

## District 10-Minute Guide Series

This is one in a continuing series of informational/discussion topics designed to help conservation district directors and employees become more informed and knowledgeable about their responsibilities. It is suggested that employees and board members review and then have a 10-minute discussion on a selected guide at each board meeting as part of the district's commitment to continuing education for leadership and staff.

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### *Guide No. 12 – District Director Elections*

The governing body of a conservation district consists of five public officials. Two board members are appointed by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and three are elected by registered voters within the conservation district. Elections are governed by Title 27A of the Oklahoma Statutes and Title 155 Chapter 10 Rules. Conservation district director elections are held independently of official state elections run by the Election Board, and as such, have different deadlines and requirements.

#### **Elected Directors**

Three positions on the conservation district board are elected. The elected positions are numbered 1, 2 and 3 with succeeding terms, so that one term expires each year.

#### **Term of Office**

The term of office for elected district directors is from July 1 to June 30 for a period of three years following the date of their election.

#### **Eligibility Requirements for Candidate**

To be eligible to file for a district director election, an individual must be a registered voter in the district and must be a cooperator of the district. The individual must either have a cooperator agreement on file with the district or have made an application for a cooperator agreement upon declaration of candidacy.

#### **Taking Office**

Elected directors begin their term of office on July 1 of the year they are elected. They will be eligible to vote on district matters and to draw per diem for attending meetings on or after July 1, after the Conservation Commission has certified the position, and the Oath of Office, and the Loyalty Oath have been administered. Reelected directors must complete the oaths at the start of each new term.

The director must also review and complete the Director Position Description when oaths are administered.

#### **Elections**

Conservation district director elections are held each year on the first Tuesday of June. Polling locations are open from 7:00 am through 7:00 pm.

#### **Filing Period**

Anyone wishing to file for the position of district director must complete Candidacy forms during the filing period which occurs May 1 – 14 each year.

#### **Election Expenses**

Election expenses are eligible for reimbursement with no effect on the district's allocation if they meet all requirements and are claimed following established guidelines.

#### **Election Schedule**

Districts must meet several deadlines and requirements for the election cycle each year. These deadlines and requirements apply to all districts. The District Services Division provides guidance in February that outlines specific due dates and instructions along with a list of directors whose elected terms are expiring.

In general, the election schedule requires the district to address the following items:

Set dates for publishing the notice of filing period – This action should be taken in the February or March board meeting and must be recorded in the meeting minutes, including the publication locations and selected publication dates.

Publication of the Notice of Filing Period – Form OCC-3D, *Notice of Filing Period for Election of District Director*, must be published twice as a legal notice, seven days apart, in all newspapers in the district during the first three weeks of April. The district must then certify to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission that the notice has been published by providing the notarized proof of publication affidavit from each newspaper.

Filing Period – The district must accept Form OCC-3F, *Notification and Declaration of Candidacy*, from any who wish to file for the position. Candidacy forms may only be completed and accepted May 1 through May 14; all forms must be received by the close of business on the last day of the filing period. The candidacy form is to be made available to the public at the district office and is also available on the Commission's website.

A copy of the applicant's Cooperator Agreement or application for Cooperator Agreement must be attached to the Candidacy form. The district must verify with the County Election Board that the individual is a registered voter in the district.

All completed Candidacy forms, with required attachments, should be emailed to the Commission upon receipt, but no later than the morning of the first business day following the close of the filing period.

The Commission will certify candidate eligibility and will notify the district. If only one eligible candidate files, no election will be held, and the

candidate, if qualified, will be certified as elected by the OCC. If two or more eligible candidates file, an election will be held, and the district must begin election preparation procedures immediately.

### **Board Meeting to Prepare for Election**

The timeframe for completing all election requirements is very tight. The district should act in the April or May board meeting to select polling places, a District Election Committee, and newspapers for the Notice of Election publication in the event two eligible candidates file. If the district does not take this action in April or May, and an election will be held, a special meeting must be scheduled as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements.

### **When No Candidate Files for Election**

If no one files for the elected position, the district must notify the Commission in writing at the close of the filing period. OCC will take action to declare the position vacant, then request the district board make a recommendation for appointment to fill the vacancy. The recommendation must be submitted on Form OCC-3B, *Recommendation for Appointment of Conservation District Director*.

The Commission will act on the recommendation during a regular meeting.

An appointment to fill a vacant elected seat does not convert the position to an appointed one; it remains an elected position subject to all election requirements and procedures.

### **Other Resources**

District Director Elections section of the Conservation District Handbook and the District Resources section of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission website at [conservation.ok.gov](http://conservation.ok.gov).

For specific questions or information, please contact the District Services Division with the Conservation Commission