Oak Creek Club Homeowners Association

14505 Mary Bowie Parkway

Upper Marlboro MD, 20774

**Elections Committee Meeting Minutes (8th Meeting 2024)**

**Tuesday, October 1, 2024, @ 6:30 pm**

Pamela Rachal called the Elections Committee Meeting to order at 6:31 pm (ET).

**Committee Members in Attendance:**

* Jessica Hill – HOA Board Secretary, Committee Member
* Pamela Rachal – Chair
* Yolanda Ricks – Secretary

**Residents in Attendance:**

● Suzann King ● Danielle Telesford ● Doris Tucker ● Doreen Adair

● Cheryl Hawkins ● Julian Brown ● Martine Payton ● Artisha Polk

● Sheila Lebrun-James ● Rheiya Florence ● Dwight Ward ● Keith Pierce

● Steven Ricks ● Aaron White

**Camp Representative:**

* Not present.

**Old Business:**

* + - 1. **Approval of meeting minutes for September 16, 2024:**
	+ Yolanda Ricks made a motion to request another approval of the 9/16/24, meeting minutes, which were approved via email by all Elections Committee members on 9/18/24. Jessica Hill seconded. All Committee members were in favor and the **Motion to approve the September 16, 2024, meeting minutes passed unanimously.**

**New Business:**

1. **Elections and Vote Count Process Draft:**
	* Pam Rachal went over the Elections and Vote Count Process, providing a share screen on Zoom of the draft document. Items discussed included what happens 60 days before the Annual Meeting of homeowners (list of homeowners in good standing is generated from Ciranet). This list is used to set up the Vote Now HOA database for electronic voting. This list is also used to ensure that paper ballots are compliant. The Annual Meeting Notice was discussed. Counting the Ballots was discussed including that only votes submitted prior to the close of the election are counted. Paper ballots are stored in a lockbox until ballots are counted and paper ballots compared to electronic ballots to ensure one vote per household (unless a homeowner owns more than one property). Ballots are counted by at least one member of the Elections Committee, a homeowner in good standing and a representative of the HOA Management Company. Pam Rachal noted that the Annual Meeting Notice requires that the return envelope have the names and addresses of the resident. Also, Ms. Rachal indicated for next year we should ensure that paper ballots have a place for names and addresses for residents. Ms. Rachal also indicated that these recommended changes would take care of those residents with multiple Oak Creek properties. Announcing the Election results was discussed to include informing residents via all platforms (email, text, Facebook).
		+ 1. **Discussion of the first Organizational Meeting after Announcement of winners of the Board Election.**
		+ Jessica Hill asked whether this meeting will be a regular annual meeting where officers are elected? Ms. Hill indicate that in October of 2023 there was no documentation of how to break a tie for any particular HOA Board position. Per Ms. Hill, it was decided that the person with the higher vote count would win. Ms. Hill indicated that this was an ad hoc process, and she had questions, going forward, regarding whether the process be operationalized and documented for future elections. Pam Rachal indicated that this may be a bit outside of the purview of the Elections Committee. However, Pam Rachal indicated we should document this issue and obtain an official position from the HOA Board/Legal Counsel.

**Resident Forum:**

**Martine Payton** – Discussed the Residents’ involvement volunteering to count ballots: three residents would audit all the paper ballots at the Oak Creek Swim and Tennis Clubhouse. CAMP would have a laptop to check names and addresses of residents who voted by paper ballot to ensure they were in good standing and did not also vote electronically. Ms. Payton was not in favor of posting election result totals because it may be discouraging to candidates. Also, Payton was in favor of issuing totals by candidate number (without candidate names). Ms. Payton was shocked at the low percentage of voter turnout. Pam Rachal recalled that in 2020, she counted ballots with Tamika and no other resident assistance.

**Suzann King** – Commented that we need to clarify that there is only one voting deadline for paper and electronic ballots. Pam Rachal indicated that the VOTE HOA NOW platform had to be corrected by CAMP this year because the electronic voting was set to end on September 30, 2024, in the system and Elections was told this could not be altered to correct the date to October 4, 2024, when the date actually could be corrected, and in fact was corrected after checking with the Vote HOA Now representative. Pam Rachal explained that she thought that the electronic ballot controls when both electronic and paper ballots are received from the same property address for counting.

**Artisha Polk** – stated that she is impressed with the Elections Committee and appreciated the link to the recorded Candidate Forum. Ms. Polk thanked Elections for our process, and she indicated that she likes policy and is in favor of full disclosure for voting and wants full transparency.

