

Selectboard Meeting – 12/20/2021

Town Meeting Ballot Notes

New Election Law:

- This year (2021) election law changed in a few different ways. Notably, the State (Secretary of State's Office) will mail ballots to all active voters for General Elections. This does NOT include Primaries or Local Elections.
- The new law, 17 V.S.A §2680 g(1), allows towns to determine for themselves if they want to mail ballots to all active voters for local elections: "The legislative body of a town, city, or village may vote to mail a ballot to all active registered voters in the town, city, or village."
- The law also states, 17 V.S.A §2680 g(2): "A school board may, after receiving the approval of the legislative body of each member town in the district, vote to mail its annual meeting ballot to all active registered voters in the district. In such case, the town clerk and election officials in the member towns shall be responsible for the mailing of the ballots but all costs associated with the mailing of ballots shall be borne by the school district."

Three options:

1. Milton Selectboard could vote to conduct the TMD election per usual, by providing early/absentee ballots upon request. (Least cost, preferred option.)

- Voters can request a ballot a number of ways:
 - Online at My Voter Page: mvp.vermont.gov.
 - Phone call to Clerk's Office
 - Email to Clerk's Office
 - Print request form off Milton website and return to Clerk's office (mail or drop box)
 - In-person at the Clerk's Office
- Voters can request ballots now, before ballots are even ready, and the Clerk's office will save the requests and mail ballots as soon as they arrive.
- By VT State law, printed ballots must be back from the printer and available no later than 20 days before the election (February 9, 2022).

2. As done in March 2021, Milton could mail informational postcards. (Expensive, but could test voter checklist.)

- In 2021, the postcard costs were reimbursed by the State.
- We do not have funds in the current budget to mail postcards again.
- Town Clerk would prefer not to spend more funds than necessary, but recognizes there is value in reaching all registered voters and testing the mailing

addresses for accuracy (opportunity to clean up checklist before the next General Election).

- The postcards encourage participation in the election, but social media posts are free and could be an effective alternative.
- **The costs of mailing postcards in 2021: ≈ \$5,791.53**
 - Postage for outgoing postcards \$1,337.45
 - Postage for return postcards \$2,764.08
 - Postcard print & mail service \$1,690.00
- Remember that postage costs have increased since March 2021.

3. Milton could mail ballots to all registered voters. (Expensive, wasteful, reduced voter trust.)

- The town is responsible for all costs associated with ordering ballots and the required mailing envelopes (outgoing, certificate and return envelopes) and postage to mail back and forth.
- We did not budget to mail all ballots for FY22, so we would have to take funds from some other line item to make this possible.
- **Approximate cost to mail to all registered voters: \$12,999.00**
 - Envelopes (≈ \$3,050.00).
 - One box of 500 envelopes is between \$30-\$50 each box.
 - 3 types of envelope required per mailed ballot.
 - $3 \text{ (env)} \times 10,129 \text{ (120\% reg voters)} = 30,387 \div 500 \text{ (box)} = 61 \text{ (boxes)} \times \$50 \text{ (each box)} = \$3,050$
 - Ballots (≈ \$2,556.00)
 - Last year 6,000 ballots = \$1,514.09
 - $1,514.09 \div 6,000 = 0.25235 \text{ (each)} \times 10,129 = \$2,556$
 - Postage (≥ \$7,393.00)
 - $\$0.73 \text{ per ballot (over one ounce)} \times 10,129 = \$7,394$
 - Possible cost for using a mailing service...
- Town Clerk is strongly opposed to this option.
- Milton has 8,441 registered voters (as of 12/17/21)
- Back in November 2020, the SOS ordered ballots for 120% of registered voters, to account for voters that received one in the mail, but showed up at the polls in-person without it. (120% of 8,441 is 10,129)
- In March 2020, which was also a Presidential Primary, Milton had about 3001 voters participate (632 early/absentee)
- In March 2021, when the town mailed postcards to each registered voter, about 2221 voters participated (1,516 early/absentee)

- Despite best efforts to clean up the voter checklist this summer, it is nowhere near perfect and ballots could still be mailed to former residents of an address, creating doubt in the system and opportunity/temptation for voter fraud.

Polling Location:

In recent meetings, the topic of changing the location of Milton's polling location has come up.

- VT Law 17 V.S.A § 2501 says "(a) The board of civil authority shall designate one or more polling places within a town; however, the voters at a regular or special meeting warned for that purpose may designate different polling places."
- The BCA is comprised of the Justices of the Peace, Town Clerk and Selectboard members.
- The BCA would need to meet, discuss and vote to change Milton's polling place. It must be done before 30 days prior to an election (before 1/30/22). A polling place change is only allowed within the 30 days prior to an election in the case of an emergency. 17 VSA §2502 c(2)A