

**Report of the Elections Committee on the Ocean Pines Association 2020 Board of Directors  
Election**

**September 9, 2020**

**Submitted by**

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## Contents

Overview	3
Election overview	3
New OPA Balloting System	4
Ballot Report	4
Support Provided by OPA Staff	5
Issues Encountered and Recommendations for Changes	5
Fiscal Performance	5
Possible Electronic Voting in the Future	5
Appendix I Requirements for modern OPA balloting system	7
Appendix II 2020 Survey Results on Possible Use of Future Electronic Voting	8
Appendix III OPA Ballot Report for 2020 Election	9
Appendix IV Elections Support Required of OPA Staff	10

## Overview

The 2020 Ocean Pines Association (OPA) Directors election was completed in accordance with the By-Laws and Resolution M-06 Elections and Referendums. This report outlines the Election Committee (EC) timeline and steps in the election process, ballot mailing, receipt and final election count, support provided by OPA staff and any issues encountered and recommended changes.

The committee held 9 scheduled meetings from November 2019 through August 2020.

These actions included:

- Identification of requirements for a new OPA balloting system (Appendix I) and purchase of the system. More detail is provided below.
- Creation of a timeline for the election process and conduct of monthly meetings with committee staff, Board Liaison Steve Tuttle and OPA staff member Josh Davis worked well to accomplish tasks. Meeting agendas and minutes were submitted to OPA and posted, as appropriate on the OPA website.
- Conduct of a candidate draw for ballot position and a workshop were held on June 12.
- Conduct of a virtual candidate forum on June 17.
- Inclusion of a ballot question, “Would you support electronic voting in the future?” Results are shown in Appendix II.

All election deadlines were met.

## Election overview

On May 20, 2020, the Association Secretary sent the EC a letter informing the EC that three candidates were qualified for the 2020 election to fill two Director positions. Those candidates were:

Doug Parks,  
Colette Horn, and  
Stuart Lakernick.

At the candidate draw on June 12, the ballot order was determined to be:

Colette Horn,  
Doug Parks, and  
Stuart Lakernick.

The ballot results were:

Colette Horn - 1,801 votes.

Doug Parks - 2,206 votes

Stuart Lakernick - 1,149 votes.

At the OPA Board Special Meeting on August 12, 2020, EC member Carol Ludwig validated the election of Collette Horn and Doug Parks to Director positions.

### New OPA Balloting System

With the OPA move to the Northstar software package and obsolescence of the Scantron system a new balloting system was required. The Elections Committee:

- Developed a set of requirements for the new system (Appendix I) and began to survey possible balloting systems. There is a vast array of systems marketed for use by organizations like OPA.
- Reviewed options to a manageable number,
- Developed a cost-benefit analysis (by committee member Bob Windsor) to help us select the best system.
- Selected a Fujitsu printer coupled with a dedicated laptop computer and using the *Snap Survey* operating system. OPA staff procured all needed equipment at an FY 2020 cost of \$ 3,869.74.

The system performed as expected.

The Snap Survey resource is a web-based subscription program. The EC considered a one-year subscription but chose a “perpetual” subscription. The difference in cost between the two options was small. The EC considered that the new equipment and software subscription would be useful for at least three years and the perpetual subscription would be the more cost-effective choice. Snap Survey is now an OPA resource that will allow the Association to develop and administer surveys quickly and at no additional cost. EC hopes the Association will take advantage of the subscription to Snap Survey.

### Ballot Report

This was an unusual year as residents were given until August 1 to pay assessments; however, OPA By-Laws require that if the assessments were not paid as of July 1, residents are ineligible to vote in the election. This situation caused confusion among residents and generated a number of calls to the election committee line.

This year was also unusual in the number of ballots returned after the August 5 deadline. As shown in Appendix III, there were 162 total ballots received after the deadline. In comparison, for 2019, 46 ballots were received after the deadline. The return rate for all ballots in 2020, including rejected and late ballots was 42.5%, based on 6975 ballots mailed.

The new balloting system performed well in the election; the finalization of tallies and review of questioned or unreadable ballots was completed in about an hour on August 7.

The ballot report for the 2020 election is shown as Appendix III. The Elections Committee explores ideas and implements ways to reduce late ballots and increase voter participation.

### Support Provided by OPA Staff

The five members of the Election Committee could not complete the administration of the election without the assistance of OPA staff and we greatly appreciate their assistance. As part of the annual report, the committee prepared a list of support requirements. The support requirements are listed in Appendix IV.

### Issues Encountered and Recommendations for Changes

The Election Committee encourages the Board to communicate what constitutes voter eligibility in elections and how to ensure an account is in good standing.

There were three candidates for two Board openings this year; the by-laws state there should be four for two openings. The situation necessitated a need to extend the deadline for candidates; the compression of deadlines made it difficult for the committee to complete our mission. In planning the 2021 election process the EC will review all timelines to ensure a smooth process.

### Fiscal Performance

The 2020 election was accomplished at a cost of \$18,174: \$6,826 below the approved budget of \$25,000.

