

Town of Brookline
Ranked-Choice Voting Study Committee

C. Scott Ananian, Chair

Date: September 28, 2022

RCV Committee members present:

Joan Lautenschleger

C. Scott Ananian

Alex Neary

Joan Sawyer

Jay Sweitzer-Shalit

RCV Committee members absent:

Ben Kaufman, Town Clerk

Isaac Silberberg

Cathleen Cavell

Michael Sandman

Non-committee members present:

Greg Dennis, Voter Choice MA

The committee made quorum at 8:15pm and held an abbreviated meeting. The Chair took minutes.

Discussion:

1. The progress of the committee was briefly reviewed.
 - a. Jay Sweitzer-Shalit suggested that for a number of the questions where we've narrowed the decision down to two options (eg, whether Town Meeting Member elections should use RCV) we might hold the public hearing to solicit feedback before finalizing our choice.
2. Among the remaining decisions itemized on the legislation skeleton, the following were chosen to discuss in depth at our next meeting:
 - a. Form of local approval (local/hybrid/restricted)
 - b. Concluded ballots / overvotes / skipped rankings / unreadable ballots
 - i. Joan Sawyer has talked to RCV folks in Westbrook, ME; Portland, ME; and Minneapolis, MN. They have shifted their approach to overvotes over time w/ experience. Joan expects to receive their "voter intent guide" which they use to resolve overvotes and can present this at a future meeting.
 - ii. Options to conclude ballot at first overvote, at first skipped ranking, after 2 or more skipped rankings.
 - iii. Voter education component may be involved here. Concern about folks filling out the ballot "in the old way" and ending up with an overvote in the first ranking.

- iv. Registrar of voters usually decides questions involving “intent of voter”, if any.
 - c. Ties / Empanelment of election judges
 - i. No random tiebreakers in MA. (Texas plays a hand of poker.) If candidates are tied all the way back to the first round, current HRPs say nothing, which implies a “failure to elect”. This is the same outcome as for an exact tie in a single-seat race in our existing system. Given a failure to elect, rules for filling a vacancy kick in (ie, special election, appointment, caucus of TMMs, etc). (If there’s an exact tie in a state primary, the party caucus chooses.)
 - ii. Using batch elimination makes the likelihood of an exact tie in an early round pretty low, because exact ties are more likely among low-vote-getting candidates, but they can both be eliminated in a batch hence no tie need be broken.
 - iii. Some of the draft language gives discretion to Town Clerk and/or Board of Registrars to decide tie break provisions.
- 3. Next Wednesday is Yom Kippur; we will hold our next meeting next Thursday @ 7:30
 - a. Chair will try to confirm w/ missing attendees that this time is reasonable before confirming.