

Notes from the Public Meeting on the Election Guidelines held November 10, 2025

Prepared by Edward Richards, November 25, 2025

Introduction

The meeting started at 6:30PM and adjourned about 7:30PM. There was a good turnout and many members of the community participated in the discussion. These notes attempt to summarize the excellent ideas of the community members and to provide a basis for further discussion and action.

Access to Slayton House during the election

There was a consensus that the Howard County drug drop-off program caused access problems. Since people are expected to drive through the parking lot and drop drugs off from their car, there was a constant stream of traffic. It was also unlikely that it brought in many voters because it is countywide and discouraged people from stopping. If it cannot be scheduled at another time, there were several good suggestions of other locations nearby where it could be held, including the Wilde Lake Interfaith Center.

Most people felt that the plant adoption program did attract voters and could be moved away from the doors of Slayton House so that there could be a buffer zone to clearly show where electioneering is not allowed. There were suggestions to mark off the area and to have a walkthrough the day before with the candidates.

While it was not discussed in the meeting, we might consider reducing the buffer distance from the polling tables. The current requirement is 100 feet from the polling tables. This could be changed to no electioneering inside Slayton House and within 25 feet of the entrances to Slayton House. This would be easier to implement and would still provide a clear access area to the polls. We do not have the large crowds of voters or of candidate supporters that lead public elections to use a 100-foot buffer.

Election hours

Many people were concerned that the election hours, 10AM-2PM, were too short. It was noted by Bill Santos and others that voting falls off in the afternoon. A number of people commented that this is a busy time of year and opening the polls earlier, say at 9AM, would be more helpful than keeping the polls open later.

How many votes per unit?

There was a discussion about whether there is only one vote per unit. The bylaws do not clearly resolve this, which led to some confusion. It is addressed in the Articles of Incorporation, but the language is arcane. The Seventh Section, paragraph B, reads:

B. When any lot, unit, share, membership or other interest, as described in Article Sixth above in connection with qualification for membership, is owned or held by more than one member as tenants by the entirety or in joint tenancy or tenancy in common or any other manner of joint or common ownership or interest, such members shall collectively be entitled to only one vote relative to that lot, unit, share, membership or other interest, and if such members cannot jointly agree as to how that vote should be cast, no vote shall be allowed with respect to such lot, unit, share, membership or other interest.

This does not mention a lease, and the references to tenancy are to forms of joint real estate ownership, not rental agreements. However, a lease is an interest in property, as in the phrase “any other manner of joint or common ownership or interest.” Thus, both tenants and property owners are covered by this provision. This means that there is only one vote per unit (single-family detached house, townhouse, condo, apartment, co-op, or other dwelling unit, as defined elsewhere in the Articles of Incorporation). Under this provision, if there is a dispute over who can vote for the unit, then no one can vote. There were questions about changing this rule at the meeting. However, as discussed at the meeting, the Articles of Incorporation are difficult to change because they require a majority of all members who are eligible to vote to approve the change.

Absentee voting and notice of rejected ballots.

There was an extended discussion of absentee ballots. Many members were concerned about potential lost votes from individuals who are eligible to vote. At the same time, people wanted to ensure that if an individual’s ballot was disqualified, the individual would be notified and given a chance to cure the problem with the ballot. The absentee ballots have a phone number and/or email address that could be used to contact the voter and explain the problem. There was general support for doing this. It would require notification before election day, or there would need to be a provision to consider the disqualified ballot as provisional and give the member a few days after election day to correct the error. This would also give time to correct problems that are identified during in-person voting on election day. One idea would be to post the voting list on the WLW WWW site so folks could check to see if they are on the list before submitting a ballot. It would also be valuable to post the list of the units that voted after the election.

Increasing tenant voting participation

Very few tenants vote in WLW elections. There was an extended discussion of increasing the number of tenants who vote in WLW elections. WLW Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws require that a tenant file a lease with the HOA to become a voting member of the HOA. It was discussed that other villages have less complicated requirements for tenants to vote,

but that this would require changing the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. While neither document requires the lease to be refiled each year, there was concern that people might be able to continue to vote after moving out of WLW unless they refile a valid lease each year.

There was general support for making it easy for tenants to present their leases, including emailing the lease to the Village office. If the Village created a devoted email address for filing leases, Gmail can be set up to automatically add the information from emails to that address to a spreadsheet. This would reduce the work necessary to keep an up-to-date list of tenants eligible to vote. A link to the list could be posted on the WWW site so that tenants could check their status.

There were many useful ideas on getting information about voting to the tenants. These included a voter registration table at festivals and other community events and posting information in the common areas of the apartment buildings. A short guide to voting for tenants could be prepared to use at events and for posting. This could be posted on the WLW WWW site year-round, perhaps as part of a Welcome to WLW page for tenants.

There was also discussion of Dear Occupant mailouts to apartment addresses. There was some confusion about what is currently mailed out. It was reported that the mailout is in February and that it includes the ballots. The candidates are usually not confirmed until sometime in March, and the ballots are prepared after that.

There was a consensus that we needed more information about how to reach tenants and the impediments to voting. We need to get tenants involved in this discussion and ideally represented on the Board.