

**2026 Election Rules and Regulations for the
Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
Business Committee and Chairperson Elections**

The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribal Election Committee adopts these Rules and Regulations to govern the 2026 Tribal Elections in accordance with the provisions of the Tribe’s Constitution and Bylaws, including in particular, Article III, Section 6, which provides that, “All elections shall be held in accordance with rules and regulations prescribed by an election board appointed by the business committee.” These 2026 Regulations govern all aspects of the 2026 elections, including but not limited to the process for nominating candidates for the Tribal Business Committee, electing the Business Committee members, and electing the Chairperson of the Business Committee and Community Council from among the membership of the Business Committee.

The schedule for the 2026 elections is as follows:

April 6 (Monday) – Nominations for Business Committee Candidates.

May 9 (Saturday) – Election of two Business Committee members.

May 23 (Saturday) – Election of Chairperson.

Two (2) Tribal Business Committee positions will be elected this year. Candidates will be those eligible Tribal Members who are nominated at the April 6, 2026 Community Council meeting and who accept the nomination in the manner prescribed in Rule 5.3.

The Lower Elwha Business Committee Members are as follows:

Council Member:	Year Term Expires:
Melissa Gilman	2026
Russell (Razz) Hepfer	2026
Christia (Tia) Skerbeck	2027
Steve Joaquin Robideau	2027
Frances (Gator) Charles	2028

1. General Information

1.1 Date of Nominations. Nominations for the Tribal Business Committee position will take place on Monday, April 6, 2026, 7:00 PM, at the regularly scheduled Community Council

Meeting in Room 13 at the Lower Elwha Tribal Center. In the event a quorum of the Community Council is not present, the Business Committee will conduct the nominations at that time.

1.2 Date of the General Election. The General Election will be on Saturday, May 9, 2026. There will be a polling place in Room 13 at the Tribal Center, which will be open from 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM. Mail-in ballots shall also be used, and all mail-in ballots must be either mailed to be received at the official Election Committee Post Office Box (PO Box 1104, Port Angeles WA 98362) by Election Day, May 9, 2026, or delivered to the polling station by the time it closes. Any ballots not received by Election Day **WILL NOT** be counted, regardless of when they were mailed or post-marked.

1.3 Date of the Chairperson Election. The Chairperson Election will be on Saturday, May 23, 2026. There will be a polling place in Room 13 at the Tribal Center, which will be open from 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM. Mail-in ballots shall also be used, and all mail-in ballots must be mailed to be received at the official Election Committee Post Office Box (PO Box 1104, Port Angeles WA 98362) by the Chairperson Election Day, May 23, 2026, or delivered to the polling station by the time it closes. Any ballots not received by Election Day **WILL NOT** be counted, regardless of when they were mailed or post marked.

2. Election Committee

2.1 Authority of the Election Committee. The Election Committee has been appointed by the Business Committee in accordance with Article III, Section 6 of the Constitution and Bylaws, which states, “All elections shall be held in accordance with rules and regulations prescribed by an election board appointed by the business committee.” The role of the Election Committee is to: develop rules and regulations for all aspects of elections; enforce those rules and regulations and decide election disputes; ensure that only eligible voters cast a ballot; and count the ballots after the Election and certify the results. All disputes about eligibility and all other election matters will be settled by the Election Committee, and the decision of the Election Committee will be final and not subject to any appeal process.

2.2 Composition of the Election Committee. The Election Committee consists of seven (7) members appointed by the Business Committee. For 2026, as of the date of adoption of these Regulations, the current members of the Committee are: Sateva Henderson, Chairperson; Sharmaine Wright, Vice-Chairperson; Rayin Blewett, Secretary; Courtland Coutlee, Treasurer; Jeffrey Hepfer, Committee Member; Amy Reed, Committee Member; and Tammy Heshughes, Committee Member. The Election Committee shall remain fully authorized to function, notwithstanding any vacancy, provided that a quorum of three (3) is present at any meeting where action is to be taken.

