

# RIO BRAVO COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

## ELECTION AND VOTING RULES

In accordance with Civil Code Section 5105, the following rules and procedures shall apply for the election of directors. These Election Rules and procedures shall also govern any other election or vote of the Membership, including, without limitation elections regarding assessments legally requiring a vote, removal of directors, amendments to the CC&Rs or Bylaws, or the grant of exclusive use of Common Area. **Should any provision of the Association's Bylaws directly conflict with these Election Rules and applicable law, such provision of the Bylaws shall not be enforceable.**

(1) **Notice Requirements.** As prescribed by law, the following notices must be distributed to Members.

(a) At least thirty (30) days before the **close of nominations**, the Association will provide individual notice of the election and the procedure for nominating candidates.

(b) At least thirty (30) days **before the ballots are distributed**, the Association will provide general notice of (1) the date and time by which, and address where, ballots are to be returned; (2) the date, time and location of the meeting to tabulate the ballots; and (3) when applicable, the list of all candidates' names that will appear on the ballot.

(c) The Association shall permit Members to verify the accuracy of their individual information on the Association Election Material at least thirty (30) days **before the ballots are distributed**. The Association or any Member shall report any errors or omissions for either list to the inspectors of election who shall make the corrections within two (2) business days.

(i) "Association Election Materials" means the following documents: returned ballots, signed voter envelopes, proxies, Candidate Registration List and the Voter List. The Candidate Registration List means the list of qualified candidates existing as of the close of nominations. The Voter List may include: the name, voting power and either the physical address of the Member's separate interest or the parcel number, or both; and the mailing address of the Member (if different from the physical address or if the parcel number is used).

(d) At least thirty (30) days **before the election**, the inspectors of election will deliver to each Member: (1) the ballot and voting instructions; and (2) a copy of the Election Rules. Note, the Election Rules may be provided by individual delivery or by posting same on an internet site and providing the corresponding internet site web address on the ballot with the phrase, in at least 12-point font: "The rules governing this election may be found here: <http://www.rbcahoa.org/documents/documents.htm>".

(2) **Voting by Secret Ballot.** As prescribed by law, secret ballot procedures shall be used when voting on the following issues: assessments; election and removal of directors; amendments to the Governing Documents; and the grant of exclusive use of Common Area property. Ballots must ensure the confidentiality of the voters.

(a) **Secret Ballots Generally.** A “secret ballot” is a ballot which does not identify the voter by name and address. All secret ballots, including for election of directors, must conform to the requirements of applicable law.

(b) **Secret Ballot Requirements.** Secret Ballots must ensure the confidentiality of the voters.

(i) A voter may not be identified by name or address on the ballot;

(ii) The ballot may not require the signature of the voter;

(c) **Distribution of Secret Ballots.** Each secret ballot is distributed with two (2) envelopes: the “inner envelope,” which also shall not identify the voter; and the “outer envelope,” which shall be addressed or self-addressed to identify the voting Membership. Each secret ballot, along with said envelopes, shall be mailed or otherwise distributed to every Member at least thirty (30) days prior to the vote or election.

(d) **Return of Secret Ballots.** The secret ballot itself must be inserted into an envelope and sealed (“inner envelope”). This inner envelope is then inserted into a second envelope that is sealed (“outer envelope”). In the upper left-hand corner of the second envelope, the voter prints and signs his or her name and address that entitles him or her to vote. The second envelope is addressed to the inspectors of election of the Association, who will be tallying the votes. Failure to do so will invalidate the ballot and Member’s vote.

(i) Members may return their secret ballot by mail, hand deliver it to the meeting or complete the ballot at the meeting, and is deemed cast when so delivered or mailed; provided, only those ballots which are delivered to the inspectors of election prior to the polls closing shall be counted.

(ii) A Member may submit a written request to the Association for a receipt for delivery of the election materials.

(iii) Once cast, secret ballots cannot be revoked; they are irrevocable.

(e) **Time Requirements.** All secret ballots shall provide a reasonable time within which to return the ballot to the Association, which shall not be less than thirty (30) days and which may be set at the discretion of the Board unless otherwise required by law. The time for the return of secret ballots may be extended for reasonable intervals at the discretion of the Board, with or without notice to the Members.

(3) **Voting by Written Ballot.** Any action requiring Member approval, other than those requiring a secret ballot, may be submitted for vote by written ballot without calling a meeting of the Members. The written ballot shall describe the proposed action(s), provide an opportunity to specify approval or disapproval of each proposal, and provide a reasonable time within which to return the ballot to the Association.

