

Failure to Hold Election at the 2020 WOW Hall Annual Meeting

First it is important to understand that information for each voter needed to be added to EZVoteOnline in order for the system to functionⁱ. This was made clear in meetings including the demonstration on Friday, August 7th. At that demonstration, a clear plan for how to proceed was presented including the involvement of multiple parties throughout the process to ensure the integrity of the election.

I subsequently became aware of the fact that Barbara Bochnovic had taken it upon herself to assume control of the election. Being very concerned about the integrity of the election, I sent an email making it clear that I was willing to come to the W.O.W. Hall and adhere to the agreement that had been made for a fair election and the role I had prepared to fulfill, but if that agreement was not honored, I would only monitor the election as a poll watcher.

It was my understanding that a Board member had provided assurances that the original agreement would be honored and I would work with Bob Fennessy in a reasonably distraction free space. We would collaborate, and in doing so, we would also both be able to attest to each other's fair and honest dealing in the election process.

- When I arrived at the Hall, I received mixed messages from Barbara about whether or not the agreement would be honored.
- I was not allowed to begin data entry for over an hour after arriving.
- Even when my fellow volunteer, Cary Thompson, and I tried to work with Barbara in order to continue the election, the process kept changing in disturbing ways. For example,
 - Barbara was adding new conditions and features (like mixing in paper ballots) which undermined the protections the original plan put in place to ensure everyone would have confidence in the results.
 - When the vetting of legitimate voters was completed according to the process established by Bob and Barbara, they included voters not on the list based on their personal knowledge. This arbitrary checking off some names as valid and not others was disturbing.
- Ultimately, Barbara would not commit to honoring the agreement and I became concerned about becoming involved in a highly questionable process. I gave Barbara an ultimatum that she commit to letting me do what I went there to do. That meant I would work with Bob, we would monitor each other, and that we could do the work without interference. A great deal of time had passed, and at about 5:50pm, I finally gave her 5 minutes to decide. She did not provide an answer, so I left the Hall.

The email for collecting the voter information did become unavailable for a time during the meeting, which did have a detrimental impact on data entry, but we had overcome that obstacle. The vote did not proceed because of the failure to honor the agreement for a fair election process and obstructionism by staff.

Heather Kent

ⁱ The needed login information for vote@wowhall.org was not provided to enable retrieval of voter's names and email addresses. This should have been provided immediately after the email address was created on Friday (or was it created on Saturday?) to whomever was going

to make the spreadsheet. I had offered to compile the spreadsheet as part of my work on EZVoteOnline. As I had offered to do this, and, as apparently, they had not looked for someone else to do the task, the login information should have been immediately provided to me so that I could begin well ahead of the meeting. As it was, Barbara prevented it from being provided to me when I arrived at the WOW Hall at 1:50 pm on Sunday and pleaded for it. She continued to stonewall my repeated requests all the way up until the meeting started. I had explained to her over and over why it was so critical to get started on the data entry. To understand why this was so important, read on.

Because EZVoteOnline is an online system, an electronic means of contacting each voter is needed. The contact method is via email (there can be exceptions for those few people who do not have an email address). Thus, an email address for each voter needs to be entered into the system. The best way to do this is by uploading a spreadsheet that contains each voter's email and name to EZVoteOnline. For this reason, WOW Hall members were asked in advance to send a message containing their email address and membership name to vote@wowhall.org. Data from those emails needed to be entered into a spreadsheet. This had been clearly explained at the Friday meeting during the EZVoteOnline demonstration. Thus, it was very important to have as much work as possible done on the spreadsheet in advance of the meeting. It was also clearly explained that as people arrived at the Sunday meeting their membership status would need to be verified by Bob Fennessy and a notation made on the spreadsheet (a number "1" in the first column next to their name, was the plan). This membership verification and notation activity would go on during the first part of the meeting as people arrived. Once everyone was present, the spreadsheet would be filtered so that all the names with a "1" would be grouped together at the top of the sheet. Other names and email addresses of people who were not at the meeting would be pulled off the sheet. We would then have a sheet that contained only current members who were present at the meeting. At that point the list would be ready for upload to EZVoteOnline. Once the data was uploaded, EZVoteOnline would send a unique, personalized email to each voter with links to their ballots. Then, as the meeting progressed, members would be instructed when to use each ballot link that they had received in their personalized email.

Staff either could not, or would not understand the fundamental requirement for smooth use of the EZVoteOnline system, which hinges on timely entry of contact information for voters. By not facilitating the uploading of that basic information there was no way that the EZVoteOnline platform could have been successfully used for the election. By not facilitating and assuring advance creation of the membership contact information spreadsheet (preventing starting even one hour before the meeting, never mind the day before), Staff obstructed the use of EZVoteOnline and created a panic situation at 3:00 pm on Sunday. This huge obstruction, combined with the failure (for 1 hour and forty minutes) of the [vote@wowhall](mailto:vote@wowhall.org) email address created a situation that made the use of EZVoteOnline impossible. The failure of the email address would not have prevented the use of EZVoteOnline if data entry had started earlier.