

Governance Committee Report on 2020 Board Election

Committee Name: Governance

Date of Report: September 14, 2020

Written/submitted by: Becky Lund

For the 12th consecutive year, the Governance Committee provides this report to the Board under the authority of Nova Board policy 202. The purpose of this report is to provide a written summary of the last Nova Board election, with participation percentage and recommendations for increasing voter education and participation, as well as applicable dates/deadlines for the 2021 board election. As has become customary, this report also discusses additional issues and recommendations that may affect Nova board elections.

Executive Summary

The 2020 election was delayed for a month due to Covid-19 and distance learning at the end of the school year. Several other events may have affected the turnout including large protests and riots in the Twin Cities which occurred during the two-week voting period.

Voter participation percentage is as follows:

2020 = 31% (delayed election due to Covid-19)

2019 = 40% (only two teacher candidates on ballot and a shorter - 2 wks instead of 3 - voting window)

2018 = 31%

2017 = 38%

2016 = 54.2% (switched to electronic ballot/voting instead of paper)

2015 = 29%

2014 = 35%

2013 = 39%

2012 = 52%

2011 = 51%

2010 = 42%

2009 = 56%

This year, only one community member was nominated for two open community member seats. The second seat remains open at this time. One teacher ran for the one teacher seat and ten parents ran for four parent seats.

The committee recommends continuing the existing practices of providing early reminders to the Nova community about the election process, updating and publishing written Election Guidelines, and communicating these items and any additional matters relevant to the board election process on a regular basis. The Governance Committee will continue to discuss and investigate best practices for getting election information to all members of the Nova community.

Additionally, the Governance Committee recommends continuing with the online voting as our experiences with Simply Voting continue to be excellent.

Discussion

I) Recommended Dates & Deadlines for 2021 Board Election.

The date for the board meeting which also functions as the approval of the election results is Monday, May 24, 2021. Additional dates and deadlines will be provided in an online 2021 Election Timetable as the election approaches. A draft of the timetable is attached to this report.

The Governance Committee recommends continuing with a two-week voting period coupled with continuing to provide numerous reminders to vote during that period. Simply Voting allowed us to send reminders to everyone who had not yet voted and each time a reminder was sent, approximately 20 – 30 people voted.

II) Pre-Election Publicity and Documentation.

A) Early Reminder Letter. Each January since 2010 an Early Reminder Letter and/or Brochure was distributed to the Nova Community, detailing the seats up for election, the overall timetable for the election with deadlines where applicable, a summary of the qualifications sought for a Nova board member, and suggestions for informing potential candidates about board service at Nova. In 2014 and after, this brochure was sent via email to the Nova community.

The Governance Committee recommends distributing an early reminder flyer via email in January 2021, but also include a recommendation to start thinking about people to nominate or self-nominate.

B) Call for Nominations Letter. This formal start to the annual election process is distributed to all Nova parents, teachers, current BoD members and the public. Nova's Bylaws require that this notice be sent at least 90 days before the Annual Meeting.

The Governance Committee recommends publishing/distributing a similar letter in 2021, with updates/clarification as appropriate. Going further, members of the Governance Committee will contact members of Board committees and other recommended leaders in the Nova community to encourage them to run or nominate someone else to run as this appeared to be effective with the 2020 election.

C) Candidate Nomination Form.

Several completed forms were submitted and the process went smoothly.

For 2021, the Governance Committee recommends using the same overall online form with minor changes as applicable based on current Board needs. It worked well to have everything on one form and it did not seem to be an issue that everything was conducted via Google forms. Additionally, the Governance Committee will continue to be more pro-active in soliciting nominations through Board committee members as well as doing more outreach into the Nova community for recommendations for nominations will be the most effective method of finding candidates.

D) Candidate Questionnaire Form.

All candidate questionnaires were received by the due date. All questionnaire responses were posted on the Nova web page. Copies of the questionnaire responses were also included in the voting packets mailed to the Nova community.

The Governance Committee recommends using a similar Google form in 2021, with updated questions reflecting the progress of the strategic plan, current Board goals, and other needs of the Nova Board of Directors. The Governance Committee also recommends again asking

candidates to submit a current photo to include in the Voter Packet. This would not be required, but is very helpful in connecting faces and names. Due to the delayed election, Covid-19, and other concerns, the Governance Committee did not attempt to ask candidates to make short introductory videos or encourage them to attend community events. These ideas will continue to be considered in the 2021 election as we're still looking for effective ways to share information with the Nova community.

III) Submission of Candidacy Timing.

The nomination period was extended due to the school needing to switch to distance learning in the middle of our election process. Several candidates submitted their information during this extended period. (Candidates who had already submitted their nomination information were contacted to make sure they knew about the change in the timeline.) Despite the timeline changes for 2020, the Governance Committee wants to continue to set the deadline for candidate submissions a few days prior to the Governance Committee meeting at which candidate applications are reviewed. This provides time for members of the committee to review the applications and make sure they meet the guidelines set by state statute and the Governance Committee. The Governance Committee recommends continuing to set clear and specific deadlines for all candidate information to be submitted for the candidate to be viable. Additionally, the chair of the Governance Committee will continue to respond to all nominations with a timeline, an invitation to attend the meeting, and any issues that may be obvious with the nomination (conflicts of interest, missing information, etc.)

