



Election of Members to the Board of Trustees

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Election of Members to the Board of Trustees

1. Board Control. The election of Trustees shall be under the control and supervision of the Board of Trustees assisted by Fund staff and in accordance with this Chapter.

2. Election Agent. Elections will be administered by an independent service provider (“Election Agent”) retained by the Board.

3. Election Coordinator. The Executive Director shall appoint an Election Coordinator from the Fund’s staff who shall be responsible for reporting to the Board, or its designated committee, and for coordinating the efforts of the Election Committee, the Election Agent, Canvassing Board members, and Fund staff.

4. Election Committee. No later than February 15th of each year, the Board shall appoint an Election Committee consisting of three Trustees who shall not be candidates in the same Fiscal Year in which the election occurs. The Board shall appoint a chair from the three Trustees, for the Election Committee. The Board delegates to the Election Committee, *inter alia*, the authority to determine a candidate’s eligibility to be on the ballot and whether to count challenged ballots and to administer the election in accordance with this Rule.

The Election Committee for each annual election dissolves once (i) all elections, including any recounts or protests, have been completed, (ii) all successful candidates have taken the oath of office, and (iii) the Election Committee for the next annual election has been appointed. Prior to dissolution, the Election Committee, working with the Election Coordinator, may report to the Board its recommendations, if any, regarding the conduct of elections.

5. Date of Elections. The online election of Teacher Trustees shall occur during the first week of November and shall end at 5:00 p.m. Central Time on the first Friday in November. At the discretion of the Board, the election may be held over consecutive, multiple days. Election materials, if any, shall be mailed as soon as possible following the certification of candidates, and votes shall be accepted so long as they are received by mail by the Election Agent by 5:00 p.m. Central Time on the first Friday in November. Online election of Trustees shall commence no earlier than the date that voting materials are mailed to eligible voters and shall end at 5:00 p.m. Central Time on the first Friday in November.

6. Eligibility Criteria for Candidates. A candidate for an elected Trustee position must meet the following criteria as of October 1 in the election year:

(a) **Teacher Trustees (6)** Candidates for Teacher Trustee must:

1. be a Member, other than a Principal/Administrator, as defined in 40 ILCS 5/17-106;
2. have been assigned on a regular certificate for at least 10 years in the Chicago Public, charter, or contract schools within District 299;
3. be nominated by a petition signed by at least 200 contributors who are not Principals/Administrators, as provided in 40 ILCS 5/17- 139(1).

(b) **Principal/Administrator Trustee (1)** A candidate for Principal/Administrator Trustee must:

1. be a Principal/Administrator as defined in 40 ILCS 5/17-106.1;
2. be nominated by a petition signed by at least 25 contributors who are Principals/Administrators, as provided in 40 ILCS 5/17-139(3).

(c) **Pensioner Trustees (3)** A candidate for Pensioner Trustee must:

1. be a service, reciprocal, or disability pensioner receiving monthly payments from the Fund;
2. be nominated by a petition signed by not less than 100 pensioners, as provided in 40 ILCS 5/17-139(2).

7. Notice of Election. The Fund's Notice of Election shall contain the date(s) of each election, eligibility criteria for candidates and voters, information on how to obtain a candidate nomination packet, instructions on the nomination process, this policy, and the schedule of election events. The Election Coordinator shall post the Notice of Election on the Fund's website no later than April 1st in each calendar year.

8. Pension Representatives. In election years in which there is a contested Teacher Trustee election: (a) Pension Representatives, who attest that they have completed all election training assigned by the Election Coordinator, shall receive a \$50 stipend; and (b) Pension Representatives, who attest that they distributed election materials and performed other tasks as assigned by the Election Coordinator, shall receive an additional \$50 stipend. A candidate for Teacher Trustee may not serve as a Pension Representative for any election-related purpose or receive either of the above stipends.

9. Canvassing Board. The Executive Director shall appoint by September 1st each year five-member Canvassing Board to monitor a Teacher Trustee election. A member of the Canvassing Board may not be a candidate for Teacher Trustee, and at least three of such members shall be Pension Representatives. The other members of the Canvassing Board shall be members of CTPF staff. A member of the Canvassing Board, other than CTPF staff, will be paid a stipend of \$100 for participating in the review of challenged ballots and declaring the election results and shall be reimbursed for parking and transportation expenses actually incurred.

