



## **RMRA Motion to Change Membership Structure January 2014**

### **SUMMARY:**

The RMRA has traditionally relied on annual memberships for dues that pay for the RMRA's public meeting expenses and other activities. The RMRA constitution and by-law require membership renewals annually. The RMRA has been flexible about the timing of renewals and this flexibility, while convenient for residents, has led to difficulties in tracking memberships and payment due dates, to the extent that the RMRA no longer has a reliable list of members in good standing. The administration of a database that can track memberships are beyond the resources of the RMRA.

Given the difficulty of keeping track of memberships, it is next to impossible to determine whether a quorum of 15 paid-up members is at any given meeting. Calls to action, including the annual election of the Executive, is often voted on by less than 15 members, and votes cast by non-members are not discounted. The RMRA supports the votes and voices of all those who attend our meetings, and we wish to make the monthly meetings as inclusive as possible.

The RMRA wishes to amend the membership structure and requirements of its constitution and by-law to increase the number of people considered members and ease the administrative burden of tracking membership status. The RMRA proposes that anyone who opts in to our email mailing list be considered a member. Since all members will be accessible via email, it will be easier for the RMRA to ensure that 15 members are present to vote on resolutions. Members will pay what they wish and whenever they wish in order to support meeting costs. The RMRA is confident that this system will cover our annual expenses, and will encourage participation at meetings.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The RMRA's Constitution was adopted in 1973 and last updated in 2004. Its By-law was adopted in 2004. The constitution and by-law govern the structure and organization of the RMRA, and provide rules and protocols for the RMRA's activities. One of the elements that these documents govern is membership in the RMRA.

The RMRA has traditionally relied on annual memberships, open to residents within the RMRA boundaries, for annual dues that pay for the RMRA's public meeting expenses and other activities. The current membership dues are \$10 per household, or \$5 for the under-waged. Any person over 18 and not holding a political office whose household has paid its dues is considered a member.

*Membership Fees and Status.* The constitution and by-law require membership renewals annually. The RMRA has been flexible about the timing of renewals and allows any household to renew membership at any meeting or to mail the fee to the Treasurer. This flexibility, while convenient for residents, has led to difficulties in tracking memberships and payment due dates, to the extent that the RMRA no longer has a reliable list of members in good standing. This has posed difficulties in collecting

membership dues, as the RMRA is not able to keep track of when particular membership fees are due. The RMRA is a volunteer-run organization, and the development, management and administration of a robust database that can track memberships is beyond the financial and human resources of the RMRA.

*Member Voting Privileges.* Currently, a member is permitted to vote on resolutions (such as changes to the RMRA's by-law or constitution, or major actions to be undertaken by the organization). In addition, those serving on the RMRA's Executive Committee must be drawn from the organization's membership. A meeting quorum (needed in order to pass any resolution or vote on those who sit on the Executive Committee) is 15 members. However, given the difficulty of keeping track of memberships, and also due to typically low numbers of meeting attendees, it is next to impossible to guarantee that 15 paid-up members are at any given meeting. At many meetings, discussions and calls to action, including the annual voting in of the Executive Committee, is done by less than the required 15 members, and there are votes cast by non-members which are not discounted. The RMRA supports the votes and voices of all those who attend our meetings, and we wish to make the monthly meetings as inclusive and democratic as possible. Therefore, functionally, there has been very little distinction between members and non-members during meetings and discussions on issues.

For the above reasons, the RMRA wishes to amend its constitution and by-law to change the membership structure and requirements, with the aim of enhancing fee payment, increasing the number of people considered members thereby encouraging more participation and attendance at meetings, and easing the administrative burden of tracking membership status.

#### **NEW MEMBERSHIP PROPOSAL:**

- *Membership is Conferred by Opting into our Email List*  
The RMRA proposes that anyone who is on our email mailing list be considered a member. Membership will therefore become an opt-in process, by providing one's email address to the RMRA. Members can also opt-out by unsubscribing from our mailings. Membership will not be limited to those living within the boundaries of our area – all interested persons can become members and have a voice in the RMRA's activities. Members can provide their emails at the beginning of a meeting, and have the privilege to vote at that meeting. This eases the RMRA's obligations by requiring us to only maintain an updated email list.
- *Membership Dues are Pay-What-You-Wish*  
Members will pay what they wish and whenever they wish in order to support meeting costs. Payment will therefore become optional. The RMRA will request donations at each meeting and via occasional email campaigns. The RMRA is confident that we will receive adequate dues to cover our costs through this process.
- *Membership Benefits include Receiving Information, Voting Rights, Ability to Sit on the Executive, and to Form Committees*  
The RMRA proposes to retain the current privileges of members including eligibility to sit on the Executive Committee, to vote on RMRA resolutions, and to form a new Committee of the RMRA, with the support of the Executive (committee founders must be RMRA members, but committee participants may be non-members). Members will also receive regular emails containing community information and meeting information.

