

Appendix B

Overview of Ranked Ballot Election Authority and Rules

Ranked Ballot Elections Authority

The MEA & O. Reg. 310/16 provides Council with the authority to pass a by-law to implement ranked ballot elections for offices on a municipal Council starting with the 2018 election. The by-law must be passed no later than May 1 in the year before the election year (May 1, 2017 for the 2018 election).

In a ranked ballot election:

- Electors rank candidates in order of preference (first, second, third, etc.)
- Votes are distributed based on the rankings marked on the ballots
- Candidates must meet a minimum threshold to be elected

The ranked ballot by-law may specify:

- the maximum number of rankings for each office
- a different number of rankings for each office
- if none are specified, the default is three

Public Consultation Requirements

Before passing a by-law, Council must ensure that at least one open house and one public meeting is held to give the public an opportunity to review and ask questions about the information that is provided to them on a proposed ranked ballot by-law.

The public meeting must be held at least 15 days after the open house is held. At least 30 days before the open house and public meeting is to be held, Council must publish notice of the open house and public meeting in a newspaper having general circulation in the municipality.

Council must also ensure the following information is made available to the public with respect to the proposed by-law:

- A detailed description of how the elections would be conducted, including a description of how votes would be distributed to candidates based on the rankings marked on ballots,
- An estimate of the costs of conducting the election,
- A description of the voting equipment and vote-counting equipment, if any, that is being considered, and
- A description of any alternative voting method being considered

Rules for Counting Votes

In a ranked ballot election, a candidate is required to cross a "threshold" of votes to be elected. In the case of a single-member ranked ballot election, the threshold is determined using the following formula:

$$\left(\frac{\text{total number of ballots cast for the office} - \text{number of rejected ballots}}{\text{number of members to be elected to the office} + 1} \right) + 1$$

In the first round of counting, votes are counted according to the highest rankings indicated on the ballots. If a candidate receives enough votes to meet or exceed the threshold, that candidate is elected and counting ends.

If no candidate has enough votes to meet or exceed the threshold, the candidate(s) with the lowest number of votes are eliminated (depending on whether single or batch elimination is used). Any exhausted ballots are removed and the votes are then distributed to the remaining candidates according to the next ranking on each ballot. This process is repeated in subsequent rounds until a candidate has enough votes to meet or exceed the threshold.

If no candidate has enough votes to meet or exceed the threshold, and eliminating the candidate with the lowest number of votes would leave one candidate remaining, the counting ends and the candidate with the highest number of votes is elected.

Determining the Highest Ranking

At each round of vote counting, the following rules describe how to determine which candidate an elector has ranked as the highest:

- If a voter gives two or more candidates the highest ranking so that it's not possible to determine which candidate is the voter's first preference, the ballot will be rejected.
- If a voter gives the same candidate more than one ranking, only the highest of those rankings will be considered. In this instance, the ballot is exhausted after the first round if transferred.
- If a voter gives one candidate a highest ranking, and gives two candidates a subsequent preference (e.g. puts two candidates second) the ballot is counted in the first round but becomes exhausted if transferred.
- If a voter skips a ranking, the next highest ranking will be considered.

Elimination Methods

If no candidate receives enough votes to meet or exceed the threshold, candidates are eliminated using a single or batch elimination method. The Clerk must, on or before December 31 in the year before a regular election (e.g. December 31, 2017) determine

which method of elimination will be used. The same elimination method must be used for all offices, and all rounds of vote counting.

Single Elimination

In the single elimination method, the candidate who has the lowest number of votes is eliminated, and those votes are distributed to the remaining candidates according to the next preference shown on each ballot.

If conducting a ranked ballot election for the first time, using the single elimination method is the most suitable to assist voters and candidates in understanding the process and to ensure transparency.

Batch Elimination

In the batch elimination method, all candidates who do not have a mathematical chance of being elected are eliminated at the same time, and those votes are distributed to the remaining candidates according to the next preference shown on each ballot.

Reporting Election Results

As soon as possible after voting day, the Clerk must make the following information available to the public on a website or in another electronic format:

- the number of ballots cast
- the number of ballots that were declined
- the number of ballots in which the votes for the office were rejected
- the threshold calculated for each office
- the number of votes cast for each candidate in the first round of vote counting
- the results of each round of vote counting, including the number of votes received by each remaining candidate and the number of exhausted ballots.