2.3 Staff Assistance to the Election Committee. The Lower Elwha Enrollment Officer provides services to the Election Committee by verifying tribal membership lists to help determine voter eligibility and registration but does not participate in the other activities,

deliberations, and decisions of the Committee. In addition, the Office of Tribal Attorney, or other contract legal counsel, provides legal advice and services to the Election Committee, and the Lower Elwha Tribal Police provide security and traffic control when necessary.

2.4 Quorum of Committee. Three (3) members of the Election Committee constitute a quorum at the Election Committee Meetings, and when a quorum is present the Committee is fully empowered to take any action within the scope of its authority.

3. Eligibility to Vote and Run for Office

3.1 Constitutional Provisions. Article III, Section 4 of the Lower Elwha Community Constitution and By-laws (“Constitution”), as modified by Amendment II, provides that “All members of the Lower Elwha Tribal Community age eighteen (18) and over are eligible to vote in all elections regardless of place of residence.” Article III, Section 1 states that the Community Council consists of “all qualified voters of the community.” Article III, Section 2, as amended, provides that Business Committee members are to be elected from the membership of the Community Council.

3.2 Eligibility to Vote, Nominate Candidates, and Serve on Business Committee. All members of the Lower Elwha Tribal Community age eighteen (18) and over, and regardless of place of residence, shall be eligible to nominate candidates, vote in the 2026 elections, and run for and serve on the Business Committee.

3.3 Eligibility for Chairperson. In accordance with Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution, only the five Business Committee Members, including the two to be elected in the May 9, 2026 Business Committee Election, shall be eligible to be elected Chairperson in the May 23, 2026 Chairperson Election and shall be listed on the ballot for that election.

3.4 Equal voting rights for all voters. All tribal members age eighteen (18) and over, regardless of place of residence, shall have equal voting rights—provided that, in order to exercise the right to vote, each eligible voter must register as provided in Rule 4.3 below.

4. Voter Lists and Registration

4.1 Certified Voter Lists. Prior to the Election, a list of all enrolled Tribal Members who are 18 years and older will be certified and supplied by the Enrollment Officer of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, to be used by the Election Committee for reference in determining who is eligible to vote. A copy of the approved list will be posted in the Tribal Center and other tribal facilities at least ten (10) days prior to the mail-out of the official ballots. It will be mailed to all tribal members age 18 or older and may also be requested by sending an email to elections@elwhaelections.org.

4.2 Responsibility of Voters to Maintain Current Address. Each voter is ultimately responsible for maintaining his or her address with the Enrollment Department and to notify the Committee or Enrollment Department that he or she is entitled to vote. Each family is encouraged to verify that all eligible voters in the family appear on the eligible voters list, and that an updated current address for each voter is provided to the Enrollment Department. In order to be eligible to register to vote by mail, a voter must provide his or her current address to the Enrollment Department by no later than April 6, 2026.

4.3 Voter Registration. A voter must register in order to vote in elections. An important purpose of this registration requirement is so that the Election Committee will have a valid, current signature on file against which to compare a voter signature on a mail-in ballot. Therefore, the voter registration form must be filled out completely and legibly, because this information will be compared with the voter signature and other information on the voter affidavit used for mail-in ballots. The Election Committee reserves the right to require a new signature for a registered voter in the event the signature on the registration form is illegible or the voter's signature on an affidavit in a previous election does not match the signature on the registration form.