(a) **Decision.** The determination to conduct a vote by written ballot shall be made by the Board or by Members having 10% of the eligible voting power signing a written request and delivering same to any Association officer.

(b) **Ballot.** The officer shall thereupon distribute a written ballot to every Member eligible to vote on the matter. A written ballot may not be revoked.

(c) **Solicitation.** All solicitations shall indicate the number of responses needed to meet the quorum requirement and the percentage of approvals needed to approve each proposal. The solicitation must specify the time by which the ballot must be received in order to be counted.

(d) **Procedure.** Written ballots and solicitations shall be distributed in the same manner as notice of meetings. Approval by written ballot shall be valid only when the number of eligible ballots received meets the quorum required at a meeting authorizing the action, and the number of approvals equals or exceeds the number of votes that would be required to approve at a meeting at which the total number of votes cast was the same as the number of votes cast by ballot. Upon tabulation of the ballots, the Board shall promptly notify the Members of the outcome of the vote or failure to meet quorum.

(4) **Inspector(s) of Elections.**

(a) For all elections or votes by secret ballot, the Board shall appoint one or three independent third party(ies) as inspector(s) of election before the secret ballots are mailed to all of the Members. Inspector(s) of elections shall be appointed by the Board at a duly noticed Board meeting.

(b) An independent third party includes, but is not limited to:

(i) a volunteer poll worker with the county registrar of voters;

(ii) a licensee of the California Board of Accountancy;

(iii) a notary public; and

(iv) a Member of the Association provided such Member is not a member of the Board of Directors or a candidate for the Board of Directors or related to a member of the Board of Directors or a candidate for the Board of Directors.

(c) If and when the Board does select a Non-Member of the Association as Inspector, the Inspector shall be required to obtain errors and omission insurance and provide proof of same to the Board prior to the commencement of the Inspector's work. The errors and omissions insurance policy shall be in an amount not less than one million dollars (\$1,000,000) that indemnifies the Association and its Board Members from liability and provides that the Association is a named insured of the policy. The Board may, in its discretion, pay compensation to the Inspector.

(d) Prior to the secret ballots being mailed to all of the Members, the inspectors of election shall meet to determine to whom the secret ballots shall be returned (the "Ballot Collector"), which may be the Association's manager, if any.

(e) The inspector(s) of election shall also do all of the following:

(i) determine the number of Memberships entitled to vote and the voting power of each.

(ii) determine the authenticity, validity, and effect of ballots, proxies, etc., if any;

(iii) receive ballots;

(iv) hear and determine all challenges and questions in any way arising out of or in connection with the right to vote;

(v) count and tabulate all votes;

(vi) determine when the polls shall close;

(vii) determine the result of the election;

(viii) perform any acts as may be proper to conduct the election with fairness to all Members in accordance with this section and all applicable rules of the Association regarding the conduct of the election that are not in conflict with this section.

(f) The inspector(s) of election may appoint and oversee additional persons to count and tabulate the votes as the inspectors deem appropriate.

(g) An inspector of election shall perform his or her duties impartially, in good faith, to the best of his or her ability, and as expeditiously as is practical. The decision or act of a majority shall be effective in all respects as the decision or act of all.

(h) Any report made by the inspector or inspectors of election is prima facie evidence of the facts stated in the report.

(i) The Board may remove and replace any inspector of election prior to the tabulation of ballots if an inspector of election resigns or if the Board reasonably determines that an inspector of election will not be able to perform his or her duties impartially and in good faith.

(5) **Meeting at Which Secret Ballots Shall Be Tabulated.**

(a) **Election of Directors.** The inspector(s) of elections shall tabulate the ballots for the election of directors at the Annual Meeting of the Members. The Board of Directors shall determine the date, time and place of said Annual Meeting in accordance with the Association's Bylaws. Notice of Annual Meeting ("Notice") shall be sent to all Members pursuant to the Governing Documents, these Election Rules and applicable state statute.

(b) **Other Votes by Secret Ballot.** Unless the vote is being taken in connection with an Annual Meeting of the Members, the ballots for the vote to approve assessments, elections of directors to fill a vacancy not filled by the Board, amendments to governing documents and/or granting the exclusive use of common area to a Member shall be tabulated by the inspector(s) of election at a duly noticed (regular or special) meeting of the Members or Board. The Board of Directors shall determine the date, time and place of said meeting.

