

# Pine Ridge Election Committee Procedure Manual

Revised and adopted on October 28, 2021

## General Guidelines:

The Election Committee is a Mandatory Committee as specified in the Bylaws (Article IV, Section 2B) of the Pine Ridge Property Owners Association (hereinafter referred to as the “PRPOA”). The Chairperson is appointed by the PRPOA President and approved by the majority Board of Directors (hereinafter referred to as the “PRBOD”). The Chairperson appoints additional Committee Members to a maximum of five (5) members. If necessary, the Chairperson can remove any Committee Member with just cause and appoint a replacement member.

1. All documents pertaining to elections must be approved by the Election Committee before mailing. The Election Committee, from time to time, may be asked to count votes for Annual Elections and Referendums or assemble before the intended meeting date at the office weekly to examine, verify and enter Proxy/Ballot votes into the Electronic Voting System (hereinafter referred to as EVS). The Chairperson may recruit additional volunteers.

## DEFINITIONS:

**ELECTIONS** – The selection of members to the PRBOD by votes of the members of the PRPOA.

**REFERENDUMS** – The legislative act(s) referred for final approval by votes of the members of the PRPOA.

**LIMITED PROXY** – The upper portion of the Limited Proxy/Ballot herein referred to as “Proxy” provides a place where Property Owner may indicate the physical description of the property. Failure to make this identification does not invalidate the proxy. Both paper and the EVS Proxy/Ballots will allow for identity of the parcel owner.

### **BALLOT –**

1. **Elections** – The lower portion of the Proxy/Ballot herein referred to as “Ballot” consists of instructions on how to vote, how many candidates are to receive votes, and the names of the declared candidates. The EVS provides the same instructions.
2. **Referendum(s)** – The lower portion of the Proxy/Ballot herein referred to as “Ballot” consists of instructions on how to vote and the legislative act (which may include more than one question) to be voted upon.
3. The EVS only allows you to vote once per property as well as once for stacked properties. Stacked means an owner who owns multiple properties, are automatically combined for the vote when identified by the system.
4. If a split vote is required while using the EVS system, you must notify the office within 10 days of the vote and not have already executed the vote within the system. If a split vote is received by paper ballot, then the Administrator will notify the EVS support to split the vote prior to processing the paper ballot.

**BALLOT ENVELOPE** – The official envelope provided with the Ballot. Plain Envelopes, receipt of a fax or email will be accepted.

**MULTIPLE PROPERTY/LOT OWNERS** – Each Property/Lot owner is only allowed one vote per property and will receive one ballot for each lot owned.

**VALID BALLOT** – For an election, a ballot where the appropriate number of candidates is indicated, i.e. if two candidates can be elected there can be no more than two names marked on the ballot. For both elections and referendums, the proxy must be signed and dated to be valid. Those voting in person by Ballot at an Annual Meeting or Referendum may need to “show proper photo ID”, be validated on the Master List, and sign the official on-site voting list. Ballots should be returned in sealed official ballot envelope to the given address or in person at the meeting. Plain Envelopes, receipt of a fax or email will be accepted. Multiple lot owners may place more than one ballot in an envelope. The EVS satisfies all the above requirements.

**INVALID (Void) BALLOT** – One in which either/or

1. more than the required number of candidates is indicated
2. a ballot other than the current year’s official ballot
3. one that cannot be checked against the master list
4. any alterations
5. does not meet above validation specifications

The reason(s) for invalidity must be recorded in the upper right corner of the ballot and initialed by only committee members declaring it invalid.

**VALID PROXY** – An official current year Proxy Form for Property Owners must be dated, signed and returned before an Annual Meeting or Referendum is adjourned to count the Ballots. or will be reviewed and validated weekly for entry into the EVS. Such a Proxy will count toward quorum, but if the Proxy is not signed and dated the Ballot will be declared invalid.

**UN-VOTED BALLOTS** – Valid Proxies with a blank Ballot will be counted toward a Quorum.

**QUORUM** – Twenty percent (20%) of the voting membership present in person or represented by proxy constitutes a quorum at an Annual Meeting or Referendum.

**DISPUTED BALLOTS** – If different co-owners of one lot submit a ballot voting for different candidates, one Proxy will be validated towards a quorum and both ballots will be invalidated unless there is on file with the Association a written designation signed by all co-owners authorizing one person to vote.

**RESUME** – The resume form is the format candidates are suggested to submit. Submitted resumes will only be added to the Pine Ridge website, or on the EVS for review.

**APPLICATION** – The application is a source of information and acknowledgement as to the accuracy of the resume submitted and will not be included in the annual packet mailing

**ADVISORS** – Volunteers who have previously served on the Election Committee can be selected by the Chair to serve as advisors and can aid the Election Committee.

