

# HOA Elections: a Primer

Every fall, Bell Canyon homeowners find themselves awash in election mail—not the national kind—that brings a whole host of questions. Why vote? What’s a quorum? Why are there so many envelopes? For anyone who might need a quick refresher, here’s how the BCA Board of Director elections work.

## What’s at stake?

Three seats on the Bell Canyon Board of Directors are up for election every year. A Director of the Board serves a three-year term and votes on the rules, policies, and procedures that shape Canyon life. The position is a volunteer position and can only be held by a Bell Canyon owner in good standing.

## How do I make sure my vote counts?

- 1. Keep ownership information up-to-date.** If you’ve moved your property into a trust or LLC, make sure that paperwork is on file with the office. Only folks named on a deed, in the trust as trustees, or as managers or members of the LLC are considered owners, so double-check that your file reflects exactly who owns the lot.
- 2. Make sure you can receive mail.** Returned election mailings are a serious issue for Canyon owners; if you’ve had a recent change in address, make sure it’s been submitted in writing to the BCA office. If you are planning to be out of town during September or October, make sure you have mail forwarding correctly set up through the Post Office or that you have a trusted person picking up your mail regularly.
- 3. Fill out the ballot correctly and return it in the correct envelopes.** After returned mailings, this is the single biggest cause of an invalid ballot. When you vote, make sure the following are correct:
  - A. Use numbers correctly:** per lot, you have three votes to cast. You can put all three votes toward one candidate, or you can split them between candidates, but make sure you are writing clearly. If your total written votes add up to more than 3, your ballot will be disqualified. Do not use a ranking system on the candidates, as that will result in a total of 6 votes and a disqualified ballot.
  - B. Don’t sign your ballot:** you only need a signature on the external envelope. Signing the ballot itself removes the confidentiality—remember, any community member can ask to inspect that ballots once the election is over—and undermines the secret ballot system.
  - C. Keep the envelopes straight:** if you only return the secret ballot envelope, the vote cannot be counted. If you do not return the secret ballot envelopes inside the signed envelope, your ballot will not be anonymous. If you do not sign the front of the envelope, the ballot will not be counted until that has been corrected. Here’s a quick visual guide to a complete vote:



- 4. Don’t seal your envelopes until you’re 100% sure about your vote.** There are no do-overs in HOA elections, as that is a potential avenue for mix-up or fraud—be aware that once your ballot is cast, it’s cast.

## What exactly is quorum, and why do we need it?

For Bell Canyon, quorum means that 50% of the property owners have voted, and the Annual Meeting and Election can be held on the scheduled date. If 50% of the owners do not vote, then the Annual Meeting must be adjourned for between two and 30 days, at which time, in accordance with the Association’s By-laws, quorum is reduced to 25%. Voting is an opportunity and responsibility of ownership; your vote represents your preferences for which candidates will join the Board and undertake the leadership of Bell Canyon.

## How do I get involved with Canyon governance?

There are numerous opportunities to participate in the Association’s governance. Leading up to the Annual Election, the Association holds a Candidates Forum for owners to address questions to the candidates running for election and the owners hear specific responses as well as learn a little about each of candidates. If you decide you’d like to fully participate in leadership, about 90 days before the Annual Election, a call for candidates is sent to all owners, and that is the time to complete the nomination form and begin running for election to the Board of Directors. There are also a variety of committees and volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Check on the website or with the office staff or Board members. ■

*By Bri Walker*