**Julian Brown** – Thanked the Elections Committee for its work and stated that he was encouraged to run for the HOA Board again because he was told he was a close 3rd place last time. Mr. Brown indicated we may want to have some more formal qualifications for the HOA Board. Pam Rachal indicated that the Elections Committee rewrote the Candidate Form to elicit more information on qualifications. Pam Rachal said that our Committee is focusing on documenting the Elections process. Jessica Hill noted that while the Committee thought that Candidate Bios were attached to the Electronic Voting System, and they were not, the Committee quickly collaborated with the HOA Management Office to ensure that there was a link to candidate information on the oakcreekclubhoa.com website.

**Danielle Telesford** – Indicated that she owns multiple homes in the community, and she received an electronic link for one home and not the other. However, each of her homes received a mail-in ballot. Ms. Telesford said that 10 people she knew did not know that there was an election and that she believes no meetings of the HOA should be held on a holiday (Example, the October 31, 2023, HOA Organizational Meeting).

**Dwight Ward** (HOA President) – Recommended to Management that paper ballots are dropped each day and date stamped each day and that CAMP keep a log to cross check. Then after 5 pm (ET) on the election voting cut-off, ballots don’t count. Mr. Ward indicated that the HOA Bylaws at Article 3 provides that no Class A owner with a delinquency of 60 days at the time of the meeting can have their vote count. Pam Rachal and Jessica Hill indicated that there is a disconnect between what we get for support from HOA Management with regard to logging and checking for residents in good standing.

**Suzann King** – Indicated that to add to the process, maybe 90 days before an election that residents update their information in Ciranet and that we get a legal interpretation. Ms. King also said that residents should be up to date on dues to be eligible to vote in an upcoming election.

**Keith Pierce** – Is the Elections Committee planning to run the Election and Vote Count Process document past the HOA Board’s legal counsel, in particular, how to handle delinquencies and voting, or checking that delinquencies are cured by the day of an Annual Meeting? Pam Rachal indicated that the election voting started on September 9, 2024. Jessica Hill indicated that we are trying to determine how CAMP prepares the delinquency list.

**New Business (continued):**

1. **Discussion of Upcoming Counting of Ballots, Monday, October 7, 2024:**
	* Pam Rachal indicated that she and Jessica Hill were not available to count ballots, but indicated that in past elections, two to three residents participated in counting the ballots. Yolanda Ricks indicated that the Committee had requested resident and HOA Management involvement for transparency and as of approximately 2 pm (ET) the Elections Committee was told by HOA Management that Elections would not receive the support that had been provided in past elections. Yolanda Ricks asked the HOA President, Dwight Ward, if he would reconsider his response to the Committee’s request for resident and CAMP support for ballot counting or provide a reason why this request was initially declined. Ms. Ricks emphasized that CAMP had control of the voting platform Vote HOA Now as well as Ciranet. **Mr. Ward indicated he had a question regarding Indemnification for the HOA Board’s counsel with regard to the volunteers.** Yolanda Ricks indicated her support for the Committee sending an email to the HOA Management to be forwarded to the HOA counsel on the issue and Mr. Ward indicated that we could move forward with resident volunteers and HOA Management support pending a response from the HOA Board counsel.
	* Pam Rachal moved that we accept the counting of ballots with three residents and HOA Management support and that the Elections Committee announce the results at the HOA Annual Meeting on Tuesday, October 8, 2024. Jessica Hill seconded. All were in favor. The Motion passed unanimously.
	* Yolanda Ricks made a motion to have the HOA Management forward an email drafted by the Elections Committee, to the HOA Counsel regarding indemnification of volunteers and addressing the voting status of residents who cure lack of good standing requirements by the date of the Annual Meeting. Pam Rachal seconded. All were in favor. The Motion passed unanimously.

**Tasks for CAMP:**

* + - 1. CAMP to post September 16, 2024, meeting minutes. Original request, Wednesday, September 18, 2024.
			2. CAMP to send out an email to obtain three resident volunteers for counting ballots on Monday, October 7, 2024.
			3. CAMP to forward to HOA Counsel Ray Via, a question from Board President Dwight Ward, regarding indemnification of volunteers to count ballots, and for the Elections Committee to announce the top three winners of the 2024 Oak Creek Board Election on Tuesday, October 8, 2024.

**Completed Tasks:**

* + - 1. The Committee prepared a draft of the Elections and Vote Count Process.
			2. The Elections Committee conducted the Candidate Forum and arranged for the HOA Management to record the meeting and send residents a link to the recording.

**Adjournment:**

Pamela Rachal adjourned the meeting at 8:37 pm (ET).

**Next Meeting:** TBD. Members will convene via email to set the next meeting date.