Nomination Process

1. Distribution of Nomination Packet. Beginning April 1st through September 15th, the Election Coordinator shall provide candidate nomination packets to Members upon request. If April 1st falls on a weekend or holiday, then packets may be picked-up starting the first business day after April 1st. If September 15th falls on a weekend or holiday, then the last day for packet pick-up will be the last business day before September 15.

2. Content of Nomination Packet. The nomination packet shall include: a copy of the Notice of Election, a pre-printed nominating petition, a candidate resume form, a copy of the applicable Policies, and such other documents as the Board or the Election Coordinator may determine are appropriate.

3. Nominating Petition.

(a) A candidate shall not be permitted to submit a nominating petition for more than one Trustee position during any particular election. No nominating petition shall be circulated without the name of the candidate and the specific position sought appearing on the nominating petition. A candidate may also digitally sign the candidate's nominating petition provided by the Election Agent.

(b) A person may sign more than one nominating petition, but may only sign the nominating petitions of those candidates for whom the person is eligible to vote. A person may also digitally sign a nominating petition on the form provided by the Election Agent.

(c) The Pension Code does not prohibit a candidate from signing his or her own nominating petition.

(d) The terms "sign" and "signature," as used in this Policy, shall include written or digital signatures.

4. Number of Signatures and Information Required. The minimum number of nominating petition signatures required for each election is as follows:

(a) Teacher Trustee nominating petitions must have at least 200 legible handwritten signatures or validated digital signatures from Members who would be eligible to vote in the election being conducted had the election occurred at the time the Member signs the nominating petition. The Member signing a nominating petition must:

- (1) print and sign his/her name,
- (2) provide the date of his/her signature,
- (3) provide his /her month and date of birth, and
- (4) provide his/her CTPF Member ID, home address, the last 4- digits of his/her Social Security number, or zip code.

(b) Principal/Administrator Trustee candidates must have 25 or more legible nomination signatures or validated digital signatures from Principals/Administrators who would be eligible to vote in the election being conducted had the election occurred at the time the Principal/Administrator signs the nominating petition.

The Principal/Administrator signing a nominating petition must:

- (1) print and sign his/her name,
- (2) provide the date of his/her signature,
- (3) provide his/her month and date of birth, and
- (4) provide his/her CTPF Member ID, home address, the last 4- digits of his/her Social Security number, or zip code.

(c) Pensioner Trustee candidates must have 100 or more legible nomination signatures or validated digital signature from CTPF Pensioners who would be eligible to vote in the

election being conducted had the election occurred at the time the Pensioner signs the nominating petition. The Pensioner signing a nominating position must:

- (1) print and sign his/her name,
- (2) provide the date of his/her signature,
- (3) provide his/her month and date of birth, and
- (4) provide his/her CTPF Member ID, home address, the last 4-digits of his/her Social Security number or zip code.

5. Physical Inability to Sign. Any individual who is physically unable to sign his/her name on any Election-related document may sign his/her name with a mark of “x” or with the assistance of his/her agent pursuant to a power of attorney for property.

If a potential candidate obtains or provides a signature on any Election-related document, including a nominating petition, from a Member or Pensioner who is physically unable to sign his/her name, the Fund shall notify all candidates that such a mark may be challenged by the Fund’s Election Agent or by another candidate if other provided information does not establish or corroborate the identity of the signer. With regard to a Petition, if the potential candidate so chooses, the candidate may have another person, other than the potential candidate or the person circulating the petition, who was present when that person signed the petition with an “x” or when the signer has affirmed to the affiant that the mark is his/her own, attest in writing before a notary public that:

1. the affiant knows the Petition signer, or at least became aware of the person’s identity by having inspected a photo ID of the Petition signer;
2. the affiant found the Petition signer to be the same person as the one the affiant has known or who is named on the ID;
3. the Petition signer voluntarily made the “x” on the Petition; and
4. the signing of the Petition occurred in the affiant’s presence or that the mark was affirmed by the Petition signer to the affiant.

The affidavit may contain any other facts that are deemed necessary to establish that the Member or Pensioner is eligible to sign the Petition. This affidavit may be obtained at the time the person signs the Petition with an “x”, or at a later date, once a challenge or objection is presented to the potential candidate. The affidavit shall be submitted by the deadline set by the Election Committee.