(6) **Election of Directors: Nomination of Candidates.**

(a) Approximately one hundred twenty (120) days before the date of the meeting at which the ballots for the election of directors are to be counted, the Association shall mail to each Member a Candidate Nomination Form. The Candidate Nomination Form must be returned to the Association at the address provided, and by the deadline stated, which deadline must be approximately ninety (90) days before the date the ballots for the election of directors are scheduled to be counted.

(i) The Candidate Nomination Form may include a statement by the candidate, not to exceed 500 words. The Association may not edit or redact any content from these communications, but may include a statement specifying that the candidate or Member, and not the Association, is responsible for that content.

(ii) Candidates may submit a photograph of the candidate with the Candidate Nomination Form. Photographs must be of the candidate only, must be appropriate, and must not contain any lewd, obscene or inappropriate images.

(7) **Director Candidate Qualifications.**

(a) Candidates and Directors must be Members of the Association at the time of nomination.

(b) Only Members who meet the following criteria are qualified to be elected to the Board of Directors:

(i) Candidates and Directors may not have been convicted of a crime that would either prevent the Association from purchasing fidelity bond coverage or terminate the Association's existing coverage.

(ii) Candidates and Directors must be current in the payment of Regular and Special Assessments. Note, this does not include non-payment of collection charges, late charges, fines, fines renamed as assessments, costs levied by a third party, or if the Member has (1) paid under protest per Civil Code Section 5658; (2) has entered into and is current in a payment plan (defined as a signed written agreement between the Board and the Owner) per Section 5665, and is current and in compliance with all terms thereof; or (3) if the Member has not been provided the opportunity to engage in Internal Dispute Resolution ("IDR").

(a) All Members of the Association have the right to engage in Internal Dispute Resolution ("IDR") and/or Alternative Dispute Resolution ("ADR"), pursuant to the Civil Code. A Member may contact the Board and/or Management, in writing, to initiate IDR/ADR. Note, if IDR/ADR is not scheduled and completed prior to the nomination deadline, candidates may be disqualified for non-payment of Regular or Special Assessments.

(iii) A Member may not serve on the Board at the same time as another Member of the same separate interest (i.e., Unit).

(iv) Candidates must have been a Member of the Association for at least one (1) year.

(c) Members may nominate themselves or another person.

(d) Any candidate nominated by another person will be contacted to confirm that such candidate consents to having his or her name placed in nomination for election to the Board.

(e) All candidates who meet the qualifications to serve on the Board if any and, if appropriate, have confirmed their willingness to run for election to the Board, shall be listed on the secret ballot.

(8) **Campaigning.**

(a) All candidates or Members advocating a point of view during a campaign, including those not endorsed by the Board, shall be provided equal access to Association media, newsletters, or Internet Web sites (if any) for purposes that are reasonably related to the election. The Association may not edit or redact any content from these communications, but may include a statement specifying that the candidate or Member, and not the Association, is responsible for that content.

(b) All candidates, including those who are not incumbents, advocating a point of view, including those not endorsed by the Board, for purposes reasonably related to the election, shall be provided equal access to any common area meeting space, if any exists, during a campaign at no cost.

(c) Any Member of the Association shall be permitted to canvass and petition the Association's Members, Board of Directors, and residents in connection with elections at reasonable hours and in a reasonable manner.

(i) If such solicitation is done by such Member going door-to-door, the Member's conduct shall be respectful and courteous. Willful or negligent activity or communication, including words, sounds, and gestures, which could be or are interpreted to be loud, obnoxious, offensive, a nuisance, an annoyance, or a threat, is strictly prohibited.

(ii) Any Member who wishes to canvass or petition within the Association must display or wear an identification badge at all times while conducting said activities within the community. An identification badge will be issued to members through the Association's management company.

(iii) Written solicitation shall not be posted on exterior doors or mailboxes or left in the common areas. Written solicitation may only be delivered by hand delivery or by mail or electronic communication.

(d) Any Member of the Association shall be permitted to distribute or circulate, without prior permission, information about elections at reasonable hours and in a reasonable manner.

(e) For purposes of these Election Rules, "reasonable hours" shall mean between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. For purposes of these Election Rules, "reasonable manner" shall mean that such activity or conduct shall be conducted only Monday through Saturday, not Sunday and not on Federal Holidays, and shall not create a nuisance in the community or otherwise annoy, harass, threaten or intimidate other Members, residents or their guests.

