



MICHIGAN 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Michigan 4-H Advisory Groups

Parliamentary Procedure: Voting

Often questions arise around proper voting techniques and processes. Different situations require different types of voting and some types are not utilized in 4-H clubs, board and committees. Following is a list of different types of voting and an explanation of where or if they are appropriate along with procedures for voting.

Proxy Voting- Proxy voting is when you allow someone else to take your vote when you cannot make it to a meeting. Proxy voting should not be used in 4-H clubs, committees or boards. When a person is serving in a leadership role in 4-H they are often representing a larger group already. It is their responsibility to listen to the discussion, listen to the information brought by other board members from the greater membership, be diligent in finding out the opinions of the greater membership themselves and share it with the board then make an informed decision on votes once all of this information is heard. Proxy voting diminishes a person's ability to listen to all of the viewpoints brought to the group before voting. Proxy Voting is incompatible with the essential characteristics of a deliberative assembly in which membership is individual, personal, and nontransferable.ⁱ

Absentee Voting- Absentee voting is when you are allowed to cast your vote early because you will not be available for the meeting. Absentee voting should not be used in 4-H clubs, committees or boards for the same reasons outlined above.

Ballot voting

President should Vote- For Ballot voting of membership a President casts their vote along with everyone else as part of the membership. They would not be utilized to break a tie in ballot voting.

Secret Ballot- The best practice for elections is to use secret ballot voting when electing members to a board/ committee or when electing officers. In these types of elections a raise of hands or a simple "aye" should not be used. Having ballot voting allows for everyone to vote in private and not be swayed by popularity or intimidation.

*Majority Rules Voting-*Most groups use a simple "majority rules" to determine the winner in a ballot voting scenario. This means that the person receiving the most votes wins the office. This form of voting is preferred when there are only two candidates, and is commonly used when there are more than two candidates. Occasionally, this type of voting can result in a tie. When more than two candidates are running for a position, the candidate receiving the least votes can be dropped from the ballot then a re-vote can take place for the top in order to break a tie. If a tie still exists then a coin toss is suggested.

Preferential Voting – Another option to voting is when there are three or more candidates is to use preferential voting. This type of voting will often eliminate ties. In this process the voter would rank the candidates. For example if they are voting for three candidates they would put a 1 next to the person

they feel would best fit the job, a 2 next to the second best and a 3 next to the third choice. If a tie still exists then a coin toss is suggested.

Voiding Ballots- If a ballot allows for someone to vote for three and they have voted for four then the entire ballot is void. If Ballots are returned either by mail or to the appropriate person collecting the ballots outside of a meeting they must remain sealed until the tellers determined to count the ballots are all present. If a ballot is opened or unsealed before the official counting takes place it is void.

Valid Ballots- If a ballot allows for three votes and less than three are cast the ballot is still valid and should be accepted.

Collecting Ballots- Ballots done by mail should not be mailed to a volunteer's house but instead be mailed to the Extension office for collection. Ballots should remain sealed until official counting takes place.

Counting Ballots- Often this is the secretary and at least one other person determined by the committee. If the secretary is affected by the election (i.e. they or a family member is on the ballot) they should excuse themselves from counting the ballots. There should always be more than one person to count the ballots. MSU Extension staff members are often acceptable tellers because they are unable to vote in most 4-H Council and Committee elections.

Destroying the Ballots- After the election takes place and the results are verified it is common practice in 4-H to accept a motion to destroy the ballots. This practice is so ballots from all the many elections do not have to be stored and kept, taking up valuable storage space. Once the vote is verified and accepted there is really no reason to review the ballots again.

If you have further questions in regards to Parliamentary Procedure or voting please contact the Leadership Civic Engagement Team at 4-HLeadership@anr.msu.edu. You may also find other valuable resources at http://msue.anr.msu.edu/topic/info/leadership_citizenship.

ⁱ Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised 11th Edition