6. Deadline for Submission. A candidate’s signed nomination petition(s) must be received by the Election Coordinator or her/his designee, on behalf of the Recording Secretary, by hand-delivery, U.S. Mail, email, electronic filing, or facsimile no later than the submission deadline below. The Fund reserves the right to request a candidate’s original nomination petitions if not provided with the candidate’s submission. For a Teacher Trustee candidate, signed nomination petitions, resume, and photo (if any), must be received by the Fund’s Recording Secretary on or after September 15th, but no later than October 1st at 5:00 p.m. CDT in the election year or by 5:00 p.m. CDT on the Friday preceding October 1st if

October 1st falls on a Saturday or Sunday. For a Principal/Administrator Trustee or Pensioner Trustee candidate, signed nomination petitions, resume, and photo (if any), must be received by the Fund's Recording Secretary no later than October 1st at 5:00 p.m. CDT or by 5:00 p.m. CDT on the Friday preceding October 1st if October 1st falls on a Saturday or Sunday. Nominating petitions, resumes, and photos received after the deadline will not be accepted.

7. Candidate Resume. A candidate's resume, if submitted, may contain the information listed below.

- (a) The Fund will not censor any material submitted, but candidates are strongly encouraged not to include defamatory statements.
- (b) All materials distributed through the Fund will contain a disclaimer that the Fund is not responsible for the content of the material and that the Fund has not verified any of the content.
- (c) The Fund's logo shall not be used on any candidate election materials.
- (d) A candidate resume may include the following information:
 - 1. Name,
 - 2. Member status (i.e., Teacher, Principal/Administrator, Pensioner),
 - 3. Education,
 - 4. Work experience,
 - 5. Other memberships and experience,
 - 6. A recent color photo in .jpeg, .pdf, or .tiff format; a head shot with a plain background is best.
- (e) The candidate resumes and photos will be made available via printed material, posted on the CTPF website, and will be available through social media outlets. By submitting a resume or photo, and in consideration for the publishing of the material, a candidate consents to the distribution of the material and agrees to indemnify and hold the Fund harmless from any liability for the published content.

8. Certification of Candidates. The Election Agent, with the assistance of the Election Coordinator, shall review the eligibility of candidates and shall recommend to the Election Committee the eligible candidates for each election(s).

- (a) The recommendation of certified candidates shall be submitted to the Election Committee no later than October 15th.
- (b) Upon certification of eligible candidates by the Election Committee, the Election Coordinator shall notify qualified candidates of their certification.

(c) After the certified candidates have been notified, the Election Coordinator shall make public on the Fund's website the names of the qualified candidates for the Trustee Election.

9. Placement or Order of Candidates. The placement or order of the candidate resumes on election materials shall either be electronically randomized or determined by lot conducted by the Election Coordinator. Names of the candidates for each election shall be rotated on the ballots so that each candidate's name appears to the extent possible at the top of the list an equal number of times.

10. "Uncontested Ballot." When the number of certified candidates does not exceed the number of positions in that election, the Election Coordinator shall notify the Election Committee. Upon approval by the Election Committee, the Election Coordinator shall cancel the remaining election procedures for that election. After the approval by the Election Committee to cancel the remaining election procedures for that election, the Canvassing Board shall declare the certified candidates elected for any uncontested Teacher Trustee election and the Election Coordinator shall declare the certified candidates elected for any uncontested Principal/Administrator or Pensioner election.

Campaign Process

1. Request for Member Mailing Lists

(a) The Fund shall provide a list of pre-approved print/mail vendors which candidates or their sponsoring organizations may use to distribute campaign materials. Such print/mail vendors must satisfy the Fund's requirements for data security, insurance, and other internal controls.

(b) No later than October 1st of each election year, the Election Coordinator shall have all pre-approved print/mail vendors provide updated data security, certificates of insurance, and other internal controls as further detailed below.

(c) Upon receipt of a signed request to add a print/mail vendor not on the already pre-approved list, the Fund will add this vendor to the pre-approved list, provided the vendor satisfies the Fund's requirements for data security, insurance, and other internal controls. The Fund will make its assessment of whether a vendor satisfies the Fund's requirements no later than 5 business days after receiving all necessary documentation and information from the company that the Fund requires to make the assessment.

(d) The Fund will provide only the full list of all eligible voters who are expected at the time of the request to receive a unique voter identification number in a category (Teachers, Principal/Administrators, or Pensioners) to a print/mail vendor; the Fund will not segregate eligible voters by any other attribute.

(e) CTPF is not responsible for the content of any candidate campaign material. All mailings by candidates or sponsoring organizations must include, in legible format, the following statement: "Candidate campaign material: CTPF is not responsible for the content of this mailing."

