Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts

Procedural Protocol for Election of Society Leadership

Proposed and agreed upon at the Joint Meeting of the Trustees and the Governing Board, May 8th 2026

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Article I: Purpose & Goals

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

The purpose of these Articles is to promote transparency, fairness, accountability, and procedural clarity in the election process of the Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts (ISWM). These Articles are intended to ensure a consistent and impartial election process and to provide all eligible members of our diverse community with a fair opportunity to participate in the selection of organizational leadership.

The Society reaffirms its commitment to the foundational Islamic principles of:

- **Shūrā (Consultation):** Upholding inclusive and meaningful consultation in decision-making, as commanded by Allah تعالى: *"And those who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation (shūrā)"* (Qur'ān 42:38).
- **ʿAdl (Justice):** Ensuring fairness, impartiality, and equity in all procedures, in accordance with the divine command: *"Indeed, Allah commands justice (ʿadl)..."* (Qur'ān 16:90).
- **Amānah (Trust):** Fulfilling all responsibilities with honesty and faithfulness, as Allah تعالى says: *"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts (amānāt) to whom they are due..."* (Qur'ān 4:58).

These principles must guide the structure and implementation of the Society's election processes, with the intention of preserving unity, preventing harm, and serving the best interests (*maṣlaḥah*) of the community in accordance with the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Article II: Enforcement of Existing By-Laws

The following provisions shall be strictly enforced:

Section 2.1 – Voter Eligibility & Membership

- Annual membership dues must be paid and officially recorded between **January 1 and September 30** of the election year.
- The Society shall provide structured and timely reminders to members:
    - Beginning of **July, through August** and **September**
    - Through:
        - Email
        - Official social media channels
        - Jumuʿah announcements Notice board postings

Section 2.2 – Publication of Eligible Voters

- A preliminary list of eligible voting members shall be:
    - Published and visibly posted by **October 15**
- Members shall have until **October 31** to:
    - Raise disputes
    - Request corrections
- All disputes must be formally reviewed and resolved by the Treasurer and Election Committee, with escalation to the board for further reconciliation if necessary.
- All deadlines to be enforced <u>strictly</u> without extensions.

Section 2.3 – Eligibility for Board Candidacy

- Candidates must:

Be members in good standing (Paid dues, No disciplinary actions, Active participation)

Have paid dues for both:

- The **previous year**
- The **current year**, prior to the deadline

- No exceptions (hardship waiver etc.) to be granted.

Section 2.4 – Contribution-Based Dues Credits

Members contributing financially to the general fund, the amounts listed below in one calendar year, shall receive dues credits as follows:

Contribution Amount	Dues Credit
$200 or more to the society	1 year
$20,000+ (starting 01/01/2016)	Lifetime*

*Lifetime members must maintain local residence within a 60 mile radius of ISWM. Lifetime membership for members who move away from the locality will remain suspended until such time as they relocate locally.

*For spouses to be counted as lifetime members, the total amount must exceed $40,000.

*Lifetime members should be marked as such on the annual membership list.

Article III: Nomination Process

Section 3.1 – Compliance

- All nominees must meet **all eligibility criteria and deadlines** outlined in the By-Laws.

Section 3.2 – Recommendations on Nominee Selection

- Every effort should be made to diversify the skillset as well as the ethnic background, gender composition and age range of the nominees, keeping in view the need for varied skill and representation requirements in running the society effectively.
- Different community groups should ideally be represented on the board. However, if this is not practically feasible or achievable due to limitations of the democratic process, the board should identify opportunities to include under-represented segments in non-governing capacities such as committee roles, observer board member status and the like.

Section 3.3 – Vetting Requirements

All nominees shall undergo a formal vetting process, including:

- Character and reputation
- Conflict of interest review
- Legal and criminal background (as permitted by law)
- History of contribution and participation in Society activities
- Availability and will to step up to the task of volunteering time and energy.

Section 3.4 – Approval Requirement

- Each nominee must be approved by:
    - A **simple majority** of the Board
    - The list of nominees should be shared with the **Trustees** for approval by a **simple majority** prior to being published.