(9) **Record Date**. The record date for purposes of voting shall be the date the ballots are mailed to all of the Members.

(10) **Eligibility to Vote**.

(a) The total number of Memberships entitled to vote equals the total number of Units in the Association. However, Members whose voting rights have been suspended in accordance with the Association's governing documents after notice and hearing and as of the Record Date shall not be entitled to vote. This provision shall not be construed to prohibit any Member from receiving a ballot, pursuant to Civil Code Section 5105(g)(1).

(b) A Member may cure his/her/its suspended voting rights by correcting the violation prior to the Record Date, unless the Board has informed the Member in writing, following a hearing, of the length of time the Member's voting rights have been suspended. (Civil Code § 5855.)

(c) Management will provide a list of suspended members to the inspector(s) of elections prior to the meeting to open ballots and tabulate votes. Inspector(s) of elections will be advised that the member's voting right has been suspended after notice and hearing, without details of the reason for suspension.

(d) The denial of a ballot to a person with general power of attorney for a Member is prohibited. (Civil Code § 5105(g)(2).)

(11) **Handling of Ballots.**

(a) As secret ballots are returned to the Ballot Collector, the Ballot Collector shall check off on a sign-in sheet that a ballot has been received for such a resident. The first secret ballot received for any Unit shall be the ballot which is counted. Any subsequent ballots for the same Unit which are received shall be deemed invalid and shall be discarded.

(b) Unless the Member is a proxy holder, Members may only hand deliver his/her secret ballot and not the secret ballot of another Member.

(c) A ballot submitted for a Member by an individual with general power of attorney is valid so long as it is submitted in a timely fashion.

(d) The Association Election Material at all times shall be in the custody of the inspectors of election, Ballot Collector, or at a location designated by the inspectors until delivered to the inspectors at the meeting for the opening of the ballots and the tabulation of the vote. After the counting of the ballots and the certification of the election results by the inspectors of election, the ballots shall be transferred to the Association.

(e) No person, including a member of the Association or an employee of the management company, shall open or otherwise review any ballot prior to the time and place at which the ballots are counted and tabulated.

(f) After tabulation, election ballots shall be stored in a secure place for no less than one year after the date of the election. In the event of a recount or other challenge to the election process, the Association shall, upon written request, make the ballots available for inspection and review by Members or their authorized representatives.

(g) Members may be responsible for the actual and direct costs arising out of inspection of election ballots, including any cost to the Association for the time and service of the inspector(s) of elections or management.

(h) Any recount shall be conducted in a manner that shall preserve the confidentiality of the vote. If a recount is requested by a Member, the recount will be performed only at the direction of the inspector(s) of elections and at the requesting Member's expense, if any. Only ballots may be reviewed; Members are not entitled to view outer envelopes or any registration list.

(12) **Tabulation of Secret Ballot Votes; Quorum Requirement.**

(a) All secret ballot votes shall be counted and tabulated by the inspector(s) of election in public at a properly noticed open meeting of the Members or of the Board, at which a quorum of Members or a quorum of Board members, as the case may be, must be present.

(b) The inspectors of election shall confirm that no more than one ballot was returned for each residence.

(c) Any candidate or other Member of the Association may witness the counting and tabulation of the votes.

(d) The inspectors of election may establish a physical boundary or buffer zone around them during the tabulation of ballots.

(e) In order for the vote for the election of directors to be valid, ballots must be returned by at least a quorum of the Members. The presence in person or by proxy of Delegates entitled to cast at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the total votes of all Members shall constitute a quorum.

(f) If quorum is not met, Delegates representing a majority of the voting power of the Members present at the meeting may adjourn the meeting to a time not less than five (5) days nor more than thirty (30) days from the original meeting date, at which meeting quorum will be twenty-five percent (25%) of the total voting power of all the Members. Such an adjourned meeting may be held without the notice required by the Bylaws if notice thereof is given by announcement prior to the adjournment of the original meeting.

(g) After any meeting to tabulate the votes for the election or removal of directors has been adjourned for lack of quorum twice, the seated directors will remain on the Board until successors have been elected.

(h) In the event of a tie in an election of directors, any tie vote shall be broken by a runoff election.

(i) To the extent permitted by law, in the event the number of candidates at the close of nominations is the same as the number of open positions on the Board, those candidates shall be automatically elected, by acclamation, without further action, and the results shall be announced as required by these Rules and law.

