



OCEAN PINES ASSOCIATION ELECTIONS COMMITTEE (EC) REPORT 2023 Board of Directors Election

SUBMITTED TO: The Ocean Pines Association Board of Directors

SUBMITTED BY: Tom Piatti, Chairperson

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date Appointed</u>	<u>On term</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Tom Piatti	October 15, 2022	1	
George Alston	October 15, 2022	1	
Elaine Brady	October 15, 2022	1	Resigned on 13 April to become a Board candidate
Tom Shwartz	October 15, 2022	1	
Nanci Osborne	October 15, 2022	1	
Steve Ransdell	April 15, 2023	1	

Board Liaison: Vice President Rick Farr

1. Detailed results of the voting: in ballot order (see attached statistics):

- a. John Latham – 2,237
- b. Jerry Murphy – 1,460
- c. Elaine Brady – 2,293
- d. Jeff Heavner – 1,849

The candidates elected to serve three-year terms on the Ocean Pines Board of Directors are John Latham and Elaine Brady. The candidate elected to serve a one-year term (due to the resignation of an elected Director) is Jeff Heavner.

2023 Election Statistics

Election Trust (ET) Results				
Ballot envelopes mailed to eligible voters:	7,781			
Letters mailed to ineligible voters:	884 (see para 6a below)			
Ballots automatically adjudicated:	2,967			
Unreadable ballots visually adjusted:	14			
Total valid ballots:	2,981			
Blank ballots received:	3			
Pages judged to be non-ballot:	62			
USPS envelopes returned to sender (ET):	44			
Envelopes received by ET after 8/24:	0			
Election Committee (EC) Manual Results				
Envelopes with ballots received:	4			
Total ballot votes:	4			
Drop box ballots (3 blank) received:	465			
Drop box ballots forwarded to ET:	462			
Combined 2023 Ballot Count Report (2,985 ballots)				
	ET	EC	Total	
John Latham	2233	4	2237	
Jerry Murphy	1458	2	1460	
Elaine Brady	2290	3	2293	
Jeff Heavner	1846	3	1849	
Totals:	7827	12	7839	

Additionally, the EC fielded 63 telephone and 339 email messages during the election period.

2. Problems encountered with the tabulating and reporting system and any assistance required. Due to multiple tabulation and reporting issues during the 2022 election, the EC recommended, and the BOD approved, abandoning the tabulating and reporting system used in previous elections and outsourcing the printing, mailing, collection and tabulation function to an outside contractor. Election Trust of Bainbridge Island, WA, was the successful bidder. Further and to build voter confidence, the EC recommended and the BOD approved, providing an envelope with ballot for each lot owned and the suspension of online voting for the 2023 BOD election. This eliminated the unpopular and confusing “weighting” of ballots by Members with multiple properties during the 2022 election. The EC does recommend re-establishment of online voting in subsequent elections.

3. A summary of Committee activities during the reporting period and any recommendations for improving the election or referendum process.

The EC met four times from November 2022 through June 2023 and exchanged information via email and telephonically throughout the election process. Meanwhile, based on Board taskings, substantial independent research was conducted by EC members. Several after action reports with recommendations were submitted to the Board for consideration and approval and the Chair participated in several monthly/special Board meetings fielding questions from Board members.

On June 17, the Board approved modifications to Resolution M-06 to clarify recount procedures and to allow a ballot count by an independent contractor.

4. Recommendations, if any, for the calendar of events for the next election if the balloting is for the election of directors.

The OPA Bylaws state that to be eligible to vote, a member must be in good standing 35 days prior to the Annual Meeting. For the 2023 election, that date was July 6 and the Annual Meeting was scheduled for August 11. The point here is that election materials cannot be mailed prior to the thirty-five-day cutoff. Thirty-five days may have been sufficient time in the past when the USPS was reliable and using a local printing contractor to print, mail and pick up envelopes from a local post office, besides volunteers to count ballots, but today, thirty-five days is insufficient. The EC recommends that our documents be revised to provide ample time to process election documents. Also, we find that the requirement for remote observation of the ballot count unnecessary because ballots are electronically machine read and disputed ballots are set aside and adjudicated by humans. Moreover, and as experienced during the 2022 election, there was no way to observe electronically submitted online ballots. Finally, the remote observation requirement shrinks the number of contractors that provide such a service.

5. Comments on the capabilities of the contractor used and a recommendation regarding future use of the contractor or suggested alternatives.

Election Trust (ET) was the successful bidder for the 2023 election process. ET has an outstanding reputation and serves many public and private organizations and their Clear Ballot adjudication platform is Federally certified. Coordination meetings were successful and contractual agreed upon timelines were put in place. Unfortunately, there was a seven-day delay by ET getting the ballot envelopes in the mail to our Members, which in turn, caused the two-week extension of the ballot deadline, along with a delay in the Annual Meeting. Additionally, the early establishment and sustained use of the Police Dept. ballot drop box became critical.

This delay caused a tremendous number of inquiries to the EC and angst among Members for selecting a contractor on the other side of the US. ET did not have a solid reason for the seven-day delay, other than a possible mix-up by their printing contractor in delivering the envelopes to the USPS Bulk facility and by not emphasizing these were election materials to be expedited. Additionally, we learned that during the same period seven Puget Sound counties were going through an election with millions of by-mail ballots streaming through and placing a heavy burden on the Seattle area USPS (Washington is an All Mail-in Voting State).

Other than the delay in mail, ET's services were outstanding – the materials and ballot instructions were very clear, their periodic updates to the EC kept us informed of voting numbers. The live final tally and adjudication was extremely detailed and undisputable. Furthermore, ET provided a service never experienced in the past by OPA – after processing the ballot envelope, an email receipt was electronically sent to the voter for confirmation from vote@voteegrity.net. Unfortunately, many OP Members do not have an email address on file with the Membership Office and a large percentage of those emails on file are obsolete which caused multiple bounce-back emails.

6. Other remarks.

a. This year, the EC decided to not mail documents to eligible and ineligible members on the same day. 884 letters to ineligible members were mailed in advance. This action resulted in 108 Members resolving their ineligibility and who were later mailed ballot envelopes. This practice should remain in place.

b. The PD ballot drop box has been in use for years and worked very well for FedEx overnight delivery to our 2023 elections contractor. The EC should continue its use.

7. Fiscal performance.

The 2023 election was accomplished at the cost of: \$19,950.22.

8. Action Plan. Coordinate with the By-Laws and Resolutions Committee on a recommendation to: (1) adjust the 35-day eligibility date and/or date of the Annual Meeting, and (2) eliminate the observable count requirement.