



Mr. Eli Mattioli
Chair, Procedure Committee
50 Drake Rd.
Scarsdale, NY 10583

April 18, 2014

Dear Mr. Mattioli:

The League of Women Voters of Scarsdale (the League) would like to thank BK Munguia and Sara Werder, members of the Procedure Committee (“PC”), for attending our general membership meeting on December 9, 2013 to review the Citizens Nominating Committee (“CNC”) election that was held on Wednesday, November 13, 2013, and thank you and Howard Nadel for providing answers to the questions we submitted. The League commends you and the Vice Chair of the PC for your leadership and commitment to Scarsdale’s nonpartisan Village election system. We note the following efforts by the PC during the 2013 CNC election:

- Conference calling to try to increase involvement of PC members;
- Continued use of the mail-in ballot option to improve voter turnout;
- Continued efforts to fund PC expenses through public contributions.

After the information meeting, the League held a consensus meeting of its members to discuss the CNC election and to review its prior positions pertaining to the village election system.

Recommendations

The League highlights the following recommendations. Detailed comments and observations about the CNC election are included in the body of this letter.

- The League urges the PC to continue to address its internal membership participation issues. We note our concern that no representatives of Scarsdale Neighborhood Association Presidents (SNAP) were designated to participate on the PC this year as provided in the Non-Partisan Resolution (“Resolution”) despite your efforts to obtain SNAP representatives.
- We suggest that the PC begin recruiting earlier in the process, including at the last CNC meeting of the year to encourage retiring CNC members to begin identifying potential candidates.
- We urge the PC to continue to develop strategies to ensure that two candidates for each open position in each district are obtained.

- The League recommends that the PC continue to evaluate and improve the use of mail-in ballots.

The League reiterates two prior positions originally put forward in its 2011 “Statement Concerning Scarsdale’s Nonpartisan System For the Selection of Candidates for Village Office”:

1. **The League recommends that the PC propose an amendment to the Non-Partisan Resolution providing that the CNC elect the Chair and Vice-Chair of the following year’s CNC from the outgoing class of the voting members in order to ensure a more democratic structure.** Currently the President and the First Vice President of the Forum serve as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the CNC. The Forum is a civic organization whose leadership is elected by its membership and not by the community at large. Although the Chair and Vice-Chair are non-voting members they are in leadership positions and can influence the CNC on its operations and selection of candidates. The League believes that it would be more democratic for the CNC to elect its own leadership.
2. **The League recommends that the PC propose an amendment to the Resolution to formally codify how the PC and the CNC fund their expenses.**

Detailed Comments and Recommendations

Candidates and the Slate

Identifying candidates to run for the CNC appears to have been particularly difficult as a result of several factors, including the lack of assistance from some of the retired members of the CNC and the absence of SNAP representatives as required by the Resolution. We also understand that the PC’s recruiting efforts did not begin until September. This, in combination with the fact that the Administrative Committee began its recruiting efforts early for candidates for the School Board Nominating Committee, further complicated the PC’s ability to obtain candidates to run for the CNC by the deadline established by the Resolution, September 30. Because the PC did not have the requisite number of candidates by the deadline, the PC was required to utilize the appointment process, as authorized by the Resolution, to fill the slate. Nonetheless, two out of the five districts (Edgewood¹ and Quaker Ridge) did not have two candidates for each open slot.

We recommend that you encourage all members of the PC to get involved in the recruiting process. We urge the PC to impress upon CNC members completing their last year on the CNC at their final meeting the importance of their participation on the PC, including their timely assistance in identifying potential candidates. In addition, the League recommends that the PC begin identifying and contacting potential candidates in the summer rather than waiting until September. We believe outreach to the community and enlisting assistance from community organizations will be helpful to a successful recruiting effort.

¹ We understand that Edgewood was as a result of a last minute withdrawal after the appointment deadline.

Notice to Vote Brochure

The Brochure contained an explanation of the nonpartisan system, candidate bios, the mail-in ballot and instructions on its use, and appeals for financial support. We suggest the PC consider a more efficient use of space to decrease printing costs.

Voting and Mail-in Ballots

The League notes that voter turnout continues to be an issue for the CNC election. This year a total of 355 votes were cast, with mail-in ballots comprising 46% of the vote, compared to a total of 553 votes cast (mail-in ballots comprised 42.3% of the vote) last year when the election was held days after Hurricane Sandy. The League recommends the PC continue to publicize and encourage the use of the mail-in ballot. The League suggests the PC consider printing the mail-in ballot in the local newspaper and include a link to the mail-in ballot on electronic media sites.

We are pleased to learn that the PC experienced fewer issues in connection with the validity of mail-in ballots and look forward to the PC continuing its efforts to educate the community on the use of mail-in ballots.

Website

The League understands that the PC may have been undergoing transition regarding administration of the website. We hope that going forward the PC will be able to ensure that a member will be tasked with maintaining and updating the website. The League believes that the website has been, and when updated can continue to be, a critical tool that the community can use to learn about the nonpartisan system, the PC and the CNC, and thereby promote participation by the public in the nonpartisan system and strengthen voter turnout.

Conclusion

The League appreciates the efforts of the Chair and Vice-Chair and each PC member in carrying out their duties this year. The League hopes that the PC will view this letter as an aid to further discussion about how to improve Scarsdale's village election system.

Sincerely,

Carolyn B. Stevens
Chair, Village Election System
League of Women Voters of Scarsdale

Susie Rush
President
League of Women Voters of
Scarsdale

cc: Howard Nadel, Vice Chair