

Lowell PTA Standing Rules Explainer

2017-2018

Each year our PTA is required to approve our “Standing Rules” at the first general meeting. Typically, each year, amendments are made to the previous year’s rules. A rules committee, appointed by the full board, created this year’s proposed Standing Rules. The proposed standing rules are just that; a proposal. They don’t become official until voted on at a general meeting. The proposed rules are very similar to last year’s with the substantive changes being explained below. Minor changes, clarifications that don’t actually change rules, and typos are omitted from this discussion.

Board Membership:

Previously, according to our standing rules, the Board of Directors (“board”) was composed of elected officers (president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary). There was no other provision for becoming a board member. However, last year, several people were “de facto” board members, including casting votes. This was improper.

The rules committee voted to create an official route to appointing new voting members:

The President may appoint, and the existing board confirm by majority vote, new voting members to the Board of Directors.

We felt it important to make sure that we encouraged and facilitated underrepresented members of our community to participate in PTA leadership. We have proposed two specific actions to facilitate greater participation. First, we are proposing a \$2000 “Board Participation Grant” in this year’s budget proposal. This money would help pay for transportation, childcare, or other services, for any board member who

declared it a “financial hardship” to participate in board meetings. This grant proposal requires no change to the Standing rules, but is relevant to the topic. Second, we are proposing a new rule allowing board members to fully participate (including voting) in board meeting via teleconference.

Telephone or video conferencing does count as attending a board meeting. The board will accommodate, within reason, board members wishing to attend via conference.

Finally, we felt it was very important to make expectations clear about board membership. We felt that it was crucial to the supervisory and strategic nature of the board’s responsibilities that all board members stay informed of the challenges and issues facing the board, and to participate in those decisions. In the past, board membership has been granted (informally, see above) partly as a recognition of a substantial contribution to the Lowell PTA. We want to emphasize that in our opinion board membership is an additional supervisory and strategic role that must be affirmatively taken on as an *additional* responsibility.

To be eligible for appointment, the appointee must declare that they intend to attend the majority of board meetings.

Any board member who misses three board meetings in a row, unexcused by the President, is automatically considered as resigning from the Board of Directors.

Electronic Voting:

From time to time the board needs to vote on minor items, approve uncontroversial expenditures, or act on a rapid time table. We have proposed allowing the board to vote electronically. However, online votes must achieve quorum, be anonymous, and be unanimous. If it can't achieve that high bar, the vote must be taken in person, according to usual voting rules.

Electronic voting is not allowed for General Meetings. Electronic voting is allowed for board votes, using an electronic voting system designated by the President. Electronic votes must have a quorum of 50% plus 1 of board members. Votes will be anonymous. Votes will stay open for 3 days, unless the president declares a pressing need for a rapid vote. For a vote to be binding, it must be unanimous, otherwise an in-person vote is required. For purposes of this requirement, a board member participating in a meeting via teleconference counts as "in-person".

Best Starts Grant:

The Lowell PTA won an unusual and large grant last year. This grant operates very differently than typical PTA grants, and benefits not just Lowell students, but families all over the city. It has a professional staffer, a large budget, and unique needs and challenges. We have proposed two provisions that apply just to the administration of this grant.

Lowell PTA's All Seattle Kids Home (ASKH) project which manages the Best Starts grant is an extraordinary and unusual project different from usual PTA operations. Therefore there are special provisions that apply exclusively to this project and the administration of the Best Starts grant.

The provision prohibiting debit and credit cards being issued is waived for Best Starts accounts.

An ASKH project member shall report progress, challenges, plans, and finances related to the Best Starts grant at every board meeting.