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## 6.3 BOABC MEMBERSHIP SERVICES REPORT APRIL 2010

### SECURED ELECTRONIC VOTING

#### Executive Summary

Under the current voting system members may only vote on the business of the Association at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) or a special meeting called for such a purpose. Recognizing the vast area served by our members and their difficulty in attending these meetings, it has long been a desire of the Executive to improve the voting process, making it more inclusive and thereby more democratic. The Corporate and Business Plan specifically states this as it contemplates various replacement mechanisms including internet based balloting systems. The current Bylaw wording mandates that voting shall take place "... by the membership present at the Annual General Meeting" or at a "...special general meeting". This wording is restrictive and stands in the way of the changes needed to improve the system. As a result a motion is sought from the membership by the Executive to change the wording of the Bylaw to allow for the creation of an improved voting system based on the Internet.

The Executive further recommends the implementation of **Secured Electronic Voting (SEV)** using a website specifically designed for this purpose. This requires the creation of a nominations period followed by an elections period culminating with the AGM where the voting results would be announced. The nominations procedures would as result require adjustments, removing in the process the practice of nominating from the floor. This again requires changes to the wording of the Bylaw.

The idea of improving the voting procedure is a fundamental directive of our Corporate and Business Plan and has been presented to the members a number of times at the AGM's, receiving positive feedback, at least conceptually. It is time now to drive down into the details of how this might work and make recommendations for the necessary changes to the applicable Bylaws.

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## **First Principles of a New Election System**

The first step in analyzing the needs of a new voting system is to establish some guiding principles. These are as follows:

### **Democracy\_**

Like perfection, complete democracy is an unattainable absolute. However in all voting procedures we strive to achieve it. Certainly our current mechanism can stand improvement.

### **Anonymity\_**

Votes must remain anonymous as they are in our current system. In a web based system during the elections period the administrator will know **if** a member has voted, but not **how** they voted.

### **Security\_**

The system must be secure from misuse and tampering. With web based systems voting members will be given an access number (PIN) or other security mechanisms and only permitted to vote once for each candidate.

### **Ease of use\_**

For voters a simple, clear and easy step by step process is a must. Similarly for administrators, quick assessments and results should be easily understood and available in real time.

### **Inclusiveness\_**

All voting members must have access to the system. Staff has established that all members have email and web access; even in the most remote areas the web is available. The internet is also available in other public locations.

**Fairness\_** Current practices specifically nominations from the floor can be unfair; everyone willing to run for office should have an equal opportunity.

### **Participation\_**

The more the merrier! This will profoundly change the way we elect members to the Executive, hopefully encouraging people run for office. Biographies, experience, background, photos etc. may be posted with nominations.

**Cost effective\_** the costs should be kept to a minimum.



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## **BACKGROUND**

We are directed in large degree by our Bylaws under the “Meetings” heading which state in part “Roberts Rules of Order shall govern **all** matters not covered by the bylaws” (Bylaw Part 3. 7.5). This means that where procedures are not specified, RRO are the rules by which we are governed and generally it is under these rules that we operate our current elections system.

”Mail-in” and “electronic Voting” are actually contemplated in Roberts Rules of Order, specifically for organizations such as ours with members spread over a large geographic area. Mechanisms for implementation and verification procedures are spelled out in RRO but are based on old fashioned surface mail with nominations directly mailed to members, mail outs for ballots including stamped return envelopes, time consuming verification, tabulation etc. These are of course old cumbersome concepts, which are slow, resource intensive and not reflective of a modern wired society. The Corporate Plan specifically uses the terms “proxy, mail-in and e-mail” ballots. We have recently had concerns answered by legal opinion regarding the appropriateness of email as a means of communication which was further upheld by the voting members at the last special meeting. Allowing ourselves latitude in the interpretation of these terms then, there are various modern options we may consider. There are other ways of communicating electronically that are equivalent to or an improvement on “mail”.

## **OPTIONS**

### **Internet based ballots\_**

The first assumption of any internet based voting system must be that all voting members have access to a computer and the internet. This is assured these days given the extent to which our industry relies upon the internet. Staff has confirmed that all voting members, in fact all members, have access to the web, either at work, at home or both. The web can also be accessed remotely at libraries, other public buildings or web cafes, even if out of province or country.

