take much longer and be less reliable in the last year or so. Last year, some members hadn't received their election materials prior to the Candidates Forum. Therefore, those people didn't know as much about the candidates as they would have liked to going into the Forum. Sending the materials electronically would allow for timely delivery without being at the mercy of the Postal Service.
6. **Environmental** – Electronic voting and communication would greatly reduce the amount of paper used.
7. **Member participation** – Electronic voting is faster and easier than voting by absentee paper ballot. We would also be able to send email reminders to voters who requested electronic voting but have not voted yet. Therefore, having it as an option could increase member participation in our elections.

#### **DISADVANTAGES:**

Because people will still have the option to vote by paper ballot either in person or absentee, we do not see any disadvantages to adding electronic voting as an absentee option for future elections. Some efficiency and cost savings can be realized even if only a few members opt for electronic voting. If many choose it, the savings will be considerable!

#### **SUMMARY:**

It would be beneficial for many reasons to add electronic voting and electronic communications as options for our elections. The Nominating Committee is happy to address any questions or concerns that Board members may have. We can also set up a dummy election so Board members and other interested parties can see exactly what the electronic voting experience would be like. If approved by the Board, we will recommend specific updates to PRP 16 to document the electronic voting procedures we will use. We will submit our recommendations as a tab for the next Board meeting.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Board should vote to proceed with exploring electronic voting and electronic communications as options for the 2021 election. This will allow the Nominating Committee to proceed with software evaluation, demonstrations, development of specific procedures, and submitting suggested revisions to PRP 16.

#### **PROPOSED MOTION/ACTION:**

Move that the LHCC Board approve exploring electronic voting and electronic communications as options for the 2021 election.

#### **SPONSOR:**

The LHCC Nominating Committee  
Betka Hardgrave, Board Liaison