

CAUCUS TIMELINE SUPPORTED BY DOCUMENTATION

The purpose of this memo is to dispel some false information which has been circulating in the community regarding the history of the Lake Forest Caucus. There seems to be a lack of historical context among the current Caucus leadership which is misleading residents and serving a misguided overreaction to recent events. There is a narrative developing which has no basis in fact.

First, the tradition of confirming candidates at the Caucus Annual meeting goes back very far in the history of the Caucus. This is not a new practice.

Second, there have been contested elections in the past, many even successful, which did not result in the Caucus removing the residents right to vote to confirm the Caucus nominated candidates.

Third, that there was an ambiguity in the Caucus bylaws and stated practice about what the Caucus should have done when faced with a negative vote for its nominee for mayor at the last annual meeting. Not only were the current bylaws clear that Caucus nominees are required to win the vote at the annual meeting to be slated, but past statements in the Caucus' own mailings spelled out unequivocally that in the event a nominee fails to gain a majority vote at the annual meeting, the Caucus is charged with going back and nominating **another** candidate.

The charge that to allow a vote by residents at the annual meeting would result in manipulation is unfounded. The purpose of a Caucus system in municipal elections is to avoid the disruption of contested elections in small communities. The idea is for the community to come together and coalesce around a slate of candidates that all residents can at least feel comfortable with. It is a good example of a process whereby the community reaches a consensus of support.

This fall, that consensus was not reached by a significant percentage of Lake Foresters - around 40%. The message the Caucus should have accepted was that they missed some significant discontent regarding their choice for mayor. As their own brochure clearly states, they were then charged with going back and choosing another candidate. It didn't have to be any of the other candidates they interviewed for mayor, just someone else. Instead, they disregarded the vote for the first time in the 70- year history of the Caucus, ignored its stated practice and proceeded with the same candidate despite significant opposition. No consensus was reached.

Much of the opposition came from residents who the nominated mayor had represented as alderman. They were dissatisfied with his actions on the Council as alderman. They were facing some significant issues in their wards regarding the proposal of a third-rail holding track adjacent to their residential areas. There were other issues as well from residents in other parts of Lake Forest. How else were these disaffected residents supposed to let their dissatisfaction be known than to peacefully use the single option they had which they, in good faith, believed would be respected by the Caucus when they showed up at the Annual Meeting and voted against the Caucus' nominee for mayor? These voters were not anti-Caucus. In fact, they were working within the system. They did not object to the other candidates on the ballot, just the Caucus choice for mayor. They were sending a message the Caucus missed the mark in its selection. Had the Caucus followed its own rules and gone back and chosen another candidate, the contested election and resulting community divisiveness the Caucus is specifically designed to eliminate would have been avoided, their many voices, although a minority, but a significant minority, would have been respected.

These same, now extremely frustrated registered voters whose voices were ignored at the fall Annual meeting appeared again at the spring meeting to vote out the nominated Caucus leadership members who had ignored their voices in the fall. Anticipating this, the Caucus put out a ballot for its selected nominees with the only option being a "Yes" vote.

As the timeline below will demonstrate, there is a very long history behind requiring a vote at the Annual Meeting to approve the proposed Caucus slate of candidates. To disenfranchise the residents of Lake Forest in this manner disrespects not only our current citizens, but those community leaders from the past who upheld the right of residents to have a voice in choosing the leadership of our community even when faced with similar contested elections. To change the proud seventy-year history in reaction to a single contested election scenario is an over-reaction to a specific instance, by members who have limited experience with the Caucus system and limited knowledge of the history of self-government in our community through the Caucus system. The fact that political partisanship was allowed to enter this past election without being strongly condemned by the Caucus merely speaks further to how far the current Caucus leadership allowed the traditions of the Caucus to be eroded.

The current bylaw changes proposed by the Caucus should be abhorrent to everyone who believes in the long tradition in our community of a responsive Caucus system which puts trust in and listens to residents and in the open Caucus system which has been a hallmark of our community.

The Caucus should be called to task for even proposing such a change. Hold these people accountable for attempting to corrupt the system and disregarding our long proud Caucus tradition of self-government which encourages and respects the rights of every citizen to participate in the selection of the single candidate who will appear on the spring general election ballot and for every resident's voice to be respected, even in the course of a contested campaign.

DON'T LET THIS CAUCUS LEADERDHIP DESTROY OUR LONG TRADITIONS

1. Rules For the Lake Forest Caucus were first adopted in 1954. (See attached Lake Forest Caucus Notice of Annual Meeting from 1981)
2. The Lake Forest Caucus Rules as amended in 1972 do not directly address voting for candidates at the annual meeting other than to state, "The function of the Caucus is to approve candidates for elective offices of the City of Lake Forest and to elect the committee on Candidates and the Executive Committee...All voters are entitled to attend the meeting of the Caucus which shall be held annually. Notice shall be given by publication in The Lake Forester." It goes on to say, the President and Secretary of the Caucus shall be nominated by the Committee on Candidates and elected at each annual meeting of the Caucus to serve for the succeeding year." The rules also state, "The Committee on Candidates SHALL NOMINATE ITS OWN SUCCESSORS." (Emphasis added, See attached, "The Lake Forest Caucus Rules as Amended January 23, 1972"). Voting for members of the Committee on Candidates was not adopted until the late 1980s or early 1990s following the recommendation of the League of Women Voters' study and consensus.
3. Bylaws amended in 1976
4. In the 1981/82 election, the Caucus faced a full slate of independent candidates. Gerhard Seidel was the Caucus nominee for mayor. A brochure mailing from that election states, "The Committee on Candidates only proposed Seidel for the mayoral job: The Caucus members, the registered

