

CANON CHANGE BACKGROUNDER

Amendment to Canon 4.1(1) – Vestries, Churchwardens, and Lay Representatives

Section 1 of Canon 4.1 relates to the composition of parish vestries and the conduct of vestry meetings. The proposed amendments to this section are intended to more succinctly define the core aspects of vestry membership, add clarity regarding the eligibility for election to any office in the parish, expressly provide for the Bishop's right to attend a vestry meeting (drawing from similar provisions in the canons of other dioceses), and align the notice period for publishing the list of eligible voters with the notice period for a vestry meeting. The text of the section has been simplified, re-ordered and re-numbered for improved flow and clarity.

Lastly, the current provision for the issuance of voting cards to each eligible voter (currently contained in s. 1(a)(iii) of Canon 4.1) has been removed, since the use of voting cards at vestry meetings has become obsolete in modern times.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

THAT section 1 of Canon 4.1 be amended to read as follows:

- (a) In every **parish** congregation within the Diocese of Niagara there shall be a Vestry composed of all the baptised members of such congregation of the full age of 16 years who are qualified and willing to sign the declaration below, in a book kept for this purpose, before **voting** at each vestry meeting **or being elected to any office in the said parish congregation, or to membership in the Synod of the Diocese**, subject to the certification and appeal procedures outlined in section 1(d) of this canon.

"I do solemnly declare that I am a baptised Christian of the full age of 16 years, who for at least six months preceding the holding of this Vestry meeting, has been identifiably involved with this congregation, through worship, fellowship, and financial support. Further, I declare that I have not voted as a member of any other Vestry within the said six months."

- (b) A Certification Committee composed of the **Incumbent**, the Churchwardens and **the** Lay Representatives to Synod, shall determine, **on the basis of the vestry qualifications and requirements outlined in section 1(a) of this canon, and using their best pastoral judgment**, eligibility of those who are to be voting members of the Vestry.
- (c) A list of those eligible to vote at a Vestry meeting shall be displayed in a prominent place **immediately following the giving of notice of any Vestry meeting**.
- (d) If a person's name does not appear on the ~~roll~~ **Vestry list described in section 1(c) of this canon**, that person may appeal to the Certification

Committee no later than 72 hours before the time of the opening of the Vestry meeting, to have their name added to the certified list of Vestry members. Individuals who still feel unjustly excluded, may further appeal to a committee of the Archdeacon, Regional Dean, and Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor. However, if the Archdeacon or Regional Dean be the **Incumbent**, the Bishop shall appoint a substitute for this purpose. Should there be more than a dozen people making such an appeal, the tribunal may order the Vestry meeting postponed until the appeal has been heard and a decision rendered.

- (e) The Vestry Chairperson may invite non-voting members to speak at a Vestry meeting at their discretion, with the approval of the said meeting. **The Bishop or their designate may attend any Vestry meeting and will have the right to speak but not vote.**

Amendment to Canon 4.1(3) – Vestries, Churchwardens, and Lay Representatives

Section 3 of Canon 4.1 describes who presides over the Vestry meeting and explains how records of the Vestry meeting are to be kept. The proposed amendment to section 3 updates and reorganizes the text into three parts, clarifying who chairs the vestry, enshrining the present convention that, where possible, an archdeacon should chair in the absence of the Incumbent, and describes how a vestry clerk is appointed. The amendment also adds a requirement to preserve any digital records of a Vestry meeting.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

THAT section 3 of Canon 4.1 be amended to read as follows:

- (a) At all Vestry meetings, **the chairperson shall be** the **Incumbent** who shall preside, and in **their** absence **an archdeacon** or in the absence of both, such member of the Vestry as the majority, duly qualified to vote and present at such Vestry meeting, name.
- (b) At the commencement of all Vestry meetings, a Vestry Clerk shall be nominated by the churchwardens, with the concurrence of the chairperson, and be elected by the duly qualified members to serve as the Secretary of such Vestry meeting.**
- (c) The proceedings of all Vestry meetings shall be entered in a book kept for that purpose and preserved in the custody of the Churchwardens, **in addition to any digital and other records which shall be preserved in parish files.**

Amendment to Canon 4.1(14) – Vestries, Churchwardens, and Lay Representatives

This amendment updates the text of Canon 4.1 (14) to be more inclusive of the diversity of parish employees that may be appointed by the churchwardens.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

THAT section 14 Canon 4.1 be amended to read as follows:

~~The Organist, the Vestry Clerk and the Sexton, and other~~ **All non-licensed or non-commissioned lay employees** shall be appointed **or employed** by the Churchwardens with the concurrence of the Incumbent; and their salaries and wages shall be brought into the general account to be rendered as aforesaid by such Churchwardens.

Amendment to Canon 4.1(17) – Vestries, Churchwardens, and Lay Representatives

This proposed amendment simplifies and modernizes the sections of the canon related to Vestry reporting. It removes the reporting provisions from the section relating only to the election of lay representatives to Synod and creates a standalone provision relating to Vestry reporting. It removes the existing requirement for a certificate to be transmitted, to better reflect the current digital reporting process, and adds the ability for the Incumbent to delegate their reporting responsibilities to their designate, which is a common and sensible practice. Lastly, the amended language clarifies the Secretary of Synod's responsibility for use of information conveyed in Vestry reports.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

THAT sections 17(d) and 17 (e) of Canon 4.1 be repealed and restated as a new section of the canon, as follows:

Each Incumbent, **or their designate**, shall, without delay after each **annual Vestry meeting, report** to the **Secretary of Synod the election and appointment of all Churchwardens, Deputy Churchwardens, Lay Representatives to Synod and other office holders in a manner duly prescribed by the Secretary of Synod, along with any statistical, financial, auditor or other reports deemed important and necessary.**

The Secretary of Synod shall have custody of said reports for the general benefit of the Officers of Synod, and their designates, and for the purpose of preparing a list of Synod members.