



COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

21st Century Programs, Governance & Membership

Mastering the Nuts and Bolts of Council Elections

Council Member Handout

Council members are elected and appointed public officials. The Revised Statutes of Missouri require county Extension councils to organize and conduct an election of membership each January. All citizens of voting age are eligible to vote in the election. This module will:

- Help Extension councils comply with state statutes regarding election of members.
- Provide suggested processes for conducting the election to provide all eligible voters the opportunity to participate.
- Assist in publicizing the election to all citizens.

A companion module, “*Recruiting Candidates for Effective County Councils*,” addresses the process of soliciting nominations and approaching potential candidates.

State Statutes Governing Council Elections

Organizing the annual election is the legal responsibility of the county Extension council. Several sections of the Revised Statutes of Missouri govern county Extension council elections. These statutes are found in Chapter 262: Promotion of Agriculture and Horticulture (<http://www.moga.state.mo.us/STATUTES/C262.HTM>).

Section 262.573 mandates the annual election of membership:

In the month of January of each year an election shall be held in each of the established districts in which there is a vacancy for membership on the council, for the election of a member or members to the council, at which election each citizen of voting age residing in the district shall be entitled to vote.

Section 262.567 describes the composition of the council, terms of office, tenure and when elected and appointed council members take office:

1. *The University of Missouri Extension council in each county shall be composed of the following members:*

(1) At least one elected member from each district within the county as established under the provisions of sections 262.550 to 262.620; if no districts shall be established then from

each township within the county. Such member shall be a resident of the district from which elected.

- (2) A **member of the county commission** to be designated by the commission, or if none be so designated, then the presiding commissioner of the county commission.*
 - (3) **One member from each general farm organization** having a membership in the county of twenty-five or more persons, such members to be appointed by the farm organization in such manner as it may determine.*
 - (4) **One member from each incorporated town or city within the county having a population of ten thousand or more**, as shown by the latest federal decennial census, to be appointed by the mayor of the town or city. Such member shall be a resident of such town or city.*
 - (5) **In counties having no town or city with a population of ten thousand or more**, as shown by the latest federal decennial census, one member to be appointed by the mayor of the town or city designated by the elected council of the county which may or may not be included in a district. Such member shall be a resident of the designated town or city.*
- 2. Council members, both elected and appointed, shall hold office for a term of two years, and until their successors are elected and qualified, provided that in the first council in a county approximately one-half of the elected and appointed council members shall be elected or appointed for a term of one year, and until their successors are elected and qualified.*
 - 3. Men and women shall be eligible for membership on the council.*
 - 4. Vacancies in the elected council membership shall be filled until the next annual election by council appointment and vacancies in the appointed membership shall be filled until the next annual election in the manner provided for the original appointment.*
 - 5. The newly organized council shall assume its duties on March first of each year.*
 - 6. All elected or appointed council members may serve two consecutive two-year terms, provided that those members elected or appointed for a one-year term may not be elected or appointed for more than one additional consecutive two-year term.*
 - 7. An elected or appointed council member upon serving two two-year consecutive terms shall become eligible for reelection or reappointment to the council after one year.*

Section 262.570 calls for the establishment of district boundaries:

...The university shall file with the county commission in each county in which there is to be established a council an instrument setting forth the boundaries of each district within the county established for the purpose of electing members to the council. The districts in



each county shall be consecutively numbered from one. A copy thereof shall be published within fifteen days after it is filed. If the districts as originally established are at any time thereafter altered or changed, the university shall, on or before the first day of July, file with the county commission an instrument setting forth the change in the districts and the boundaries thereof and like notice as above provided shall be given of such change.

Section 262.577 describes the requirements for publicizing the ballot:

The council shall cause the list of nominees named by it to be published at least once, which publication shall be not more than fifty days nor less than thirty days prior to the date fixed for the election. The publication of notice shall also contain a statement that additional nominees for council members may be made by petition of twenty-five or more qualified voters residing within the district filed with the council within twenty days after the publication of notice of election. The names of all such nominees shall be placed upon a ballot to be submitted to the voters of the respective districts at the election.

Section 262.620 clarifies how the council is to provide public notice:

“Any public notice required to be given under any provisions of sections 262.550 to 262.620 shall be given by publishing a copy thereof for at least one time in a newspaper published within the county and having a general circulation therein and if there be no such newspaper within the county, then in some newspaper having a general circulation in the county. ...”

Preparing for the Election

Extension councils should begin preparing in the fall for the January elections (*see “Recruiting Candidates for Effective County Councils” training module*). Councils should review the election process and make any necessary revisions. A written procedure, adopted as part of the council bylaws, may be useful in ensuring a legal and inclusive process. Next, the council must set the date for the election (*see Section 262.573, RSMo*). The election date provides a starting point for establishing deadlines to comply with statutory requirements for providing public notice.