voters who were there slated him at the January 25 annual meeting.” (See attached flyer, “The Lake Forest Caucus, You and I. That’s what the Lake Forest Caucus is. Every registered voter of us”). This clearly shows that a vote by the residents at the annual meeting was necessary to approve the proposed nominee. Any statements that this is a more recent phenomenon is simply false. In fact, I have not found any reference to a time when a proposed candidate did not have to be voted on by a majority at the Annual Meeting to be a Caucus nominee. It is also interesting that this same brochure states the average years of residency for members of the COC was 21 years. The average age was 47; and the COC was composed of 18 men and 16 women. (Ibid). All the independent candidates were defeated. The 1983 election was uncontested and resulted in a voter turnout of only 8.2%. (See attached, “A History of the Lake Forest Caucus”)

5. The bylaws were amended again in 1981. **Voting at the Annual meeting to approve the proposed slate of candidates was already well established.**

Notice was sent to all registered voters about the Annual Meeting to be held on December 13, 1981. The Rules which were sent to all residents state, “The purpose of the Lake Forest Caucus is to promote good representative government... The function of the Lake Forest Caucus is to nominate candidates for elective offices of the City of Lake Forest and to elect the Committee on Candidates and the Executive Committee.” In discussing the Annual Meeting it states, **“The purpose of the Annual Meeting is to receive and act upon the reports of the Committee on Candidates.”** The voting however was conducted by voice vote, not by secret ballot.

6. Starting in 1987 and continuing into 1988, The Lake Forest League of Women Voters undertook a study of comparative nominating systems, held community informational meetings, and ultimately reached a consensus after two meetings. The consensus, reached in May of 1988 recommended ten items to the Caucus which would make the Caucus more responsive, representative, and accountable. It called on the Caucus to adopt the proposals and to form a joint League/Caucus Task Force to implement the proposed changes. Melanie Rummel chaired the study and was one of the League representatives to the Task Force. (See attached letter from the Caucus to Melanie Rummel dated June 14, 1988 signed by Caucus President, Steven Seiler). **The ten recommendations were as follows:**

1. COC [Committee on Candidates] members should be chosen in a manner which promotes direct voter participation. This might include 50% or more of the COC members being elected by mail ballots sent to all registered voters in a ward or by petition.
2. COC members' names, addresses and phone numbers should be sent to voters in each ward in order to make the COC more accessible.
3. Data sheets of all nominated candidates for appointed and elected offices should be available in the library.
4. Two COC members from each ward - either current or added to expand the COC – should be charged with seeking candidates for the school board.
5. All data sheets submitted to the COC should receive a timely acknowledgement, and all who submitted data sheets should be processed and interviewed.
6. The League propose[s] that each nominee for elected office should address those assembled at the annual meeting, outlining his/her qualifications for office including his/her vision for Lake Forest and how he/she hopes to contribute toward that goal. Candidates should then be voted on individually and by secret ballot. **If a candidate does not receive the necessary vote, the COC would be directed to present a new nominee for that position.**
7. To increase community identification of COC representatives the League suggests that all COC members be introduced at the Annual Meeting. They should step forward and be recognized.
8. The League encourages the Caucus to continue its efforts toward increasing interest in the Search for Candidates meetings in the fall so that Lake Forest citizens will recognize they can come forward and have a chance of being nominated or appointed to a position. To this end, the League suggests that an explanation of standards and qualifications for open positions, whether elected or appointed be published.
9. The League also suggests that an annual poll be taken of town residents to ascertain community feelings on issues such as was proposed several years ago. This could be included in the mailing announcing the Search for Candidates meeting or some other citywide mailing.