4.3.1 Any voter who was registered to vote in the 2025 elections shall not be required to register again for 2026 but shall be deemed registered for 2026. Any eligible voter who was not registered to vote in the 2025 elections, or who has only become eligible to vote since the 2025 election, may register for the 2026 election by returning a completed and signed voter registration form, which will be mailed to all potentially eligible voters. In order to register so as to be eligible to receive and vote by mail-in ballot, a voter must be registered by April 6, 2026, except that any voter who registers at the polling place on the day of the General Election shall be eligible to receive a mail-in ballot for the Chairperson Election. To register by mail, a voter must mail the registration form to the following address: Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe – Attention: Enrollment Officer, 2851 Lower Elwha Road, Port Angeles, WA, 98363. The form must be received by no later than April 6, 2026. Unregistered voters may also register and vote at the polling place on the date of the Business Committee Election, May 9, 2026, and on the date of the Chairperson Election, May 23, 2026.

4.3.2 If an elder or disabled voter requires special assistance in filling out a voter registration form, please call the Enrollment Officer to schedule an appointment to acquire assistance in filling out the registration form.

5. Nominations

5.1 Nominations Procedures. Any eligible voter, whether or not registered, may appear at the April 6, 2026 Community Council Meeting and nominate an eligible tribal member to run for the Business Committee in the 2026 Election. *See* Rule 3.2 regarding eligibility. The Community Council Meeting will begin at 7:00 PM. Representatives of the Election Committee shall attend the Community Council Meeting and shall record the names of the

nominees; the person making the nomination shall provide a phone number or other contact information for the nominee so that he or she may be informed of the nomination and the opportunity to accept in accordance with Rule 5.3 below. The Committee shall consult with the Enrollment Officer to verify that each nominee is eligible.

5.2 Limit of Nominees. No person may nominate a greater number of candidates than the number of positions on the Business Committee that are up for election in a given year. In 2026, no person may nominate more than two (2) candidates. After nominating a candidate, a person may not withdraw that nomination in order to nominate any other candidate. A nominated candidate may decline a nomination, but in that case the person who made the nomination will not be provided an opportunity to make a replacement nomination.

5.3 Acceptance of Nomination. Nominees may attend the nominations at the Community Council Meeting but are not required to. In order to accept the nomination and actually appear on the ballot, each nominee must provide written acceptance of the nomination to the Election Committee. Acceptance may be done in one of two ways: (1) at the Community Council Meeting on April 6, 2026, by handing in the completed acceptance form to the Election Committee; or (2) by sending the completed form in an email to elections@elwhaelections.org no later than 5:00 PM on April 9, 2026. If a nominee fails to provide this written acceptance by that deadline, his or her name will not appear on the ballot, but will still be eligible for election to the Business Committee as a write-in candidate as provided in Rule 6.2 below.

5.4 Candidate Letters. The Committee will prepare a mailing including a letter or statement to the voters from each nominated candidate for the Business Committee election. Any nominee who desires to use this service may submit the written statement to the Committee in one of two ways: (1) at the Community Council Meeting on April 6, 2026, by handing in the statement to the Election Committee; (2) by sending it via email to elections@elwhaelections.org not later than 5:00 PM on April 9, 2026. If a nominee fails to provide this written statement by that deadline, the Committee will not distribute the statement to the voters.

6. Form of Ballots

6.1 Business Committee Election Ballot. The ballot for the Business Committee election shall display the names of all candidates in alphabetical order of last name. There will also be two spaces on the ballot for indicating a write-in candidate. A voter shall mark the box for not more than two (2) candidates on any ballot, including any write-in. If a ballot shows any vote for more than two (2) candidates, including any write-in candidate, it will be declared invalid by the Election Committee and it will not be counted. For 2026, the two candidates for Business Committee receiving the two highest total number of votes shall be elected to the Business Committee.

6.2 Write-In Candidates for Business Committee. An eligible voter may write-in the name of any person who is eligible to hold office as an alternative to voting for a nominated candidate in the Business Committee election.

6.3 Chairperson Election Ballot. The ballot for the Chairperson election shall display the names of all five (5) Business Committee members, including any newly elected member, in alphabetical order of their last names. A voter may vote for only one candidate for Chairperson. If a ballot shows a vote for more than one (1) Chairperson Candidate, it will be declared invalid by the Election Committee and will not be counted. The candidate receiving the highest total number of votes shall be elected Chairperson.