(f) The Fund shall not provide the list of eligible voters to any print/mail vendor until the vendor signs a Confidentiality Agreement agreeing to use the list for the sole purpose of sending campaign materials and agreeing to maintain confidentiality and operational safeguards.

(g) All requests for mailing lists shall be made to the Fund in writing by the candidate or sponsoring organization.

(h) Printing and mailing of campaign materials shall be invoiced to candidates or sponsoring organizations directly by the print/mail vendor. CTPF shall not be responsible for paying for the printing or mailing of any campaign material.

(i) The Fund will not provide email addresses to any person or organization.

2. Use of Fund Vendors. Except as provided in Rule II.B/301, a candidate for Trustee shall not solicit or accept, directly or indirectly, the services or resources of Fund Providers, or Prospective Providers as defined in the Code of Conduct/Ethics Policy for the purpose of printing, distributing, or mailing campaign materials, or any monetary or other assistance for the candidate's campaign. A list of current Providers shall be available on the Fund's Election Central webpage.

3. Use of Mail Run System Prohibited. Candidates are not permitted to use the mail run system or the email system of any Employer for distribution of campaign materials.

4. Distribution of Campaign Materials

(a) CTPF Pension Representatives shall not distribute any campaign materials provided by candidates.

(b) CTPF Pension Representatives are responsible for distributing materials provided by CTPF only.

5. Campaign Activities.

(a) Trustees and employees shall not intentionally engage in "campaign activities" (defined below) using Fund property or resources or during any compensated time (other than employee vacation, personal, or other compensatory time off).

(b) No intentional campaign activity by anyone, including but not limited to Trustees, employees, trustee candidates, or sponsoring organizations, is permitted on Fund property, including any space rented, leased, or otherwise used for a Fund event. In the Fund's sole discretion, the Fund may provide for a clearly-marked, defined Fund-designated area that is part of the property being rented, leased, or otherwise used by the Fund where campaign activity may be conducted by any person or organization. CTPF shall notify all trustee candidates of events that will have a Fund-designated area where campaign activity can take place by posting a list of such events on its website, which shall be seasonably updated throughout the election campaign cycle.

(c) At any event at which campaign activity is permitted, Fund staff shall inform all attendees that campaign activities are permitted only within the Fund- designated area.

(d) No Trustee or employee may intentionally misappropriate the services of an employee by requiring an employee to perform any campaign activities as part of that employee's unofficial Fund duties, (ii) as a condition of Fund employment, or (iii) during any time off that is compensated by the Fund (such as vacation, personal, or other compensatory time off).

(e) A Fund employee shall not be required at any time to participate in any campaign activities in consideration for that Fund employee being awarded any additional compensation or employee benefit, in the form of a raise, bonus, compensatory time off, continued employment, or otherwise. Likewise, a Fund employee shall not be awarded any additional compensation or employee benefit in consideration for the Fund employee's voluntary participation in any campaign activities.

(f) Nothing in this section otherwise prohibits protected speech or prohibits activities that are otherwise appropriate for Fund employees or Trustees to engage in as a part of their official Fund duties (e.g. employees and Trustees helping to administer the election, pursuant to Illinois law and to this Rule; Trustees carrying out their duties as members of the Election Committee: or otherwise prohibits activities that are undertaken by a Fund employee on a voluntary basis as permitted by law.

For purpose of this Rule, "campaign activity" includes any intentional effort, in violation of this Rule, to influence the selection, nomination, election, or appointment of any individual to a trustee position, including but not limited to collecting nominating petition signatures, preparing, distributing, or mailing campaign materials, soliciting votes, or campaigning for office.

The Election Process

1. Voter Eligibility

(a) Teachers who are not administrators shall be eligible to vote for Teacher Trustees in accordance with Sections 17-138 and 139. Every Member must have obtained that voter eligibility status on or before October 1st of the election year.

(b) Principals/Administrators shall be eligible to vote for Principals/Administrators in accordance with Sections 17-138 and 139. Every Member who is a Principal/Administrator must have obtained such voter eligibility status on or before October 1st of the election year.

(c) Pensioners receiving a service, reciprocal, or disability pension from CTPF as of October 1st of the election year shall be eligible to vote for Pensioner Trustee.

2. Form of Ballots

- (a) Voting for Teacher Trustees and Principal/Administrator Trustees shall be by secure electronic ballot.
- (b) Voting for Pensioner Trustees shall be by secret, paper ballot conducted by mail and/or by secure electronic ballot.
- (c) The ballot format shall be uniform in size and appearance.