Section 3.5 - Conflict of Interest Policy

- Mandatory disclosure forms for nominees
- Recusal requirement where conflicts exist

Article IV: General Election Process

Election Step	**Deadline**
Dues Deadline	Sept 30
● Voter List Publication ● Election Committee Appointment	Oct 15
● Voter Grievances & Addressal ● Nominee Solicitation	Oct 31
Nominee List Approval	Nov 30
Ballot Distribution/Voting Commencement	Dec 7
Voting Completion	Jan 7
New Board Convenes	On or by Jan 20

Section 4.1 – Ballot Deadlines

- Ballots must be received by the official deadline.
- Ballot Chain-of-Custody: Ballots will be retained unopened in a secure place with the Treasurer or Election Committee and crosschecked against the voter eligibility list which will serve as a written audit log.
- Only ballots received by the published deadline will be counted.

Section 4.2 – Voting Method

- The finalized ballot will be circulated widely to advertise candidates' details
    - Detailed bios with skills and what each one brings to the table.
    - It is recommended that a "Meet the Candidates" community dinner be organized for healthy discussion in the community and to familiarize the voters with the candidates.
- The board will decide appropriate voting methods as agreed upon by a majority with respect to how ballots are distributed and collected. Options include but are not limited to:
    - Mail vs. in-person voting.
    - Ballots accepted on a rolling basis or cast on a designated date/venue on an "Election Day"
    - Using Jummah days for multiple vote casting days.
- The default method shall be **paper ballots**, due to:
    - Confidentiality concerns
    - Data security limitations in non-specialized software
- Ballot handling shall include:
    - Supervised opening
    - Transparent tabulation procedures

Section 4.3 – Electronic Voting Review

- Electronic voting may be reconsidered upon availability of secure, verifiable, dedicated election software that meets privacy and security requirements as deemed appropriate by the board.
- Paper ballots may be issued on a case by case basis where a member is incapacitated from participating in electronic voting (e.g. technical or accessibility limitations).

Section 4.4 – Election Committee Composition

- The Election Committee shall include:
    - **2 Board members**.
    - **3 Community members** knowledgeable in By-Laws and election procedures. Efforts should be made to diversify this committee to minimize risk of interest group fortification.
    - Trustees may be included in one of the 3 community member slots if available and able to participate in the election process.

Section 4.5- Conflict of Interest Policy

- Mandatory disclosure forms for the Election Committee members
- Recusal requirement where conflicts exist

Article V: Election of Executive Board

Section 5.1 – Eligibility for Executive Positions

Minimum service requirements:

Position	**Minimum Board Service**
Secretary	1 year
Treasurer	2 years

Position	Minimum Board Service
Vice President	2 years
President	3 years

Section 5.2 – Election Timeline and Voter Eligibility

- Executive Board elections shall occur annually in **January**
- Before the election, a brief write up on each potential office bearer's background and skillset should be shared to allow all voting members to make an informed decision.
- Eligible voters:
    - Newly elected Board members
    - Existing Board members whose terms have not expired
    - Trustees

Section 5.3 – Expanded Executive Roles

The elected Executive Board will solicit volunteers for, or in the absence of volunteers, assign the non-executive members to the following roles based on interests and suitability. These roles may change based on needs and expertise available at any given time. Each assigned role should be appropriately defined prior to being delegated. This delegation of roles should occur during the February board meeting (following the executive election in January).

- Deputy Treasurer
- Deputy Secretary
- Youth Coordinator (Role, authority, and reporting structure to be defined)
- Coordinator of Sisters' Affairs
- Facilities Manager

Section 5.4 – Oversight of Election

- Executive Board elections shall be conducted by:
    - An outgoing board member and community members of the Election Committee under the supervision of a Trustee or their designee.

Section 5.5 - Post-election summary report:

In order to ensure transparency, the following data should be made available in all its details to members of the Executive Board as soon as possible

- Total votes
- Participation rate
- Audit confirmation
- Spread sheets including manual and/or electronic

Article VI: Ethical Guidelines for Voting and Conduct

Section 6.1 – Criteria for Selection of Executive Board Members.

- Votes shall be cast based on the qualifications and suitability of each candidate, including:
  - Relevant skills and abilities
  - Dedication and service to the community
  - Capacity to work collaboratively
  - Professionalism and interpersonal conduct

Section 6.2 – Independence of Voting

- Voting shall be exercised as an independent and conscientious decision, free from:
  - Political pressure
  - Ethnic or group bias
  - Personal relationships or favoritism
- Members shall remain mindful that leadership selection is an amānah (trust) and carries accountability before Allah تعالى.