6.4 No Write-In Candidates for Chairperson. There will be no write-in vote in the Chairperson Election, because only the five Business Committee members are eligible.

7. Mail-In Ballot Procedures

7.1 Distribution of Mail-In Ballots. Ballots for the Business Committee election will be mailed to all registered voters one week after the Committee has confirmed all nominations in accordance with Rule 5.3. Ballots for the Chairperson election will be mailed out promptly after the Business Committee election results are certified. The ballots will be mailed to the address currently on file. If a voter has not provided any address, no ballot will be mailed to that voter. A voter who receives no mail-in ballot may still vote at the polling place on Election Day provided he or she is eligible. When using a mail-in ballot, voters must follow the voting instructions for filling out the ballot and using and signing the voter affidavit. Voters must sign the voter affidavit, and either mail their ballots back in the official envelope addressed to the Post Office Box address listed on the return envelope, or deliver to the official election ballot drop box at Elwha Justice Center or to the ballot drop-box at the polling station, during voting hours, on Election Day.

7.2 Receipt or Delivery of Mail-In Ballots—Business Committee Election. The official voting envelope for the Business Committee election must be received at the official election Post Office Box by the Business Committee Election Day, May 9, 2026. Any official voting envelope received after that date **will not** be counted in the official count of the 2026 Business Committee Elections. Mail-in ballots may also be delivered to the official election ballot drop box at Elwha Justice Center or to the ballot drop-box at the polling station, during voting hours, on Election Day. Mail-in ballots that are delivered in any way other than as set forth in this section, such as by delivery to the receptionist at the Tribal Center, will not be counted.

7.3 Receipt or Delivery of Mail-In Ballots—Chairperson Election. The official voting envelope for the Chairperson election must be received at the official election Post Office Box by the Chairperson Election Day, May 23, 2026. Any official voting envelope received after that date **will not** be counted in the official count of the 2026 Chairperson Election.

Mail-in ballots may also be delivered to the official election ballot drop box at Elwha Justice Center or to the ballot drop-box at the polling station, during voting hours, on Election Day. Mail-in ballots that are delivered in any way other than as set forth in this section, such as by delivery to the receptionist at the Tribal Center, will not be counted.

7.4 Committee Handling of Mail-In Ballots—Security. Tribal police officers will check the Post Office Box weekly and transport the ballots received to the primary locked ballot box to be maintained at the Elwha Justice Center. The officers who transport these ballots will log them in each week, stating the number of ballots received from the Post Office Box and signing the log-book. The ballots collected in this manner shall not be opened until all votes are counted after the polls have closed on Election Day. The post office box will be checked one final time, late in the afternoon of Election Day, to pick up any ballots that were delivered to the post office box that day.

7.5 Chain of Custody for Ballots. The Election Committee shall retain a printing company to produce all mail-in and polling station ballots. The printing company shall deliver the ballots directly to a professional mailing service, which will mail the ballots to all registered voters on the list to be maintained by the Enrollment Officer, or shall do the mailing itself, if it has that capability. In addition, the printing company will, if at all possible, be responsible to hand-deliver to the Tribal Police station the new ballots to be used at the polling station on each of the two election days. In the event that the printing company does not have that capability, then two members of the Election Committee will be responsible for picking up the new ballots from the printing company and transporting them directly to the Tribal Police station. Tribal Police shall maintain custody of these ballots under secure conditions in the evidence room until Election Day, when Tribal Police shall transport the ballots and ballot box to the polling station.

8. Polling Station Procedures

8.1 Verification of Registration; Voter Affidavit. At the polling station on the day of either the Business Committee or Chairperson Election, the Election Committee shall verify the registration of each voter and require each voter to sign a voter affidavit, in order to receive his or her ballot. The Election Committee shall require a prospective voter to provide acceptable identification if that prospective voter is not known to the Committee members administering the election and is unable to provide the pieces of identifying information set forth on the voter registration form.