**E mail ballots\_** setting up a voting mechanism using the existing email system is possible but would involve much staff time in verification of voting eligibility, tabulation, recording, recounting if necessary, etc. Security and anonymity can be difficult to maintain using an email system.



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**Web site based ballots\_** An in house mechanism could be designed using our own website but this would be very staff intensive and would take some time to design, create, test, de-bug, etc.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The simplest method and the one recommended by your Executive is to make use of available services already in existence on line. Some websites have been developed with our needs in mind and one such website in particular seems to be tailor made for our purposes. The website is called “Voting on Demand” and can be found at [https://vod.votenet.com/site/demo\\_asd01.cfm](https://vod.votenet.com/site/demo_asd01.cfm)

This website is a secure self administered site set up for organizations such as ours and can accommodate up to 10,000 members. The cost of this service is based on the number of votes and for our roughly 600 members it would be in the neighborhood of \$500.00 to \$600.00 per election.

### **Establishing Eligible Voting Members:**

Only Regular and Associate One Members in good standing (dues paid up) are entitled to vote. (Bylaw part 2. 3. and 6. 4). A list of these members would need to be created and maintained by staff to eliminate the possibility of non-eligible votes. This is most critical during the nomination and voting periods. Eligibility could be confirmed at the time of annual dues submission with a PIN included with the membership card. At elections time voters would log on to the website using the PIN, a membership number, or similar security device, which could only be used once to vote for each vacant seat.

### **Nominations and Voting**

Currently nominees for elected positions happen in one of two ways:

1. Zone Director nominees are chosen by the zone members at a zone meeting and forwarded on to the nominations committee **or** are nominated from the floor at the AGM
2. Nominations for President and Vice presidents are brought forward to the nominations committee and presented to the membership at the AGM.



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This would need to change using the web based system. It is imperative that the new elections process be complete by the end of the AGM in order for the new Executive to assume their duties. In a web based system if the voting results are to be concluded by the end of the meeting, nominations would have to occur well in advance of voting. As such they could not occur from the floor of the AGM. Currently Zone Directors are elected by the entire voting membership at the AGM. In this proposed system only members from a particular zone would nominate and elect their respective Zone Director. This can be easily managed through a web based system but requires that members declare the zone in which they work.

In the proposed system a **Nominations Period** would be established over a period of perhaps one month. This would occur some fixed time before the **Voting Period** and AGM. The Nominations period would close and the Voting period would commence 2 weeks before the conference, and close at the beginning of the AGM. The results of the voting would be verified, tabulated and then announced at the end of the meeting.

Members attending the conference could if they wish vote directly from the conference floor through computers set up in booths and linked to the website. This would give them the opportunity to meet and talk to the candidates before voting, helping them with their decision. The voting itself would remain secret as it is now, and although the administrator would know who has voted, they wouldn't know how they voted. This should encourage more involvement from members both as voters and as potential candidates.

### **Other Considerations:**

Things we currently vote for at the Annual General Meeting:

- Election of Executives (Bylaw part 4. 10)
- Bylaw amendments (Bylaw 8.25, 75% required)
- Dues Increases (Bylaw Part 2.6.)
- Honorary Members (Bylaw Part 2. f. 2/3 of members present at AGM)
- Life members (Bylaw Part 2.g. 2/3 of the Executive and then 2/3 of members present at AGM)
- Removal of Executives from Office - Bylaw 4.14



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We must decide which of these we want to vote for using the new system. Clearly we would want the full voting membership to have the opportunity to vote on important issues such as Executive positions, Bylaw amendments, dues increases, etc. but voting on minor issues may be left to be decided by the attendees at the AGM.

### **Conclusion**

The Executive seeks from the membership by way of motion to change the wording in the Bylaw at instances where the Bylaw states “elected’ or “voted.” FROM ...”at the Annual General Meeting” TO “...by the accepted voting procedures.”

This wording allows the flexibility to develop policy that would incorporate the procedure described above and to adjust it in the future if necessary.

I look forward to comments and input from the membership at this year’s conference with the hope of fine tuning these procedures into policy and implementing this system for the elections at the 2011 AGM.

I am confident that with the increased opportunity to participate the membership will be enlivened with an improved sense of involvement with their Association.

Respectfully Submitted  
Frank Hill, RBO. CRBO.  
VP Membership Services