

# **Ramsey County Elections | Processing Petitions**

General procedures staff follow when accepting and reviewing petitions

## **Accepting the petition from petitioners**

1. Staff will note that the petition must comply with the appropriate laws. Election officials must be able to determine compliance solely from the information provided on the face of the petition, ensuring that each page complies with Minn. R. 8205.1010, subp 2:
  - a. A petition must be prepared on paper no larger than 8-1/2 inches wide and 14 inches long. The signer's oath and the signature lines must be on the same side of the paper.
  - b. The language on the petition must be printed in no smaller than 10-point type.
  - c. Each petition page must have a short title describing the purpose of the petition.
  - d. Each petition page must have a statement summarizing the purpose of the petition.
  - e. If the purpose of the petition is to put a question on the ballot, each petition page may have a statement of 75 words or less summarizing the ballot question.
  - f. Each petition page must have a signer's oath in no smaller than 12-point bold type. If the form of the signer's oath is not specified by statute, the following oath must be used: "I swear (or affirm) that I know the contents and purpose of this petition and that I signed this petition only once and of my own free will."
  - g. Each petition page must include the following statement immediately above the signature lines: "All information must be filled in by person(s) signing the petition unless disability prevents the person(s) from doing so."
  - h. Each petition page must have no more than ten signature lines. The signature lines must be consecutively numbered. Each signature line must have space for the date of the signature; a signature; and each signatory's year of birth; printed first, middle, and last name; and residence address, municipality, and county.
  - i. Each petition page must include the following statement: "All information on this petition is subject to public inspection."
2. Staff will count and consecutively number the pages of the petition in front of the person submitting it, then explain the process to be used to inspect the specific petition. Staff will prepare a receipt, which is signed by both the person submitting the petition and the filing officer. Staff will issue the receipt to the person submitting the petition and keep a copy with the petition. The receipt will contain the following information (Minn. R. 8205.1040, subps 3, 4):
  - a. Name, address, phone number and email address of petitioner.
  - b. Type of petition.
  - c. Date the petition is submitted for inspection.
  - d. Date by which petition inspection will be completed; the verification of a petition must be completed as soon as practicable but no later than ten working days after the day on which the petition was filed.
  - e. Acknowledgement by the petitioner of the process that will be used to inspect the petition.
  - f. Acknowledgment by the petitioner of the number of petition pages submitted for inspection.

3. The same day the petition is submitted, staff will save a copy of the county's voter registration master list. Along with the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS), this list will be used to verify the petition.
4. State law, local ordinance or charter provision will dictate the number of valid signatures needed on the specific petition. When staff determines what type of petition the filer is submitting, they will state the threshold number of signatures the petition will need to meet to be considered "sufficient".
5. For archival purposes, staff will scan both the petition and the SVRS master list used to inspect the petition.

### **Reviewing in office**

1. Staff members and/or election judges will work in teams of two to inspect the petition. One person will read from the petition; the other will verify that information by reviewing the public information list. Each team will maintain an inspection log to record information on rejected signatures.
2. For city charter amendment petitions, staff will check the face of the petition to ensure that each page additionally complies with Minn. Stat. 410.12, subd 2:
  - a. Each page includes an affidavit of the circulator;
  - b. Each signer indicates their residence address, which must match exactly the address for that voter in SVRS; and
  - c. Each page includes the names and addresses of five residents of the city who are registered to vote in the city and the affidavit in the form provided by law.
3. Staff will review whether the signatures on a petition can be counted based on basic criteria:

#### ***For petitions in lieu of filing fee: signers should be eligible voters***

If the petition requires that signers be eligible to vote for the candidate or ballot question that is the subject of the petition: (Minn. R. 8205.1030, subp 2)

- a. Staff ensure the signer's printed name is legible and the signature is in ink.
- b. Staff check the year of birth (should be all four digits of the year) to ensure that each signer is at least 18 years of age.
- c. Staff verify the signer's address is in the jurisdiction that is the subject of the petition.

#### ***For all other petitions: signers should be both eligible and registered to vote***

If the petition requires that the signers be eligible and registered to vote for the candidate or ballot question that is the subject of the petition (Minn. R. 8205.1030, subp 2):

- a. Staff ensure the signer's printed name is legible and the signature is in ink.

- b. Staff check the year of birth (should be all four digits of the year) to ensure that each signer is at least 18 years of age. The year of birth provided on the petition must be an exact match with the year of birth provided in the voter record.
  - c. Staff verify the signer's address is in the jurisdiction that is the subject of the petition. The address provided by the signer on the petition must match the address in the voter record. A signature can be accepted if the address does not include a discrete apartment or unit number.
- 4. Staff will make a small 'x' mark next to the signature line number for each line that does not have the information required. On an inspection log, staff will note the page and line number of any signatures not counted and detail the reason.
- 5. For each page of the petition, staff will count the number of signature lines that meet the legal criteria; they will write this number on the lower right-hand corner of the petition form. Staff will periodically add the numbers of sufficient signatures together to see how close the petition is to the threshold of signatures needed.
- 6. If the minimum number of valid signatures required has been verified, the inspection process can stop. (Minn. R. 8205.1050, subp 2.)
- 7. Staff complete the petition inspection form, stating whether the petition is "sufficient" or "insufficient".
- 8. Staff will store the inspected petition with the archived master list which was used to inspect the petition. The petition, the master list and the inspection log are all available for public inspection.
- 9. If the petition is sufficient, staff will notify petitioner and the appropriate governing body. If the petition is insufficient, staff will notify only the petitioner, including a report that describes the page, line number, and details of the signatures not counted. Also, staff will include the date by which additional signatures can be submitted for inspection, if permitted by law.