3. Ballot Distribution

- (a) The Election Agent and Election Coordinator shall ensure that notice of the date of the Election and instructions for voting shall be posted prominently on the Fund's website, printed prominently in the Fund's newsletters, and distributed to schools.
- (b) The Fund shall direct the Election Agent to generate a unique voter identification number for every Member who is eligible to vote, pursuant to Section 401, above.
- (c) Unique voter identification numbers for voters in a Teacher Trustee Election shall be mailed to the last known address of each voter in a Teacher Trustee Election, and distributed by email, if available. Unique voter identification numbers for voters in a Pensioner Election shall be mailed to the last known address of each Pensioner, and distributed by email, if available.
- (d) Unique voter identification numbers for voters in a Principal/Administrator Election shall be mailed to the last known address of each Principal/Administrator, and distributed by email, if available.
- (e) A Member may request a replacement voter identification number by calling the Fund office. Fund staff shall provide instructions for obtaining a replacement voter identification number from the Election Agent. The Election Agent shall ensure that only one vote shall be accepted per Member.
- (f) Regardless of whether an individual receives a unique voter identification number pursuant to subsection (b), Teachers, Principals/Administrators, and Pensioners may be eligible to vote in accordance with 40 ILCS 5/17-106, 40 ILCS 5/17- 139, and Section 401, above.

Any Member who does not receive a unique voter identification number, including, for the Teacher Trustee election, laid-off Members for whom the Fund received a contribution on or after the October 1st two years prior to the election, Members currently on a leave of absence authorized by the Pension Code, and Members who are currently on worker's compensation leave, but who believes he or she is eligible to vote, may request a unique voter identification number by calling the Fund office. Upon receipt of a request at least 48 hours prior to the applicable deadline for voting, and subject to verifying the Member's status with the Fund (i.e. confirming that the Member currently has contributions as a teacher, currently has contributions as a principal/administrator, or is currently receiving a pension through the

Fund) and determining the election in which the Member will be eligible to vote, the Fund will direct the Election Agent to generate a unique voter identification number for each requesting Member for the appropriate election.

4. Ballot Counting. The Election Agent, with the assistance of the Election Coordinator and appropriate staff, shall use reasonable procedures to ensure ballots are secured and canvassed in a manner consistent with commonly accepted election practices.

(a) The Election Agent shall canvass valid ballots by the date specified in the Notice of Election at the location designated in the annual election plan.

(b) Regardless of the method of balloting chosen by a voter, the following are declared to be invalid ballots and shall not be counted in the election:

1. Votes cast for individuals not listed as candidates on the official ballot.

2. A ballot submitted by a person who is not an eligible voter.

3. A duplicate ballot received from the same voter; only one ballot per voter shall be permitted.

4. Votes cast in excess of the number allowed on the ballot.

5. Ballots not received within the time period prescribed by the Notice of Election.

5. Election Observer. Every candidate shall be entitled to appoint an observer who, as applicable, must be a Member or a Pensioner, and shall not be an employee of the Fund. All expenses for an election observer appointed by a candidate shall be borne by the candidate.

(a) Such observer shall have the right to be present at the opening of any post office box containing paper ballots, at the balloting as herein described, and at the tabulation of ballots.

(b) Observers may challenge the eligibility of voters. If a challenge is filed, any challenged paper ballot shall be sealed in a blank envelope which shall be sealed in an envelope with the name of the voter and the basis for the challenge thereon. Any challenged electronic ballot shall be identified by voter in a manner that does not reveal the voter's preference and shall not be included in the tally except as provided in subsection (c), below.

(c) If the challenged ballots are sufficient in number to materially affect the result of the election, as determined by the Election Committee in its sole discretion, the Election Committee shall investigate challenges and determine whether to count such ballots, and any decision made thereon shall be final and binding. The Canvassing Board, at the sole discretion of the Election Committee, may assist in the review of challenged ballots in a Teacher

Trustee election, but the Election Committee shall in all cases make the final determination whether to count such ballots.

(d) The blank envelope containing the paper ballot shall not be opened, and a challenged ballot shall not be included in the tally, until such time as all challenges have been ruled upon and the name-bearing envelopes destroyed.

6. Tie Breaker. A tie in votes received shall be broken by a coin toss conducted by the Election Coordinator.

7. Certification of Contested Elections. For all contested elections, the Election Agent shall certify to the Election Coordinator the vote totals for each candidate(s) and accordingly the candidate(s) with the highest number of votes. Upon receiving the certified results, the Election Coordinator shall provide the results to the Election Committee, the Board of Trustees, and the Executive Director.

