

POLICY MOTION

TITLE: Bylaws Amendment: Ballot Requests

PURPOSE: To amend the MVCC bylaws to allow for ballot requests through self-affirmation.

BACKGROUND: Voter turnout in the MVCC elections was quite low. Official statistics have not been released yet, but a decent estimate of full turnout can be derived from the results in the race for Youth Director. All stakeholders were able to vote in this race, and it was contested, unlike the race for community director. A total of 295 stakeholders cast a vote for Youth Director. Mar Vista includes 51,169 residents according to 2020 census data. This reflects turnout of 0.58%. This is less than ideal.

As the most local form of government in Los Angeles, one of the primary purposes of a neighborhood council is to foster engagement among the community. One way to do so is to raise stakeholder participation in the democratic process. Another purpose of a neighborhood council is to inform the City Council of the views of its stakeholders. The City Council likely gives more weight to the recommendation of NCs with higher turnout, as they reflect the direct will of more Los Angeles voters.

There are many possible explanations for the low level of voter turnout in this past cycle: lack of awareness about elections; a lower level of civic engagement in the public; relative ease or difficulty of requesting a ballot, to name a few. Some of these factors are outside the control of the MVCC; however, the MVCC bylaws include an uncommon requirement that voters submit separate proof of residency when requesting a ballot by mail. This requirement is a vestige of earlier times when the majority of MVCC residents voted in person. Now, elections are vote by mail only, and such an onerous requirement could lead to reduced turnout, especially when the extra required documentation is not clear.

Many neighborhood councils allow stakeholders to request a ballot by mail through self-affirmation. This requires a voter to declare under penalty of perjury that they are qualified to vote in the election. The ballot is then mailed to the compliant address that they listed in the self-affirmation, ensuring the voter's valid residency, as they can only receive the ballot if they truly reside in Mar Vista. This process is much easier and would allow many more residents to receive ballots and vote by simply opening an online account to request a ballot and filling out a self affirmation. Conversely the current process requires a stakeholder to: (1) open an online account; (2) cross reference the neighborhood council elections handbook to determine acceptable documentation; (3) scan and upload proof of residency; (4) keep track of emails from the City that would notify the stakeholder of any deficiencies in their document production; and (5) potentially provide further documentation.

Thus, the following motion would amend the MVCC bylaws to allow stakeholders to request a ballot through self-affirmation.

THE MOTION: Article X, Section 4: Method of Verifying Stakeholder Status, currently reads as follows:

"Voters will verify their declared Stakeholder status by providing documentation acceptable to the City of Los Angeles and/or City Clerk—Election Division. Community interest Stakeholders

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will also be required to provide a form of documentation to substantiate their community interest claim."

This motion would amend Article X, Section 4 to read as follows:

"Stakeholders will verify their Stakeholder status through self-affirmation."

DIRECTED TO: MVCC Board of Directors

ACTION/VOTE COUNT:

MVCC Board Meeting, May 6th, 2025

Motion of opposition moved by Director XXX, seconded by Director XXX

Motion of opposition approved by the MVCC Board XX-XX-XX