

## Electronic Balloting Project Plan

Report from the Ethics and Elections Committee

March 6, 2022

### **Executive Summary**

In accord with ARRL Bylaws, electronic balloting is allowed as an alternative to paper balloting for elections. The ARRL Board passed a motion in January 2021 tasking the Ethics and Elections Committee to investigate the state, cost and availability of commercial electronic balloting services.

After investigating several potential election service providers, Chief Financial Officer Diane Middleton was able to identify one company that responded well to her request for a quote, has a strong background and history in providing such services, and is willing to work with us to provide the security and processes appropriate to the ARRL.

The intent of staff under the guidance of E&E is to contract with Election Services Company for 3 years to support both paper and electronic balloting.

Our plan is roll out electronic balloting over the 3 year period in a manner that will give members time to understand the process while allowing members uncomfortable with electronic balloting a way to vote via paper mail. During year one and two all members in the affected divisions will receive a paper ballot with instructions on how to access electronic balloting as an alternative. In year 3, all members in affected divisions will receive email and paper mail announcements about the election with instructions about submitting an electronic ballot and providing an option to request a paper ballot in the alternative. After year 3, all election announcements will be by email and will include information on electronic balloting and requesting a paper ballot. Members without email will automatically receive paper ballots. This plan will, of course, be adjusted as or if necessary based on membership response and lessons learned during the implementation and roll out.

### **Background**

ARRL's Bylaw 19 states in regard to the election of Directors, "If there is more than one eligible nominee, then on or before October 1 of that year the Secretary shall make a paper or electronic ballot available to every person who was a full member of the League in the divisions in which elections are being held on the tenth day of September of that year."

During the January 2021 annual board meeting, motion Zygielbaum-1 was passed directing the Ethic and Elections Committee "...to investigate the state, cost and availability of commercial electronic balloting services as an alternative to paper balloting distributed and collected via the postal service." The committee was directed to report back to the board within one year.

E&E is late on that report. But good progress has been made. This report contains an implementation plan based largely on the good work of Diane Middleton, ARRL Chief Financial Officer.

### **Vendor**

Understanding the intent of the board, Diane Middleton sought bids from several vendors of election services. Big Pulse Online Voting Technology, Survey Ballot Systems, and Election Services Company responded. Of the three, Election Services provided the most detailed and responsive bid.

Election Services Company proposed providing paper and electronic balloting including mailing and receiving paper ballots and operating an election website customized for the ARRL election. Services include sending email announcements and reminders for members who have not voted. They would count all ballots and validate the results as they have for many other organizations and companies. Located in Melville, NY, the company is set up to electronically scan paper ballots, collect online votes and supply the resulting totals to E&E and the ARRL.

The contractual cost is made up of three elements, printed ballot and ballot handling, election services (including the online ballot) and postage expenses. The annual cost for services will be constant as shown below. The costs for the printed ballot and postage will vary depending on the number of paper ballots as well as the actual cost of postage. Election Services estimate for the first year's cost is:

- Printed ballot creation and ballot handling: \$15,735.84
- Election services including paper processing (\$1,000), database setup, website programming, emails to members and reminder emails, etc.: \$6,286.10
- Postal expenses for paper ballots: \$11,608.00
- Total: \$33,629.94

Note that if we are able to go fully electronic, we could save approximately \$28,000 per year in paper handling expense.

A three year contract gives us a small discount in costs. More importantly, with the prospect of a multi-year contract, the company offers a demonstration mock election involving the Officers, Directors and Vice Directors (ODV) prior to signing the contract.

### **Implementation**

Putting these election services in place requires meeting several deadlines prior to the election, especially in this first year. Members need to be notified and educated about the new process.

The following schedule is established to meet both the vendor's needs and deadlines imposed by QST publication requirements.

First year:

- By March 31, 2022, conduct a fake election asking ODV to exercise both paper and electronic balloting. The electronic balloting will show the range of information available including access to candidate statements as well as the ability to vote for a particular candidate.
- By April 15, 2022, visit Election Services to see their facilities and understand their processes and election security/validation. This would include one E&E member, one member from staff, and maybe a board member with IT skills/background.
- By May 1, 2022, sign a contract with Election Services for a 3-year contract.

- By June 1, 2022, author a description of the electronic and paper balloting process which will act as a guide for implementing the election and a source for articles to be published at least twice in QST, distributed via the ARRL Newsletter, and available on the ARRL website.
- By June 22, 2022, author the articles described above in order to meet the publishing deadline for the September QST.
- By August 1, 2022, develop a template for paper ballots and electronic balloting.
- September, October 2022, publish the electronic balloting articles.
- Conduct the first electronic election in October/November 2022. All affected division members will receive paper ballots along with instructions on how to vote electronically in the alternative

#### Second year:

- By August 1, develop a template for paper ballots and electronic balloting.
- September, October publish descriptions of the process in QST
- Elections conducted in October/November. All affected division members will receive paper ballots along with instructions on how to vote electronically in the alternative

#### Third year:

- By August 1, develop a template for paper ballots and electronic balloting.
- September, October publish descriptions of the process in QST
- Elections conducted in October/November. All affected division members will receive paper and email notices with instructions on how to vote electronically and how to request paper ballots in the alternative. Members without email will automatically receive paper ballots.

#### Subsequent years:

- By August 1, develop a template for paper ballots and electronic balloting.
- September, October publish descriptions of the process in QST
- Elections conducted in October/November. All affected division members will receive email notices on with instructions on how to vote electronically and how to request paper ballots in the alternative. Members without email will automatically receive paper ballots.

There is concern that not all ARRL members will have a chance to experience electronic balloting over the initial three year cycle. It is our belief that through coverage of the process in newsletters and QST and possibly by creating a mock dummy election page (with appropriate functionality), all members will become familiar enough with the process to be comfortable. While we could consider division by division roll outs, the process would likely cost more than its added value.

#### **Review**

In accord with its charter E&E will review the election process each year, identify any problems or issues, and make recommendations on required changes.