## **PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES:**

### **PHASE I: PREPARE THE ELECTION DOCUMENTS – By October**

1. Review the language used in the following documents to determine consistency with current policy and Bylaws:
  - The Proxy/Ballot Form
  - The Application for Election
  - The Notice of Meeting (to Members)
2. Prepare a Budget, in cooperation with the Board.
3. Determine dates for the “Calendar of Events” which shall represent the intent to meet the following critical path factors:
  - A) End of January            Receipt of candidate’s applications as per Bylaws
  - B) Early February            Acceptance of the Slate by the Board of Directors with possible revisions by the Election Committee. Establish the required dates for the Meet the Candidates sessions, which will be moderated by the Election Committee, to occur shortly after the mailings of the Proxy/ballots or the sending of EVS invitations.
  - C) February/March            Mail Ballots or EVS Invitation as per Bylaws no later than twenty (20) days, nor sooner than sixty (60) days prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of April.
  - D) Feb/March/April            Check incoming Ballots against Master List of Property Owners and log into EVS to add verified paper votes.
  - E) 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday April            Annual Meeting will be scheduled as stipulated in PRPOA Bylaws (Article VI, Section 2).
  - F) 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday April        Announce Election results to BOD.  
or sooner
4. Submit the following for Board approval:
  - A) The Committee’s recommendations for the Budget;
  - B) Committee’s recommendation regarding contracting out or in-house procedures for mailing;
  - C) Revisions to language for the “Proxy/Ballot Form”, the “Application for Elections”, the “Notice of Meeting” and the “Calendar of Events”.

### **PHASE II: IDENTIFY CANDIDATES – November/December/January**

1. Publicize the Elections in local media: Pine Ridge Post, Civic web page, PRPOA web page and on the official notification board.
2. Collect one page resumes and applications from the candidates and present the Slate of Candidates to the PRBOD Chairperson after closing date for applications. Resumes will be listed on the Pine Ridge Website and on the EVS.

### **PHASE III: NOTIFICATION – February/March**

1. The Election Committee chair or designee from the election committee will authorize the mailing of the Proxy/Ballots, Annual Notice/Meeting and Agenda. This mailing will be

sent to all Property Owners that are not registered in the EVS as per the PRPOA Bylaws “not later than twenty (20) days, nor sooner than, sixty (60) days prior to the meeting” It is not necessary to indicate the lot/block numbers on the outside of the envelopes for the purpose of validation.

#### **PHASE IV: VALIDATE AGAINST MASTER LIST - Late March/Early April**

1. To maintain confidentiality of the Proxy/Ballots that are mailed, or hand delivered directly to the Pine Ridge Office, they are checked in by two different systems.
  - A) Mailed pieces are counted daily and by two staff members. Then they are checked in against the master list and kept locked down for safekeeping.
  - B) Hand delivered pieces are counted the day after delivery and are verified by two staff members. Then they are checked in against the master list and kept locked down for safekeeping.
  - C) Periodically add received Proxy/Ballots into the EVS.
2. The office will accept proxy ballot envelopes. Property owner’s presenting in person at the meeting will be signed in by the Election Committee and/or volunteers assigned to the task.
3. The Proxy/Ballot(s) remain secured in the custody of the PRPOA Office which will be uploaded weekly up into the EVS until the date of the election. The Election Committee will not disclose results until Candidates and Board of Directors are notified after the final count.
4. All Ballot envelopes submitted by owners of multiple properties need the vote count reaffirmed when actually opened. When owners of multiple properties cast their ballots electronically, they will all be voted the same, unless they notify the office 10 days prior to voting that they wish to split their votes and they must give an alternate email other than what is on file. If an owner of multiple properties has already cast their electronic vote, they will not be permitted to split their property votes.

#### **PHASE V: ON-SITE VOTING: ANNUAL MEETING DAY OR REFERENDUM DAY**

Before the meeting, PRPOA staff, and committee members will set up the voting table for on-site voters and prepare to receive Ballots.

1. As a Ballot is submitted, verify that no other Ballots from that Property Owner have been received. If a Property Owner has submitted more Ballots than their allocation allows, the previously received Ballots are marked duplicate and set aside.
2. Indicate on envelope the number of votes to which the Owner is entitled if the entitlement is more than one.
3. If the Owner fails to bring their envelope, they may be asked to provide identification with the correct address whereupon a new envelope is provided.
4. File in unique number order.
5. Ballots received at an Annual Meeting or Referendum are recorded by the PRPOA staff and reviewed by the Election Committee and are to be included in the count.

An Annual Meeting or Referendum starts with PRBOD Chairperson calling the meeting to order, and requesting a report from the Election Committee Chair on whether the tentative quorum has been met. Ballots are collected, and the meeting is adjourned. The adjourned meeting reconvenes the following day after the votes are tabulated and entered into the electronic voting system. Then the new Directors are seated.