(a) After receiving the results from the Election Coordinator, the Executive Director shall notify all candidates in a contested election of the certified results.

(b) The results shall be posted on the Fund's website and emailed to all candidates in a contested election no later than the next business day after the final results are certified.

8. Seating of Elected Trustees

(a) Prior to the next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees, any newly-elected Board member(s) shall be provided with a copy of the Oath of Office, the Fund's By-Laws, relevant articles the Illinois Pension Code, and other such materials as determined by the Board and/or the Executive Director. A newly-elected Trustee may request a copy of the Fund's Administrative Rules and Regulations.

(b) The Board of Trustees, at its next regular meeting, shall enter in its proceedings the results of said election and the newly-elected Trustees shall subscribe to the following oath of office:

"I do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Illinois, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of Trustee of the Public School Teachers' Pension and Retirement Fund of Chicago according to the best of my ability."

9. Retention and Destruction of Election Materials. For six months after the election, the Election Coordinator and Election Agent shall preserve the paper ballots, the electronic voting records, and all other election materials. At or after the expiration of such six-month period, the Election Coordinator shall notify the Board and, subject to any applicable document retention or legal requirements, such materials shall be destroyed after a vote of the Board. If proceedings are pending in any court in which such ballots and/or other

materials may be required as evidence, the ballots and/or other materials shall not be destroyed until such proceedings are finally adjudicated.

10. Recount of an Election.

- (a) A candidate may request the recount of an election only if the difference in the number of votes cast for the candidate requesting the recount and the votes cast for the unofficial winner with the fewest number of votes amongst the winning candidates for the affected election is less than 3% of the votes cast for that unofficial winner. The candidate in the affected election must file a written request (which may be provided via email) to the Executive Director for a recount within three business days following the election results being posted on the Fund's website, pursuant to Section 407(b), above.
- (b) The written request shall specify the election to be recounted and shall specify any other relevant material to be examined.
- (c) The Executive Director shall notify the Board of the request for a recount, provided the election is eligible for a recount pursuant to section (a), above, and shall set a date for the recount upon receipt of the written request. There shall be only one recount per each Teacher, Principal/Administrator, or Pensioner election.
- (d) The Election Agent shall certify the results of any recount. The recount results shall go through the process laid out in Section 407, above.
- (e) The Board may establish such additional rules and procedures relating to the recount as it deems appropriate.

11. Protest of an Election

- (a) A valid protest must be based on evidence that the Board's election procedures were not substantially followed and that such errors could have materially affected the outcome of the Election, as determined by the Election Committee in its sole discretion.
- (b) A candidate in the affected election may file a written protest with the Executive Director at any time, but under no circumstances later than three business days following the election results being posted on the Fund's website. The protest shall be identified using the word "protest" and shall state the specific grounds of the protest and provide any evidence (including expected witnesses and a summary of expected testimony) in support of the protest.
- (c) Upon receipt of a valid and timely protest, the Executive Director shall mail a copy of the protest to all candidates in the affected election and shall notify the Board that a protest has been filed. The Election Committee shall investigate the protest and determine what remedy, if any, shall be granted to the candidate filing the protest.

(d) The Election Committee may consider written and/or oral arguments submitted by the candidate filing the protest and their designees, and by any other candidate and their designees, in making its determination. If the Election Committee determines that a hearing is necessary, such hearing shall be held in the Board's meeting room and shall be open to the public. The Election Committee shall determine the rules, regulations, and process by which this hearing shall gather evidence. The Election Committee may retain experts as necessary. The determination of the Election Committee shall be rendered within ten calendar days of any hearing. If the Election Committee determines that no hearing is necessary, the determination of the Election Committee shall be rendered within ten calendar days of the last candidate/designee submission deadline set by the Election Committee.

(e) If the Election Committee sustains the protest, the Election shall be void for any affected Trustee vacancy and the Board shall schedule a special election to take place as soon as reasonably practical in accordance with this Article, except that the Board shall adopt a revised election calendar. If the Election Committee rejects a protest, then the certified results stand. The Election Committee's decision shall be a final administrative decision and the Board shall notify all candidates of their rights in accordance with the Administrative Review Law and applicable Rules.

(f) No candidate may resort to proceedings before any court until the candidate has exhausted the procedures provided for above.