

Endorsement Meeting Debriefing

23 July 2009

Notes by Bill Schrier

Attending: Michael Taylor, Les Treall, Stephen Lamphear, Tim Nuse, Jeff Upthegrove, Jackie Dupras, Bill Schrier, Marcee Stone

Summary of the most significant Recommendations

(in the humble opinion of Bill Schrier)

- The rules stay in place for the September endorsement meeting (there is just not enough time to have the By-Laws Committee decide upon changes, publish them and get the membership to vote on the changes at the August meeting)
- Process:
 - Double the size of the Tally Committee for faster counting or counting two races at once.
 - Prepare ballot packages in advance. Different color paper for each race. Title of the race (and ballot #1, #2 or #3), space for signature and credential number pre-printed. Have a printer collate and bind them.
 - Continue to have written voting on the first ballot, to preserve anonymity.
- Amend the rules for 2010 and beyond:
 - Allow endorsements by 60% (rather than 2/3) of the members voting
 - Spoiled, illegal or blank ballots will NOT be included in the totals when calculating totals and percentages.
 - Second and third ballots to be a show of hands, unless a member asks for a written ballot (and, maybe, a majority of members by voice vote or show of hands authorizes it). Should speed up the meeting.
- By-Laws Committee is responsible for follow-up on all this

Interesting Ideas

(In the humble opinion of Bill Schrier – these are compiled from e-mail comments and elsewhere but were NOT discussed at the meeting. Since I wrote these notes, I decided to include them here.):

- On the first ballot in any race, allow members to vote for as many candidates as they wish. But only candidates who receive 50% or more of the vote total will advance to the next round. This eliminates the problem of having candidates with 30% to 35% of the vote getting a “dual endorsement”, and ends the “tyranny of the minority” with respect to our voting process. But it complicates tallying.
- On the second ballot, allow members to vote for any or all of the candidates who have received over 50% on the first round. All candidates with more than 60% or 67% of the vote are “endorsed”. If no candidate reaches that total, we have “no endorsement”.

Comments About "The Endorsement Rules"

- Intent of the new rules was to reduce the number of dual endorsements. Didn't work. But many many districts had a number of dual endorsements. Is this really a problem? We generally felt this is, indeed, an issue because it benefits the lesser-known candidate and it also dilutes our influence to the electorate.
- No candidate was endorsed with 35% of the vote, as some people have mentioned? Not really, since such candidates had to receive two-thirds in the third ballot which was the "dual" or "no" endorsement.
- What was wrong with the former rules?
 - Lots of people wanted written ballots so they didn't feel pressured when they voted in public. They want anonymity.
 - No one knew who all the candidates were in each race - a race would be considered at a meeting and no one necessarily knew it was coming up. This is not necessarily a problem with the rules but rather with implementation.

What went well

- Kudos to Stu Yarfitz who figured out how to determine which members were residents and eligible to vote, versus those who are non-resident members and ineligible to vote.
- People were interested, a lot of members attended, and they seemed to be engaged and have fun.
- Having a presentation screen up with information for the membership was a good idea and made it a lot easier for members to know what was going on.
- Length of speeches was not an issue, in that in almost every race there was simply just one speech "for" a candidate, and none opposing.
- Overall it was a pretty good job - we gave it a grade of "B". Oh, wait, maybe that was the grade which snow removal got last winter. (Trying to be funny, and seeing who actually is reading these notes!)

What could be improved

- The meeting went on too long.
- When we do a hand count, we need to have an accurate and consistent method of counting. Counters need to make eye contact. The tables also make counting more difficult -there is no aisle down the middle - a clear division of the room. There were three people counting and sometimes there was confusion.
- Security. There are a number of holes, e.g. we don't de-credential people as they leave, nor do we check during a hand-count to make sure only credentialed people vote.
- Is two-third too high a bar for an endorsement? Should we lower it to 60% or 50%? Of course if the Executive Board endorses a candidate or set of candidates, the threshold is lowered to 50% plus one. But do we want to commit all the

resources of the district to a candidate who got 51% as opposed to her/his opponent who only got 49%? Also, our endorsement should mean something - the higher bar of 67% helps to guarantee that there is a high bar to gaining our endorsement. But 67% is a tyranny of the minority. In the Ginsberg- Conlin race the first ballot was 66.2% Ginsberg and less than half that for Conlin, but both ended up getting the endorsement. Same with Nickels - McGinn, where McGinn got half the votes of Nickels on the first ballot. Perhaps we should take this issue to the E-Board and to the membership for discussion, and let them make a decision about whether 50% , 60% or 67% is the right number. Generally, this whole group felt 60% is a better threshold than 67%.

- We talked about having a committee of members to make recommendations to the body like the KC Democrats did. But that is problematical and perhaps elitist, putting a lot of power in a small group of people. This method didn't necessarily work well at KC Democrats and in the 36th.
- Ballot options:
 - Ballots need to be prepared ahead of time with multi-colored ballots. This time there was a miscommunication about who was going to do it.
 - A printer could cut and collate ballots
 - We could just use blank paper, not pre-printed ballots. Then there is a lot less waste.
 - Perhaps the best way is to have a different color for each race, pre-printed with a space for signature and the name of the race, and preprinted with a credential number, pre-collated into stacks.
- Increase the size of the tally committee - twice as many to make counting go twice as fast or count two races at once.
- For the second and third ballots, change the rules so those ballots are hand-counted only, unless a member asks for a written ballot.
- Change the rules so we only count a valid ballot, that is, we'll only count ballots which have a nominated candidate or a nominated "no endorsement" vote. We'll simply toss out and not count any other ballots which are cast. This eliminates the "spoiled ballots" controversy.
- Put the methods of calculation in the rules or otherwise publicize them so people know how ballots will be counted.
- Change the rules and/or by-laws so that when the E-Board recommends a candidate, only a majority vote of the "members present and voting" is required to endorse as opposed to of the "members". The way it is presently worded, we'd have to have a majority of all members of the district.
- In the future, we need to consider and include all races scheduled for the primary ballot, e.g. Anne Ellington for Judge, which was overlooked and will be decided in the primary.

- Perhaps we should have also considered the school board race. Even though it is a city-wide race, it was on the primary ballot only in a school board district outside the 34th. But the top two candidates will be on our ballot in the general.
- The rules say, in #2, "At the September general membership meeting every year the Organization will consider endorsements for the General Election ballot". The operative term is "will consider" which means that everything can be reconsidered. The chair can still decide whether to put particular races on the agenda. This could be an issue for any race, but is most difficult in races where we already have an endorsement, e.g. we've endorsed Nickels and McGinn, but if McGinn and Mallahan come out of the primary, we could have to, if a member asks, reconsider this endorsement in September under our present rules.
- In September, we'll put races on the agenda where there has been a material change in the races versus our endorsements in July.
- We extensively discussed whether an endorsement made in June can be reconsidered in September. For example, we've endorsed both Conlin and Ginsberg as a dual endorsement. This race is not on the primary ballot as there are only two candidates. Can we reconsider the race in September and change our endorsement? Yes, under our present rules this is allowable, but perhaps we should change it.

Miscellaneous discussion:

- Rules changes. There probably is no particular urgency to change rules for September, because there are only two choices in each race.
- Anonymity. If anyone wanted to look at the ballots, the Chair would probably have to allow this, which loses some of the anonymity.
- We should not pre-print names for races because not every candidate would be nominated and we'd probably get more spoiled ballots (we didn't pre-print names this time, but we did consider doing it).

Next steps:

- By-laws committee to consider changing the endorsement rules. These proposed changes would go to the E-Board and then there would be written notice before any changes are considered at a meeting.