## **PHASE VI: VALIDATING**

1. The Election Committee, volunteers and the PRPOA office staff will perform the following procedures:
  - A) If not previously validated the Proxy section is checked to see if it is valid per Florida Statue 720.306. If not signed and dated within the proxy period, the Proxy/Ballot is not valid. Also needed on the Proxy to be valid, “proxy must be dated, must state the date, time and place of the meeting for which it was given and must be signed by the authorized person who executed the Proxy”. A Proxy is effective only for the specific meeting for which it was originally given, as the meeting may lawfully be adjourned and reconvened from time to time, and automatically expires 90 days after the date of the meeting for which it was originally given. If the Proxy form expressly so provides, any Proxy holder may appoint, in writing, a substitute to act in his or her place.
  - B) The Ballot selection is verified by Volunteers under direct supervision of the Election Committee and PRPOA Management assuring that no more than the appropriate number of candidates were voted for. If more than the correct number of received votes is marked or if it is altered in any way, the Ballot is invalid. A Ballot is valid with less than the appropriate number of candidates voted for.
2. This process continues until all Ballots are validated.
3. Concurrently, Election Committee, volunteers and the PRPOA office staff will perform the following tasks:
  - A) The validated groups of Proxy/Ballot forms are counted into groups of 25 to be counted by the Volunteers under direct supervision of the Election Committee and PROPA Management only if electronic voting is not in use.
  - B) The Chairperson and/or PRPOA Management is given any questions that arise.

## **PHASE VII: ESTABLISHING QUORUM**

PRPOA Management will verify that a Quorum has been met and will convey the numbers to the Election Committee Chair. Quorum is available the day of the meeting if electronic voting is in process.

## **PHASE VIII: TALLYING VOTES**

### **A. Paper Procedure**

Each Proxy/Ballot group of 25 is assigned to a (4) four-member team who perform the following steps:

1. The reader calls out with a verifier to the two recorders the names of the candidates voted for on the Ballots.
2. If there is a lesser number of votes than those specified on the Ballot Form (for example, two votes rather than the required three), the missing votes will be entered under “no votes”.
3. Once the votes in that group of ballots are recorded, the number of the votes each candidate received is tallied and placed in the box at end of the candidate’s name.
4. Both recorders add up the votes in the boxes and indicate the total number votes cast on the Tally Form.
5. If there is a discrepancy, the process is repeated.
6. Groups of 25 Proxy/Ballots along with the Tally Sheets are bundled and stored securely. All Invalid Votes will be placed in its own bundle with a written description of the issues.

## **B. Electronic Procedure**

1. Unopened ballot envelopes will be handed out to each member of the Election Committee that is in attendance that day.
2. The envelopes will be opened.
3. The Proxy/Ballot will be examined for a signature, date and proper voting execution.
4. The envelope will be attached to the proxy/ballot with return name and address facing so that it is readable.
5. Quorum only documents will be placed aside, and all others will be placed in groups for data entry.
6. Each member will take a turn calling the name of the proxy/ballot to the administrator to locate on the voting system and will call the vote, while other members witness the data entry.
7. The system is not accessed by the administrator (Property Manager) without the election committee members present and sign off is done prior to the members departure from the PRPOA office.

## **REFERENDUMS**

Follow the steps in Phase VIII A: Tallying Votes, only if electronic voting is not in use.

## **PHASE IX: RESULTS**

1. PRPOA Staff, with the Election Committee as oversight, will tabulate the final results by transferring the total votes of each candidate/Referendum on the individual Tally Sheets to a Master Tally Sheet to reach the total votes cast for that candidate or referendum. When using electronic voting the totals will be reported automatically.
2. The original Ballot/Proxy will not be separated, but it will be copied and separated so that the Ballot choices cannot be seen and matched to Property Owners' identification on the Proxy portion, should a request for records be made.
3. Each ballot packet will be placed in boxes and sealed along with the envelopes and the Master List of Property Owners. The boxes will then be sealed with tape and signed and dated by the Committee Members and stored in the administrative offices within the PRPOA community center.
4. The Election Results Report is prepared.

## **PHASE X: ANNOUNCE ELECTION RETURNS – 2nd Wednesday of April or sooner**

The Annual Meeting is adjourned and reconvened to the next business day when the Chairperson submits the results and final report to the PRBOD. Election Committee or PRPOA Management will not disclose results on the Pine Ridge website or official notification board until after 5 PM the day of the Annual Meeting. As a courtesy, the Chairperson will notify all of the Board Members (and Candidates, when an Election has been held) prior to the official announcement of the results.

For a Referendum, the results are announced at the next PRBOD meeting, posted on the Pine Ridge web site, and posted on the Pine Ridge Community Center official notification board.

## **PHASE XI: ELECTION DISPUTES**

Election Disputes must follow FL Statutes Rules FS 720

## **PHASE XII: ELECTION MANUAL**

Revisions to the Election Manual are prepared by the Election Committee and submitted to the PRBOD. Once approved, they will be time stamped, and a copy will be provided to all PRBOD and Election Committee members and placed on the website.

All samples included with this document may be updated and changed from time to time.