

DCP Election Procedures

The purpose of this document is to provide details on how to conduct the election of members to the DCP board of directors. The DCP constitution and by-laws set forward the rules for electing these members, but this document serves as a guide for how to implement those rules.

Annual Membership Meeting

As set forward by the Constitution, election of directors to the board must take place annually at the Fall general membership meeting. Replacement directors may be elected at general membership meetings called for that purpose at other times in the year. Other business may be conducted at these meetings either before or after the election as set forward in the meeting agenda.

Board Description

When the meeting agenda calls for the election to begin, either the person chairing the meeting, or someone appointed by the chair, should explain several things to the membership gathered.

- Tell them how many positions are available to be filled at this election.
- Explain the powers and responsibilities of the board members.
 - To manage, run, and execute the day-to-day functions of DCP
 - To ensure the continuation of DCP as a community theater organization
 - To choose and elect the shows and production staff for the DCP season
 - To ensure that the shows are produced for the betterment of DCP
- Be sure to explain that this election will only determine which DCP members will become directors; which directors hold specific offices is determined internally by the board itself. Offer to answer any questions the members have.
- Explain the election process, and answer any questions.

Nominations

Once all questions have been answered and the gathered members understand what is about to happen, call for nominations. Drawing on Robert's Rules of Order, note the following:

- Any member may nominate any other member.
- Any member may nominate him or herself (though it may seem awkward).
- Any number of people may second a nomination to show their support, but it is not necessary for a nomination to be seconded for it to be added to the ballot.
- A member doesn't need to be present to be nominated (though it would be wise to have some assurances that the member would accept office before making the nomination).
- Any member nominated and present may decline the nomination, in which case the members name is not added to the ballot.

- It is not permitted to make a motion to close nominations; the process simply continues until it is clear that no member wishes to make any further nominations. It is recommended that the chair of the meeting calls 3 times for nominations before moving on.

It is worth mentioning that the nomination process is a formality for convenience. As is suggested later in this document, votes can be legally cast for people who were not nominated and those votes must be counted. The nomination process merely makes it clear which members would be willing to serve, and to some extent, whether they are supported by others.

Testimonials and Discussion

Give members a chance to explain why they nominated the member(s) they nominated. Give the nominees a chance to explain why they wish to serve on the DCP board. Open the floor for any discussion or comments that members wish to have before moving on to voting.

It's nice to let people speak, but if it gets out of hand, a motion can be made to close discussion and begin voting.

Secret Ballots

In accordance with the DCP by-laws, the election shall be by secret ballot. In accordance with the DCP constitution, a plurality of votes in descending order shall be used to determine the winners. What is not specified is how many names a member may write on their ballot.

Traditionally, each member writes a number of names on his or her ballot equal to or less than the number of positions available. Make sure the members understand that each name written counts as a full vote; it is not counted as $\frac{1}{4}$ just because they voted for 4 members.

You should have the names of all nominated members written where everyone can see to make it easy for members to fill out their ballots and to avoid problems with spelling. Also, make sure everyone knows which name belongs to which person.

Each member gets one slip of paper on which to write their votes. After writing their votes, the member should fold the slip of paper in half, and these ballots should be collected in a single container.

Counting the Ballots

Several volunteers should be given the task of counting the votes, working together to make sure that no mistakes are made. No member who wishes to be part of this process, or at least observe it, should be excluded. This assures fairness and eliminates any doubts about the results. The members counting the votes should understand the following:

- A ballot which contains more names than the number of positions available is invalid and should not be counted.

- Each name on a valid ballot counts as one vote for the person named.
- It is perfectly legal for someone to write the name of someone who was not nominated, and that vote should be counted.

The results should be read out to the members gathered. According to Robert's Rules of Order, this means specifically reading out how many votes each candidate received. It is then up to the chair to review those numbers and announce the winners.

The ballots should not be discarded until the winners are determined and the members gathered are satisfied that the ballots can be discarded.

Special Circumstances

Some special circumstances may arise during the election process. Here are some suggestions and some information for dealing with them.

Skipping the Vote

If the number of nominees is less than or equal to the number of positions available, then it is a foregone conclusion that all of them will be members of the board. If there are no objections from any members, the voting procedure can be dispensed with and the winners announced.

Too Few Nominees

Every effort should be made to get enough people to accept nominations so that all of the seats can be filled, but sometimes it just isn't possible. In that case, clearly, everyone who was nominated will take office, but what will we do about the empty seats?

The constitution states that when there is a vacancy on the board, then the board shall call a special meeting to attempt to fill those vacancies. It would be a good idea to start the scheduling process right away while a hopefully large number of members are present. Those present should be encouraged to attend that meeting, and to spend the time before that meeting recruiting people who would accept nominations to the board. While not explicitly stated in the constitution or by-laws, you should try to schedule the meeting to occur within the next 30 days.