10. The Caucus might consider establishing a formal policy to deal with absenteeism.

7. The joint League/Caucus Task Force resulted in the Caucus accepting nine of the ten recommendations immediately. The only item which was not immediately accepted was the first listed recommendation that the COC be elected by mail-in ballot.
8. A draft copy of the proposed changes to the Rules of the Lake Forest Caucus from January 1989 reflects these changes. Specifically, regarding the vote at the Annual Meeting it stated, “The purpose of the Annual Meeting is to receive and act upon the reports of the Committee on Candidates ... A majority of those attending such annual meeting shall be empowered to act upon said report of the Committee on Candidates...” (See attached Draft Rules of the Lake Forest Caucus, Article IV Meetings, 1. Annual Meeting). This same document also reflects the fact that the Committee on Candidates members were still nominating their own successors. This rule was changed within the next year in reaction to contested elections which I believe seated some independent candidates.
9. A brochure sent to all households in Lake Forest from this same time period, specifically, 1986-1987 and the same brochure sent again to households in 1988-89, contains the following section in a question-and-answer format, QUESTION: “What can you do if you disagree with the Caucus and its candidates?” ANSWER: “You have the right to disagree. And you have several options. All or part of the slate can be rejected by majority vote at the Annual Meeting. The Committee on Candidates is then charged with presenting a new slate as soon as possible. You can then present candidates for Committee consideration.” It then goes further to discuss your other option which is to convene your own party and file as an independent candidate. (See attached brochure “The Lake Forest Caucus, Working Together for Good Local Government”). Longtime community members considered among the prominent citizens of our community at that time endorsed those rules. Members such as:
 - a. Former Mayor, Charles F. Clarke, Jr
 - b. Former Mayor, James Swarhout
 - c. Former Mayor, Bruce MacFarlane
 - d. Dr. Lionel Ganshirt
 - e. John and Jean Greene

- f. Phillip W. K. Sweet
- g. Wesley M. Dixon, Jr.
- h. Kitty Lansing
- i. Susan Skinner
- j. Scott Smith
- k. Dona Jensen
- l. Jan Shields
- m. Franklin McMahon
- n. Eugene Hotchkiss, III
- o. Thomas Kiddle
- p. John and Virginia Anderson

The list of prominent Lake Foresters goes on and on. Just look at the list from the attached brochures.

10. The League of Women Voters undertook another study in 2002 which basically endorsed the Caucus system and the rules it was following at the time which reflected the adoption of the changes recommended by the League in its study and consensus meetings.
11. The 2000s saw several contested aldermanic elections. Independent aldermen such as Larry Marshall, Ernie Ernst, Peter Mott, Mike Burns and Al Glover were elected to the Council. Howard Kerr faced an opponent every year in his run for mayor. (At that point, the mayor was elected to three one-year terms. The ordinance was subsequently changed to two two-year terms. Susan Garrett chaired a study group that made the recommendation to change the ordinance.)
12. To my knowledge, and from personal experience the rules and practices of the Caucus have not changed in recent years. Mike Rummel was a Caucus nominated candidate for alderman against incumbent independent, Peter Mott in the 2002 election and he recalls the annual meeting vote both at that election and again when he was Caucus nominated for mayor in 2006. He also recalls serving as both alderman and mayor with independent candidates who served their city honorably once seated. I know when I ran as a Caucus nominated candidate against an independent opponent in 2017, there was a vote at the annual meeting.
13. The only practice which seems to have changed recently is the process of becoming a candidate to serve on the Committee on Candidates. My recollection is that anyone who submitted their name to appear on the mail-

in ballot for election to the Committee on Candidates had their name placed on the ballot. In the past, there were often numerous candidates for just one, two or three places on the ward Committee on Candidates. I recall more names appearing on the ballot. Now, the Caucus pre-screens candidates before their names appear on the mail-in ballot thereby undermining the democratic underpinning of your right to at least select the selectors, the Committee on Candidates. Also, in the past, contact information for your representatives to the Committee on Candidates was published so you could contact your representative directly. Currently, there is no way to directly contact your representatives, contact information is not published as it was in the past. In fact, phone numbers for the COC were published in the Caucus brochures.

14. Despite what the current Caucus leadership would have you believe, their current bylaws were unambiguous about how the vote at the Annual meeting was to be handled. Current Caucus bylaws state:

1. Section 1.03 Purpose. The purpose of the Caucus shall be to serve the community by promoting civic engagement ... and, through the Caucus Committee, representing the community effectively in identifying, evaluating and recommending qualified individuals to serve the community in elected or appointed volunteer positions... (Author's Note: Notice it doesn't state "selecting")
2. Section 2.01 Caucus Membership. ... The general Caucus membership of the Caucus is eligible to attend, and vote on matters presented for Caucus approval at, all public meetings of the Caucus.
3. Section 3.05 Voting at all Public Meetings. All voting by the Caucus membership concerning candidates for elected positions shall be by written ballot... a majority vote of those members present at a duly convened meeting shall be required to take action on any matter presented for a vote.

It is important to understand that under the new proposal, the same 40+ people would be choosing (1) the selectors, (the Committee on Candidates nominees), and also (2) the individuals who will be on the ballot for every elected position in addition to, (3) all the Boards and Commissions. Your opportunity for direct participation in the process is eliminated by the new proposal. It's reasonable to

assume without any other outlet to demonstrate dissatisfaction with issues in local government which are bound to arise from time to time, residents will be left with no other choice but to mount campaigns to express their concern. As demonstrated this spring, this leads not only to community divisiveness, but also allows UGLY partisan politics to become involved – one of the very factors the Caucus was devised to avoid. **VOTE NO ON THE IRONICALLY LABELED “CAUCUS PRESERVATION ACT” AND SAVE OUR LAKE FOREST CAUCUS!**

Vote NO on the Caucus Preservation Act on November 7th from 4:00 – 8:30 at Gorton and preserve the strong, responsive, historical tradition of our Lake Forest Caucus!