



Report to CLIPP

Agenda Item: Review and Revision of Chapter 41 Elections

Meeting Date: June 2, 2025

Referring Body: Village Board

Committee Contact: Ken Charneski

Staff Contact: Jennifer Poyer

Report Prepared by: Ken Charneski

AGENDA ITEM: Review and Revision of Chapter 41 Elections

OBJECTIVE(S): To review problems/violations associated with Kronenwetter Elections, and create an ordinance that will clarify the correct procedures to prevent the same problems in the future.

HISTORY/BACKGROUND:

A number of complaints have been filed with the Wisconsin Elections Commission against the (former) Village clerk and in one case several Village Board members (Vedvik, Voll, Coyle, and Eiden) regarding questionable election practices in Kronenwetter.

This in turn resulted in many thousands of dollars in Village attorney fees authorized by ex-president Voll to defend that clerk against complaints that Village Attorney Turonie later said basically had no penalty associated with them, and that the WEC's response would only be instructional in nature.

The latest election has also had problems which resulted in ex-president Voll authorizing another \$4000.00 in Village attorney costs to create an after-the-fact report (attached) on the matter expressing his dissatisfaction with how the matter was handled, and to present his verbal opinion at the April 14, 2025 Village Board meeting.

The report had little information of a constructive nature, but instead seemed to merely complain about the fact that the issue was effectively dealt with between the Village and County clerks with assistance from Marathon County attorney(s), and at no cost to the Village. The written opinion appears at its core to solicit legal services with a list of 10 items that the Village "might follow up with", while his verbal report gave the impression to some people of inviting further complaints from the public.

All of the above is to say that most if not all of the ongoing problems, expense, and bad publicity **were unnecessary**, being caused by a perceived lack of clarity in the rules, exploited in some cases by personalities apparently unwilling to follow those rules.

The Village Board has assigned CLIPP to review the above issues, and any others that come forth in the Committee's discussions, and to create an effective revision to Village Ordinance Chapter 41 that will clarify policies and procedures for elections which will remove any ambiguity real or contrived from the Wisconsin Statutes on the matter.

This process will likely take a number of meetings to effectively complete. The Election Administration Manual for Wisconsin Municipal Clerks is a good start for reference.

<https://elections.wi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/EA%20Manual-August%202024.pdf>

The Election Day Manual for Wisconsin Municipal Clerks is also valuable

<https://www.wistatedocuments.org/digital/collection/p267601coll4/id/34940/rec/1>

Both manuals refer to the appropriate statutes for reference.

Aside from the attached attorney report, we will go through the WEC complaints to see what the problems are all about, as well as any other issues that committee members, the staff, or the public feel a need to be addressed.

A review of other complaints to WEC may be informative to see what problems have arisen elsewhere so that we might establish rules to pre-empt such situations that might happen here in the future.

The 5 complaints to WEC each deal with different issues and each refers to violations of the manuals or the statutes. These complaints should provide good examples of what could or has gone wrong in our elections. Since these are obvious problem areas, we would want to make sure to address and clarify the procedures referred to in these; the oldest of which is 15 months.

<https://elections.wi.gov/resources/complaints/el-24-26-charneski-v-birk-labarge>

<https://elections.wi.gov/resources/complaints/el-24-68-baker-v-birk-labarge>

<https://elections.wi.gov/resources/complaints/el-24-89-buchberger-v-birk-labarge>

<https://elections.wi.gov/resources/complaints/el-24-126-kindelberger-v-birk-labarge>

<https://elections.wi.gov/resources/complaints/el-24-110-doverspike-v-birk-labarge-et-al>

Perhaps the best way to approach this is to first start a list of problems that we have run into. Then, put together an ordinance of rules in a way that will clarify the procedures and hopefully prevent such issues from reoccurring in the future.

To start with, I think we might want to review the events of the most recent election, and the attorney's comments, to see whether or not there is anything in his opinion, or election day events that we want to start our list with, and then add to that list as we go along.

PROPOSAL: Discussion by CLIPP, and revision of Chapter 41.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: "Knuckle down, buckle down, do it, do it, do it". We have our work cut out for us, as this is a very important responsibility.

FINANCIAL

Financial Consideration/Action:

FUNDING SOURCE: N/A

Account Number/Title:	#
Current Adopted Budget:	\$
Spent to Date:	\$
Remaining Budget:	\$
Requested Amount:	\$
Remainder of Budgeted Amount, if approved:	

ATTACHMENTS: Turonie Election Report