### Possible Electronic Voting in the Future

Consistent with the results of the survey question on possible future electronic voting, the EC will investigate options for future balloting systems.

## Election Committee Membership and Terms

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Name	Date Appointed	On Term	Expires
Steve Habeger	September 24, 2016	2	September 24, 2021
Mark Heintz	September 24, 2016	2	September 24, 2021
Carol Ludwig	February 6, 2020	1	February 5, 2023
Bob Windsor	February 20, 2019	1	February 16, 2022
Mary Whitcomb	March 10, 2020	1	March 7, 2023

BOARD LIAISON: Steve Tuttle

## Appendix I Requirements for modern OPA balloting system

**Accuracy.** The balloting system must be accurate; every valid ballot must be counted, invalid ballots must be identified and rejected, and votes must be assigned to the correct candidate(s).

**Accessibility.** The selected system will be used by a wide range of voters. People with a diverse range of education, literacy, and technical acumen, etc. It must be able to navigate and vote within the system without issues.

**Flexibility.** OPA elections can have many candidates (three years ago we had 11 candidates) and the number of open positions vary from year-to-year. The selected system must be able to easily adjust to changing election environments.

**Security.** The system must be impervious to outside agents attempting to gain access as well as extracting or changing data in the system. Even if the system has strong guards against infiltration, a method must be built-in which would provide evidence of an attempt to enter as well as any successful break-ins to the system.

**Affordability.** The system must be reasonably affordable for an association the size and complexity of Ocean Pines. While a low price is beneficial, the selected system will provide the “Best Value” possible to OPA.

**Sustainability.** The selected system must be one that can be updated or modified at a reasonable cost as technologies evolve.

**Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).** While purchase price will be heavily weighted in the deliberations, the total cost of ownership will be considered as well. The selected system will have a competitive TCO.

Appendix II 2020 Survey Results on Possible Use of Future Electronic Voting

Number of ballots sent 6,975

Response Yes	1,581	65.8%
Response No	822	34.2%

Total responses 2,403 34% Voters responded

Appendix III OPA Ballot Report for 2020 Election

**Overview**

FINAL

Number of ballots mailed	6,975
Scanned ballots	2,745
Manual count	14
Total number of ballots counted	2,759

39.6% Valid ballot return rate

Letters sent to ineligible voters	1,830
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**Rejected ballots**

No box marked	0
Ballot marked improperly or comments on ballot	18
Improper envelope used	2
Voted for more than allowed number of candidates	0
Write-in attempt	0
Total number of invalid ballots	20

Received	Received beyond deadline	
6-Aug	One day late	60
7-Aug	Two days late	46
10-Aug	Four days late	43
	over 1 week	10
	over 2 weeks	3
	over 3 weeks	
	Total late	162

Total late + invalid ballots 182

Grand Total of ballots returned 2941 42.2% Ballot Return Rate

## Appendix IV Elections Support Required of OPA Staff

Association elections are an annual occurrence. While the details of each election are unique, there are several repeating (and predictable) activities that require support from the OPA staff. This document will attempt to identify those activities.

Public Relations and Marketing: Beginning early in each year, advertising for the upcoming election and the need for interested members to volunteer to run for a Director position is needed. After the candidates are established by the Association Secretary, advertising of candidate forums and publication of election information is needed.

Senior Executive Secretary: Once the Association Secretary determines the list of eligible candidates, the Elections Committee (EC) will provide a letter and define the attachments to the letter that must be mailed expeditiously to all candidates. The letter contains several deadline items required from all candidates. It is requested that the letters be mailed to each candidate using overnight delivery with tracking enabled. Additionally, each candidate should be sent their letter via email.

Membership Office: The EC will establish the member voting eligibility deadline. After COB on the established deadline, EC needs to have two Excel files prepared:

- A mailing list of eligible voters and
- A mailing list of ineligible voters.

These files are pacing items; several actions are dependent upon the delivery of these two files including establishing the print and mail quantities of the outgoing posts to all members and calculation of the cost of the outgoing mail. The pace of the election is dependent on the speed with which these two files are prepared. (EC will provide duplicate ballots and mailing envelopes for staff to assist with questions/requests received.

The Finance Department When the required postage is determined, the Finance Department will have to issue a check for the requisite postage. Postage costs (both outgoing and incoming (using Business Reply Permit #32 at the Berlin Post Office)) are not included in the election print and mail support contact.

IT Department: Ballot counting uses a dedicated laptop and scanner which is maintained and provided by the IT Department.

Annual Meeting: EC is required to ascertain if a quorum has been met at the Annual Meeting. The EC members check property owners in and maintain a count of properties represented. To accomplish that task, EC requires:

- A file (in Excel) from the Membership Department which lists all property owners, and

- A set of four tablets or laptops for the EC members to use to check owners into the Annual Meeting.
- Electrical power for each of the laptops or tablets used.

Note: If the annual meeting is held outside there is a need for tables and chairs for EC members to do check-in and a tent over each check-in location so that sun glare won't impede the ability of EC members to read screens.