Nominees, at least two from each district (*see Section 262.583.1(1) RSMo.*), should be selected by December to meet the statutory requirement to publish a public notice between 30 and 50 days before the election. This is a paid notice, not a news story (*see Section 262.620 RSMo*). It is recommended that the Extension council contact county newspapers in advance for advertising deadlines, rates and circulation areas. In some instances, the council may need to publish the notice in more than one newspaper to provide full coverage of the county.

Also within 30 days of the election, the council should notify the county commission, municipalities and farm organizations about appointees for the coming year (*see Section 262.583.1(6) RSMo.*).



Conducting Participatory Elections

The manner in which county Extension councils are to carry out the annual election are not described in the Revised Statutes of Missouri. Thus, county councils have several options for conducting the elections. Three popular ways are:

1. **Walk-in balloting.** Ballot boxes are placed in the Extension center and at locations within each district. To increase accessibility, ballot boxes also may be placed in county or municipal government offices, banks and other places frequented by voters throughout the county. *Note: Ballot boxes must be secured through such means as a locked box or the use of voting monitors.*
2. **Balloting via local newspapers.** Ballots are published in local newspapers with instructions for eligible voters to return ballots to the extension center in person or by mail. *Note: Ballots may be published in any newspaper serving the county. If multiple newspapers serve the county, it is recommended that the ballot be published in more than one newspaper to provide the greatest geographic coverage.*
3. **Balloting by mail.** Ballots are mailed to eligible voters with instructions to return ballots to the Extension center by mail or in person. Provide a deadline by which returned ballots must be postmarked.

Because the statutes require an election process that is open to all citizens, it is recommended that councils use a combination of voting strategies to provide the greatest opportunity for participation among eligible voters in a cost-effective manner.

Creating Enthusiasm and Participation for Elections

State statutes entitle each citizen of voting age to participate in county Extension council elections. To increase awareness of and encourage participation in the election, councils must educate citizens about the nominees and the election process. This can be accomplished through many means:

1. **Distributing news releases to newspapers and to radio and TV stations.** In addition to fulfilling the statutory requirement for a paid legal notice, councils may simultaneously distribute a news release containing the same information to all newspapers and to radio and TV stations serving the county. Many newspapers will publish brief profiles or interviews of council candidates. Additional news releases in the weeks leading up to the election can provide details on the election date and polling hours, and how and where to obtain a ballot.
2. **Making person-to-person contacts within the communities.** For example, council members can talk with neighbors and co-workers, and make announcements at meetings of civic groups to which they belong.



3. **Posting information on public bulletin boards, kiosks and the county Extension center website.**
4. **Sending e-mail notices to Extension users, public officials, stakeholders and community leaders** seeking their participation and assistance in publicizing the election.

Maintaining Election Integrity

County councils can take several steps to ensure the integrity of the election throughout the election process. Among those steps:

1. Use official ballot boxes obtained from the county clerk.
2. Write clear instructions to accompany ballots.
3. Ask county clerk to be an official observer of the election tally. Have at least three people count the votes — one to call the votes, one to tally results and one to serve as a spotter. (For ease of counting, use different paper colors for each district.)
4. Ensure one vote per person to the best of the council's ability.
5. Have election results certified by county clerk.

After the Election

The newly organized council assumes its duties on March 1 (*Section 262.567.5, RSMo.*). Several tasks must be completed to meet the requirements of state statutes:

1. County Extension councils must provide a list of members to both the county commission and the University. The list of members and officers is to be submitted by the council chair before the allocation of funds by the county commission. (*Section 262.603, RSMo*)
2. At the first annual meeting after taking office, the council must elect a chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer. Within five days of the election, officers must take and sign an oath of public office filed with the county clerk's office. (*Sections 262.583.2 and 262.583.3, RSMo.*)

Once new members have taken office, welcome them and provide them with an orientation to their roles and responsibilities. (*See New Member Orientation Manual, March 2003.*) It is recommended that orientation be given within 30 days of taking office. Orientation for new council members also may take place before taking office on March 1.