- *Meeting Quorum for Voting on Resolutions will Remain at 15 Members*  
The fact that all members will be accessible via email will make it easier for the RMRA to ensure that at least 15 members are present to vote on resolutions. Any meetings known in advance to include important votes will be well publicized via email and other social media, with a particular emphasis on encouraging members to attend.
- *Members May Vote on Certain Resolutions by Email*  
There may be some resolutions and discussions that are more efficiently or appropriately conducted via email, or there may be meetings at which members wish to vote but cannot attend. Therefore in certain circumstances, determined on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Committee, members may be allowed to vote via an email poll.

### **ENACTING MEMBERSHIP CHANGES:**

In order to enact these membership changes, some amendments need to be made to the RMRA's constitution and by-law.

According to the constitution,

"[Section] 10. Changes to the Constitution:

The constitution may be altered or amended at any general meeting of the Association.

- (a) By notice of Motion in writing,
- (b) After one month has elapsed, and,
- (c) By a majority vote of the members present."

According to the By-law,

"[Section] 1. The distinction between the constitution and the bylaws:

"Upon recommendation by the Executive Committee, with 14 days notice, changes to RMRA bylaws can be made with membership approval at any General Meeting."

A quorum of 15 existing members in good standing must be present at the vote.

### **Existing constitution language:**

Section 4. Membership:

- (a) All residents who live in the area [as defined by Section 2 of the constitution] have the right to attend and speak at General Meetings, subject to approval of the chair of the meeting.
- (b) A member is any person who has paid their annual membership fee, over the age of 18 years, residing in the area, and not holding a political office.
- (c) A member shall have the right to vote at General Meetings of the Association and elect the executive members at the Annual General Meeting.

Section 5. Membership Dues:

Nominal membership dues shall be determined from time to time by the Executive Committee and approved by a vote of the membership of the Association. Annual Membership will run 12 months from date of payment.

Section 7. Executive Committee: [first paragraph]

The Executive Committee shall consist of all of the executive members of the Association. The Executive Members are: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Convenor, Past Chair (when applicable), and At-Large members (as needed).

Section 8. Elections, Nominations, and Voting: [sub-section (d)]

- (d) Members shall be eligible to vote. Members are those that have not let their membership lapse more than one year.

Section 9: Duties of the Executive: [paragraph 4]

The Membership Convenor shall keep a confidential record of the names and addresses of all members, and be responsible for the collection of annual fees.

**Proposed constitution language (deletions are struck out and new wording is highlighted):**

Section 4. Membership:

- (a) Any persons with an interest in the area [as defined by Section 2 of the constitution] have the right to attend and speak at General Meetings, subject to approval of the chair of the meeting.
- (b) A member is any person who has provided an email address and has not unsubscribed, over the age of 18 years, residing in the area, and not holding a political office.
- (c) A member shall have the right to vote at General Meetings of the Association and elect the executive members at the Annual General Meeting.
- (d) Membership will run until terminated by the member acting to unsubscribe from the email list.
- (e) In rare cases, a membership may be revoked by the Executive Committee, with a vote of support from the remaining membership, if a member is acting in a manner that is disruptive to the meetings or to the organization, or is otherwise acting in a way detrimental to the RMRA's mission and standing in the community.

Section 5. Membership Dues:

Suggested nominal membership dues shall be determined from time to time by the Executive Committee and approved by a vote of the membership of the Association. Annual Membership will run 12 months from date of payment. Payment of dues is optional, and a member or meeting attendee may pay a due or fee or donation to the RMRA in any amount, at any time and as often as the member or attendee wishes.

Section 7. Executive Committee: [first paragraph]

The Executive Committee shall consist of all of the executive members of the Association. The Executive Members are: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Convenor, Past Chair (when applicable), and At-Large members (as needed).

Section 8. Elections, Nominations, and Voting: [sub-section (d)]

- (f) Members shall be eligible to vote. Members are those that have opted to provide their email addresses and have not unsubscribed from the RMRA email list.

Section 9: Duties of the Executive: [paragraph 4]

A member of the executive as appointed by the Chair The Membership Convenor shall keep a confidential record of the names and email addresses of all members, and be responsible for the collection of annual fees.

**Existing by-law language:**

*Section 9. Annual Membership Fees:*

The current annual membership fee is \$10 per household (\$5 for low-wage). A household may include more than one Association member.

**Proposed by-law language (changes highlighted):**

*Section 9. Annual Membership Fees:*

The **suggested** annual membership **donation** is \$10 per household (\$5 for low-wage). A household may include more than one Association member.

**MOTION TO AMEND THE RMRA CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAW:**

Be it resolved that the RMRA Constitution and By-laws be amended as explained and proposed in this document titled "RMRA Motion to Change Membership Structure January 2014", for the purposes of easing the RMRA's administrative burden, encouraging more frequent member donations, and encouraging more robust meeting participation by all persons interested in the area within the RMRA boundaries.