Section 6.3 – Avoidance of Seeking Leadership

- In accordance with the Sunnah, individuals are strongly discouraged from seeking or promoting themselves for leadership positions.

- Campaigning practices that resemble self-promotion, shall be avoided to preserve sincerity and humility.

Section 6.4 – Prohibition of Collusion

- While voting, it is recommended to avoid any biases (e.g. personal, ethnic, etc.)
- There should be no canvassing for votes by the candidate or their supporters
- Any form of collusion (pre-arranged agreements or bloc voting type practices) is prohibited. If confirmed, such behavior may result in nullification of the specific election process.
- Such conduct undermines trust, fosters division, and contradicts the principles of unity and justice upheld by the Society.

Article VII : Appeals Process

- The Appeals Committee is composed of the Board of Trustees as the final authority per our existing By-Laws.
- Any appeal or grievance regarding the Election Results by any board member must be communicated in writing to the President for discussion and resolution.
- In case of non-resolution, the President will escalate the matter to the Board of Trustees within 10 days of the complaint in question.
- The Trustees will render their final binding decision in writing at the end of their investigation.

Article VIII: Conflict of Interest Policy

Section 8.1 – Purpose

This policy is established to ensure that all decisions of the Society are made with integrity, impartiality, and in fulfillment of the amānah (trust) entrusted to its leadership, in accordance with the principles of ʿadl (justice) and shūrā (consultation).

Section 8.2 – Definition of Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises when a Board Member, Trustee, or Committee Member has a personal, financial, familial, or professional interest that may:

- Influence, or appear to influence, their judgment
- Compromise their objectivity
- Result in personal gain or benefit (direct or indirect)

Section 8.3 – Covered Relationships

A conflict of interest includes, but is not limited to, matters involving the following relationships:

A. Blood (Consanguinity) – Up to Second Degree

- Parents and grandparents
- Children and grandchildren
- Siblings (full or half)
- Uncles, aunts, nephews, and nieces

B. Marital (Affinity) Relationships

- Spouse
- In-laws (parents-in-law, children-in-law)
- Siblings-in-law
- Step-relations (step-parent, step-child, step-sibling)
- Parents of spouses

C. Extended Family (Third Degree – Recommended Disclosure)

- First cousins
  (While not automatically disqualifying, these must be disclosed where relevant.)

Section 8.4 – Business and Financial Interests

Conflicts include any situation where a member or their related parties have:

- Ownership, partnership, or investment interest in an entity dealing with the Society
- Employment or consultancy relationship with a vendor, contractor, or service provider

- Expectation of financial gain, contracts, or preferential treatment
- Joint business ventures or partnerships with:
    - Other Board members
    - Candidates
    - Vendors connected to the Society

Section 8.5 – Organizational and Personal Interests

Conflicts may also arise where a member:

- Holds leadership in another organization with competing or overlapping interests
- Has a close personal relationship (mentor, dependent, or similar) that may affect impartiality
- Stands to gain reputational, political, or social advantage from a decision

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Section 8.6 – Mandatory Disclosure

- All Board Members, Trustees, and Election Committee members shall:
    - Submit an annual written disclosure of potential conflicts
    - Disclose any new conflict immediately upon arising
- Disclosure must be made:
    - To the Board Chair or Trustees
    - Prior to discussion or voting on the relevant matter

Section 8.7 – Recusal Requirements

- Any individual with a conflict must:
    - Recuse themselves from discussion and voting
    - Not attempt to influence the decision directly or indirectly
- The recusal shall be:

- Recorded in official meeting minutes

Section 8.8 – Prohibited Conduct

The following are strictly prohibited:

- Participating in decisions where a conflict exists without disclosure
- Using one's position for personal, family, or business gain
- Favoritism in contracts, hiring, nominations, or elections
- Reciprocal arrangements ("you support me, I support you")

Section 8.9 – Review and Enforcement

- The Board executive committee will review the disclosed conflicts and escalate the matter to the BoT in case disciplinary action is needed.
- The Board of Trustees shall determine appropriate actions (recusal, restriction, or disqualification)

- Violations may result in:
  - Formal warning
  - Removal from position
  - Invalidation of affected decisions

Section 8.10 – Documentation and Transparency

- All disclosures and recusals shall be:
  - Documented in official records
  - Available for internal audit and review
- Independent Oversight
  - In case of a sensitive case or an issue that may result in a conflict, trustees may be asked to review the situation.