Additional Resources

1. **Timeline for County Extension Council Recruitment and Elections**



2. **“Recruiting Candidates for Effective County Councils,”** Council Leadership Development Module, October 2003
3. **Revised Statutes of Missouri**, Chapter 262; see The Extension Council Manual (M-61) (<http://moga.state.mo.us/STATUTES/C262.HTM>)
4. **“Council Member Responsibilities and Relationships,”** New Member Orientation Manual, March 2003 (<http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil/orientation/pdfs/7-responsibilities-ds.pdf>)
5. **Sample Notice of Nominees**

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Timeline for County Extension Council Recruitment and Elections

State statutes require county Extension councils to conduct their elections in January. The following schedule is based upon your council election being held on the third Tuesday in January. Although statutes do not specify that election be held on a specific day, consistency across the state enhances the opportunities for publicizing the election and marketing local Extension councils. If the council membership election in your county is held at a different time, adjustments should be made to this schedule.

Before the Election

November and December — Select nominees, at least two for each elected position and secure nominee's approval.

December — Check names with organizations appointing members to avoid duplication and ensure eligibility to serve.

December — Provide public notice of nominees (*Section 262.620*) "not more than 50 days or less than 30 days" per state statutes (*Section 262.577*). See sample notice.

December and January — Publicize election date, time and place. See sample news release.

After the Election

January — Notify elected and appointed members of date, time and place of annual organization meeting and election of council officers.

January — Order Certificates of Membership and membership cards for council members.

February — Hold annual meeting of the council to organize, elect officers and set dates of council meetings. All council officers of the council shall within five (5) days after their election, take and sign the usual oath of public office, which shall be filed with the county clerk. (*Section 262.583.2 and 262.583.3*) This may be done at the organization or annual meeting.

February — Provide list of council members and officers to county commission and University. Orientation for new council members may be provided prior to taking office.

March 1 — New council takes office.

March — Conduct orientation training for new members and officers. It is recommended that orientation be given within 30 days of taking office.

Note: This Word file may be downloaded at <http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil/training/elections/>.

**Nominees Selected
for
University of Missouri Extension Council Members**
_____ County

Citizens of voting age in _____ County, pursuant to the provisions of Section 262-577, RSMo., 1969, will have an opportunity to vote and elect members to the University of Missouri Extension Council of _____ County in January.

The Extension council, consisting of elected and appointed members, is the official body within the county to cooperate with the University in carrying out the provisions of the Smith-Lever Act of Congress and amendments and acts supplementary thereto and any other acts effecting extension programs. Two people have been nominated for each of the elective positions in their respective districts. The nominees and their districts are as follows:

(List here the names of the nominees, the length of term to serve, the name and number of the district in which they live.)

Additional nominations may be made by petition of 25 or more qualified voters residing within the district, filed with the council within 20 days after the publication of this notice of election. Forms for nominations are available in your county Extension office located at:

(Office address
phone number)

Chair,
University of Missouri Extension Council
of _____ County

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Trainer Notes and Council Activity

Council members are elected or appointed public officials. The statutes require councils to organize and conduct annual election of members each January. This module will:

- Help extension councils comply with state statutes regarding the election of members;
- Provide suggested processes for conducting the election to provide all eligible voters the opportunity to participate;
- Assist in publicizing the election to all citizens.

Tips for Facilitating

The following tips can assist trainers and council members in getting the most out of the “*Mastering the Nuts and Bolts of Council Elections*” training module:

1. Determine who will be the presenter(s) (council member, specialist, county program director).
2. Review “*Mastering the Nuts and Bolts of Council Elections*” handout, including referenced resources, and PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes.
3. Prepare materials needed for the council activity.
4. Place “*Mastering the Nuts and Bolts of Council Elections*” module on council agenda, and involve Regional Council Leadership Team in training exercise as needed.

Council Election Activity

Preparation time: 1 hour or less

Presentation time: 35-45 minutes

What is needed? (*Online resources may be used if Internet access is available.*)

- “*Mastering the Nuts and Bolts of Council Elections*” PowerPoint presentation.
- Computer, projector and screen.
- Copies of “*Mastering the Nuts and Bolts of Council Elections*” handout for participants, including:
 - Timeline for County Extension Council Recruitment and Elections;
 - Sample Public Notice of Nominees.
- Newsprint, markers, easel and masking tape.

At the Meeting

1. **Introduce “*Mastering the Nuts and Bolts of Council Elections*” training module.** (5-10 minutes)
Deliver PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes.
2. **Distribute and review module materials.** (15 minutes)
3. **Lead activity.** (15-20 minutes)
Conduct a group discussion of the council’s election process as it relates to the topics addressed in the module. The following questions can help guide the discussion:
 - a. How do we as a council prepare for the election? Have we established a timeline based on the date of the election?
 - b. Where and how can eligible citizens who live in our county vote? How can we increase participation?
 - c. How many people typically cast a ballot in the council election? How can we increase participation?
 - d. How does the council maintain the integrity of its elections? Are there steps that can improve the integrity?

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