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CORRESPONDENCE MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 7, 2012
TO: Teachers Retirement Board
FROM: Rob Marchant, Deputy Secretary
SUBJECT: Overview of Teachers Retirement Board Elections

On the morning of the June 21, 2012, Retirement Board meetings, the Teachers Retirement (TR) Board Election Committee, consisting of Roberta Rasmus and David Wiltgen, will meet to certify the results of the 2012 spring election. The open seat on the TR Board is for an active teacher member (Wis. Stat. §15.165(3)(a)1). Three candidates submitted nomination papers and were certified as eligible candidates. Ballot distribution, via local school district employers, began April 30 and the voting deadline was May 24.

The thirteen-member TR Board is comprised of four members who are appointed by the governor and nine members who are elected. Terms are staggered and each term is for five years. Due to the staggered terms, it is possible that an election may need to be conducted every year.

As you know, the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) has proposed a rule that would permit the Secretary of ETF to conduct elections “using a paper-based process, electronically by use of the Internet, by a combination of methods, or by any other reasonable means”. The drafting of this rule is the first step toward modifying the process by which elections are conducted to ensure both robust representation and efficiency.

The following is a summary our current process for conducting a TR Board election.

1. **June/July.** The year before the Board member’s term expires, a timeline/schedule is prepared outlining the various phases and dates involved in the process. An article is drafted for the September edition of the *WRS News*. The article serves as the official “call for nominations” and provides more information, including how and when to request a nomination packet and the deadline for its return.

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2. **August.** The nomination papers are revised/updated. A query is run of our IT systems to determine the approximate number of teachers that will be voting depending on the vacancy (all school districts minus Milwaukee; Milwaukee school district alone; technical college teachers; or all retired teachers).
3. **September/October.** ETF staff meet to discuss the upcoming election, the selection of a mail/print vendor, and associated deadlines for print production. The *WRS News* article is published in the September edition. Nomination packets are provided to interested candidates.
4. **November.** The deadline for candidates to return their nomination papers is typically set for the second week of November. As nomination papers are received, they are reviewed to make sure they contain the required number of signatures (25). If more candidates are certified than seats available, the candidates are contacted to advise them that an election will be conducted. If an election will be held, ETF's forms manager and the board liaison meet with the mail/print vendor to set up the print/distribution calendar and related project deliverables, including the ballot, candidate information sheet, miscellaneous materials for employers and envelopes.
5. **December.** At the December Board meeting, the board liaison requests two volunteers to serve on the Elections Committee.
6. **January.** IT queries are run to create the list of eligible voters. Ballots are printed and distributed via UPS to school districts, who are asked to distribute them to the teachers. In the case of the "retired" teacher seat, the ballots are mailed directly to the eligible voters' residences.
7. **January-March.** Voters cast ballots and mail them (at their expense) to the vendor contracted by ETF to receive and process the ballots and tabulate election results. The vendor's report is submitted to the board liaison.
8. **March.** The results of the election are certified by the TR Board Election Committee.

For the spring 2012 TR Board election, 68,856 ballots were printed and sent to 435 school districts; 5,323 ballots (7.7%) were returned. The mail/print vendor hired to conduct the election charged \$20,344. In addition, \$4,079 in postage was incurred.

The most difficult costs to measure with the elections process are the staff time needed to prepare for the election, answer a myriad of phone calls from school districts, and work with the mail/print vendor.

ETF will be convening an Elections Review Workgroup to study the elections process and make recommendations to the Secretary. Before the workgroup can make any recommendations, it will be necessary to review our current election process. Some of the questions that we would like to explore include:

1. Are we required to provide a paper ballot to all voters? For many elections (school boards, legislators), voters go to the polls to vote. Absentee ballots may be obtained at municipal buildings. However, ballots are not mailed to every eligible voter. Voters are required to take action in order to vote. Could a well-developed communication plan replace providing a paper ballot to all voters?
2. Can we direct voters to a website where they could vote directly online or download a ballot?
3. If online voting is recommended, how do we handle members who do not have computer access? Is telephone voting an option?
4. Is the certification form that is completed by the school districts required and/or necessary?
5. Is nomination necessary or appropriate? Could open elections be held where any qualified candidate could participate? If nominations are necessary, is there a more efficient process potential candidates could follow?

As we go forward with this review, we welcome input from the Board about the election process. ETF staff will be at the June 21, 2012, TR Board meeting to discuss this memo and to answer any questions.