

**Town of Brookline
Ranked-Choice Voting Study Committee**

Chair not yet elected

Date: August 18, 2022

RCV Committee members present:

Michael Sandman
C. Scott Ananian
Ben Kaufman, Town Clerk
Cathleen Cavell (not yet sworn in)
Jay Sweitzer-Shalit
Joan Sawyer
Joan Lautenschleger
Alex Neary
Isaac Silberberg

RCV Committee members absent:

(none)

Non-committee members present:

Greg Dennis, Voter Choice MA

RCV Committee member Ananian took minutes.

Discussion:

1. Reviewed the charge to the committee
2. Michael Sandman nominated Scott Ananian for chair of the committee
 - a. Scott Ananian noted that the charge requires a SB member to be Chair; the committee was reassured by Sandman that SB will correct this.
 - b. Ananian was nominated for chair by Sandman; he accepted. The vote was: Yes: Lautenschleger, Sawyer, Sweitzer-Shalit, Silverberg, Neary, Ananian, Sandman; Abstaining: Cavell, Kaufman
 - c. Ananian elected chair.
3. The newly-elected chair requested volunteers to help take minutes for future meetings
4. Presentation from Jay Sweitzer-Shalit (attached).
 - a. Interactive example: the committee voted for favorite ice cream flavor using <https://rankit.vote>
 - i. Ananian noted that he'd used a similar site, <https://rcv123.org>, for a TMMMA P10 election a few months ago
 - b. Benefits of ranked choice voting discussed; positive campaigning also mentioned.
 - c. Intricacies: Batch elimination (affects public understanding of count), Overvotes (ES&S can kick back a ballot, but only for in-person; Town Clerk indicated that 50-60% vote by mail ballots sent out so far this year), Concluded ballots (happened on our practice ballot: bullet voting decreases vote power instead of increasing); monotonicity.

- i. How are overvotes handled in a multiple-choice ballot? Do we discount just the overvote (the two #1s?) or the entire race?
 - 1. Greg Dennis: for Arlington, the choices are truncated at the overvote and the rest are treated as blank. The data show that RCV voters are not more likely to overvote in the #1 position, but there may be more overvotes overall. This is explicitly described in the Arlington Home Rule Petition (HRP); it is treated the same for single-seat and multi-seat elections.
 - ii. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monotonicity_criterion for a detailed discussion of monotonicity.
 - d. Types of Ranked-Choice Voting for Multi-Winner elections
 - i. Three main types: Iterated Ranked Choice Voting; Proportional Ranked Choice Voting; Bottom-up RCV (Bottom-up RCV is not widely used)
 - ii. (Paused here; will resume this presentation at our next meeting)
5. Update from Greg, Voter Choice MA (some documents attached)
 - a. Easthampton got RCV approved via the Municipalities committee. It also required voter approval in Easthampton; that occurred in 2019. Had first RCV election in 2021.
 - b. Amherst and Arlington and Northampton have home rule legislation, in their cases before the election laws committee. Election laws committee was tied up with the VOTES act; at the 11th hour they gave a favorable report on these three home rules. Formal session is over, but the informal session lasts until the end of the calendar year. Still a chance of being passed in informal session; otherwise will be refiled in next session.
 - c. Concord passed HRP, will be filed in the next session.
 - d. Arlington and Northampton included a town-wide ratification vote. Amherst had a townwide vote in 2018 as part of their charter. Concord's HRP doesn't require a townwide vote. Legislature can add the condition when they approve a HRP.
 - i. The state wide RCV vote got 70% YES in Brookline.
6. Timeline for this committee's work?
 - a. Sandman: Report for November Town Meeting. Select Board can put an article on the warrant for November with very short notice.
 - b. Is there a significant difference if Brookline approves a HRP in November 2022 vs May 2023?
 - i. Greg Dennis: The earlier the better.
 - c. Chair proposed that if we sprint, we will need to have a fill-in-the-blank HRP article and focus every meeting on making decisions on how the blanks are filled. Eg: one meeting will focus on what races are to use RCV and the next meeting will vote on the language to put in the HRP w/r/t races covered. We will need to narrow down the options fairly quickly to give the advisory committee and others proper time to review the final HRP text.
 - d. Chair proposed a straw poll to see whether committee members were willing to sprint to conclude their work before the November town meeting. In the straw

poll: Yes: Sandman, Cavell, Sawyer, Lautenschleger, Neary, Silberberg. Abstain: Ananian, Kaufman. Sweitzer-Shalit.

- e. Kaufman, Town Clerk: remember that there are two elections between now and the November Town Meeting. Timing will be difficult if you want to invite election vendors of other Town Clerks to give input to this committee.
 - f. Mike Sandman: will discuss with SB to put on the agenda for next Tuesday and insert a placeholder article in the warrant.
7. The next meeting of the committee was scheduled: Thursday Aug 25 at 6:00pm-7pm. (There is a state rep debate starting at 7pm.)
 8. Chair will come up with a schedule for our remaining work that focuses on decision points for an RCV HRP; Sandman will raise the timing with the Select Board w/r/t the Fall warrant; Sweitzer-Shalit will continue his RCV presentation.

Follow up items (in addition to items assigned above):

1. **Next meeting: Thursday, August 25 at 6pm.**