IV) Candidate Choice of Category

No concerns or actions at this time.

V) Additional Candidate Information

The electronic ballot through Simply Voting contained information about each candidate, including their photo and candidate questionnaire answers. This went extremely well this year; no questions were submitted regarding the ballots or the candidate information. The Governance Committee will continue to send out an electronic copy of the Voter's Guide no later than the first day of voting to help get information to the voters. We will also continue to research other methods of getting information to voters.

VI) 2021 Nova Board Election Rules/Guidelines.

As it has done each year beginning in 2010, the Governance Committee recommends that an updated version be posted in several places on the Nova website prior to and during the 2021 election. The Governance Committee also recommends that the committee continue to remind all board members, voting and nonvoting, that campaigning on behalf of specific candidates in board elections may jeopardize Nova's tax-exempt status under IRS Section 501(c)(3).

VII) Increasing Voter Participation

The Governance Committee continues to discuss ways we can encourage more people to vote in the Board elections. Besides suggestions made in above sections, the Governance Committee is suggesting creating a short paragraph reminding parents to vote that faculty members could cut and paste into communications with families. This would be in addition to current notifications in the Nova News and other emails sent out by the Governance Committee.

VIII) Ballot/Vote Tallying.

The Governance Committee continues to find electronic voting to be much easier than paper ballots. The results were immediate and certified by Simply Voting. The Governance Committee recommends continuing to use Simply Voting for the 2021 election.

IX) Staggered Term Requirements.

As there have been concerns regarding finding enough candidates for open Board seats as well as less need for a large Board, the Governance Committee will look at possible recommendations for reducing the size of the Nova Board and make a recommendation to the Board no later than February 2021, to be voted on before election information is shared with the Nova community. If the Board approves a recommendation, it may affect the staggered terms. Otherwise, due to having two parent seats for three-year terms and two parent seats for two-year terms in the 2020 election, the seats up for election are evenly spread through the three-year cycle.

Nova Board Seats – Staggered Term Status as of September 14, 2020

Terms Expiring June 30, 2021 (4)

Parents: Claudia Gumbiner Hungs
Theresa Nelson

Teacher: Jason Belter

Community Member: Open Seat (due to resignation)

Terms Expiring June 30, 2022 (3)

Parents: Divya Karan
Frank Ross

Teacher: Becky Lund

Terms Expiring June 30, 2023 (4)

Parents: Melissa DeJesus Hernandez
Jennie Winter

Teacher: Diane Ruday

Community Member: Nick LaRusso

Timetable for the 2021 Nova Board Elections as of September 2020

Date Due	Event	Action Items Necessary	Person(s) Responsible
12/14/2020	Governance Committee Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review 2021 election flyer and update as needed Remind Board members and Board committee members to begin reaching out to potential candidates 	GC
1/11/2021	Governance Committee Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make final changes to the election flyer Approve and distribute the final copy via email Assign election tasks to members of the committee including continued publicity 	GC
2/8/2021	Governance Committee Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Call for Nominations Letter Review 2021 Election Rules/Guidelines Review draft election web page format Reach out to Nova parents and Nova faculty for recommendations for nominations Arrange for posting and emailing of Call for Nominations. Vote to hire Simply Voting (or other company) to run Nova's Board election (electronic voting). 	GC
2/15/2021	Distribution of misc. notices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish/circulate Call for Nominations for 2021 board election Publish election guide/rules Individually contact members of all Board committees to ask them to consider running or nominating someone to run for the Board <p>(Bylaws state that notification must happen at least 90 days before the Board meeting on May 24, 2021; this is 98 days before the meeting.)</p>	GC Chair (Becky), GC members
3/1/2021	Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish Nomination & Questionnaire Forms Publish start of Nomination Period 	GC Chair (Becky)
4/9/2021 at 4:00 PM	Close of Nominations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate all timely forms to the GC 	GC Chair (Becky)
4/12/2021	Governance Committee Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine eligibility & candidate roster & notify Board & Nova Community of candidates & election details no later than 4/20/21; Approve Voters Guide and email to the eligible Nova voting community by the 20th along with voting information including to watch for a ballot link from Simply Voting (or other company). 	GC

4/26/2021	2021 Voting window opens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simply Voting (or other company) sends ballot links to all eligible voters • Begin to include reminders in Nova News and other emails on voting and what to do if information is not received or lost 	TBD
5/10/2021	Voting window closes at 4PM Governance Committee Meeting at 6:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare final report on election • Provide notification to Board and to all candidates <p>(Voting period is 14 days long.)</p>	GC
5/24/2021	May Board Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver election report to Board for approval • Publish approved results to entire community 	GC Chair (Becky)