(13) **Announcement of Results.**

(a) The results of the election shall be promptly reported to the Board of Directors and shall be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting of the Board of Directors and shall be available for review by Members of the Association.

(b) Upon certification of the election results by the inspectors of election, the newly elected Board members shall be deemed to have taken office.

(c) Within fifteen (15) days of the election, the Board shall publicize the results of the election in a communication directed to all members.

(14) **Recall Elections – Removal of Director(s)**

(a) In the event the Board receives a petition to hold a special meeting for the purpose of removing one or more directors, a professional, neutral third-party inspector of elections must be hired to ensure legal procedures are followed.

(b) Members may remove directors by a vote consistent with Corporations Code Section 7222 and subject to the following. Members may present, in person, a petition to hold a special meeting of the members to the President or Secretary of the Association, bearing the signatures of members in good standing who represent at least five percent (5%) of the Members of the Association. The petition must state the reason(s) justifying the director's removal; the signature and address of each petitioner in his or her own handwriting; the name(s) of the sponsor(s) of the petition; and fulfill all other legal requirements.

(c) Within twenty (20) days after receipt of such petition, the President, Secretary, or Board shall set the date and give notice of the special meeting.

(d) Candidate nomination forms must be sent with notice of the special meeting. Candidates must return forms not less than ten (10) days before secret ballots for the recall are sent. This date shall be set forth in the notice of special meeting.

(e) Such meeting or vote by secret ballot shall be conducted not less than thirty-five (35) nor more than ninety (90) days after the petition is presented. If the Board fails to set a date for, or fails to give notice of, such meeting or vote within twenty (20) days, the Members initiating the petition may call such meeting on their own initiative pursuant to the Bylaws or applicable law.

(f) The director(s) whose removal is being sought shall have the right to rebut the allegations contained in the petition orally, in writing or both. Any written rebuttal shall be mailed by the Association or otherwise provided to all members, together with the recall ballot.

(g) Two secret ballots shall be distributed to members: (1) one for the vote to remove one or more directors and (2) one for the vote to elect directors to fill the vacancies, if necessary. If the vote to recall director(s) is unsuccessful, secret ballots to elect new director(s) shall not be opened.

(h) If the quorum requirement for a valid membership action is not satisfied or if the recall vote results in a tie, the removal action will have failed.

(i) In a recall election, unless the entire Board is removed from office, no director may be removed when the votes cast against removal, or not consenting in writing to such removal, would be sufficient to elect such director if voted cumulatively at an election at which the same total number of votes were cast (or, if such action is taken by written ballot, all memberships entitled to vote were voted) and the entire number of directors authorized at the time of the director's most recent election were then being elected.

(j) Immediately following a successful recall election, the Board shall convene a regular meeting for purposes of organization, appointment of officers, and transaction of other business. Notice of this meeting shall not be required separately from the notice of the special meeting, but agenda requirements must be satisfied.

(15) **Proxies.**

(a) Proxies will be accepted so long as they meet the requirements of all applicable laws and the Association's governing documents, and they are consistent with the secret ballot election process.

(b) The Association shall not be obligated to prepare and mail proxies to the Members.

(c) Any instruction given in a proxy that directs the manner in which the Proxy Holder is to cast the vote must be set forth on a separate page of the Proxy that can be detached and given to the Proxy Holder to retain which will not be given to or shown to the Inspector of Election.

(d) In any election where, under these Rules, the Member would utilize a Secret Ballot, the Proxy Holder shall also cast the Member's vote by Secret Ballot.

(e) Neither the Association nor the Inspector will be responsible for ensuring that the Proxy Holder votes the Proxy in accordance with the Member's direction.

(16) **Other Voting/Campaign Issues.**

(a) Association funds may not be used for "campaign purposes" in connection with any board election. The term "campaign purposes" is defined to include, without limitation, (1) "expressly advocating the election or defeat" of any candidate that is on the

ballot; or (2) "including the photograph or prominently featuring the name of a candidate on a communication" from the association (except the ballot and voting materials and equal access communications sent pursuant to the Section, above, entitled "Campaigning").

(b) The Board of Directors may enact and implement a "Meeting Code of Conduct" to govern the conduct of Members at meetings.

(c) In an election to approve an amendment of the governing documents, the text of the proposed amendment shall be delivered to the members with the ballot.