8.2 Ballot Boxes. There shall be two ballot boxes used at the Polling Place. The primary ballot box shall be used for ballots voted in person on the day of the election and shall be set up in a location at the discretion of the Committee in a way to provide security and to prevent any use of this primary ballot box for deposit of hand-delivered mail-in ballots. There shall also be a secondary ballot box for hand-delivery of mail-in ballots, set up at the discretion of the Committee.

8.3 Minimum Presence of Committee Members at Polling Place. Not fewer than three (3) members of the Election Committee shall be at the polling place while it is open for voting. They shall have the authority to question and to investigate the eligibility of each individual to vote, to decide all questions pertaining validity of ballots or any other election matter, and to interpret and apply these voting regulations.

8.4 Unauthorized Persons Prohibited. No persons, except for members of the Election Committee, or duly assigned Police Officers, and enrollment personnel may participate or loiter at or otherwise disturb the Election Committee or voters when Elections are in process. This is to include conflict of interest such as immediate family members of the candidates.

8.5 Voters in Need of Assistance. If by blindness, illiteracy, or some other reason a voter needs someone to read or explain the ballot, said assistance shall be rendered or witnessed by a member of the Election Committee.

8.6 Role of Police Department. The Lower Elwha Police Department is authorized to enforce these regulations at the request of the Election Committee, including but not limited to the restrictions against electioneering, and to ensure peace and order at the polling place and during the counting of ballots, resolution of challenges by the Committee, and certification of election results. The Lower Elwha Police Department shall:

8.6.1 Provide two locked ballot boxes, one for deposit of ballots voted on-site, which the officer will ensure is completely empty prior to the beginning of on-site voting on the day of the election, and the other with accumulated mail-in ballots, into which shall be deposited mail-in ballots that are hand-delivered to the polling place on Election Day.

8.6.2 Provide an officer immediately available during the time of the official count of the ballots, including mail-in ballots, for each Election to assist as required by the Election Committee in the counting of the ballots. The Business Committee Election count will be May 9, 2026, and the Chairperson Election count will be May 23, 2026.

8.6.3 Provide a secure storage area for Election materials and retain the ballots and other materials until archived or disposed of in accordance with Rule 9.9.

9. Vote Count and Certification of Results

9.1 Closing of Polling Station. At the time of closing for the polling station, the Tribal Police officers shall secure the end of the voter line and shall allow all voters already waiting at that time to cast their ballots. Tribal Police shall assist in securing the ballot boxes in the building when the polling station is closed. No voter who arrives after the polling station is closed may vote, either at the polling station or by delivering a mail-in ballot.

9.2 Counting of Ballots. The Election Committee, assisted by Tribal Police, will count the ballots promptly after the polling place closes for both the Business Committee and Chairperson Elections. The Committee and its members may not release any preliminary results or projections prior to the posting of the certified results.

9.3 Participation in Vote Count. All members of the Committee shall participate in the vote count unless excused by the Committee for a genuine emergency or unless recused from a particular matter by rules of the Committee that apply equally to all members of the Committee.

9.4 Vote-Count Procedures. The Committee shall arrange in advance for one or more Tribal Police Officers to be present not later than when the polling station closes to assist with the vote count and to provide security. If the designated Officer does not arrive on time, the committee is to secure the ballot box and polling station and await the Officer's arrival before opening the ballot box and counting the ballots. Upon the Officer's arrival, the vote count will proceed as follows:

9.4.1 The Officer will unlock both ballot boxes, remove all the ballots, and maintain the mail-in and poll ballots separately. The poll ballots will be set aside to be counted, and the Officer, with any necessary assistance he or she may request from the Committee, will first open the mail-in ballots.

9.4.2 Each mail-in ballot outer envelope will be opened and the enclosed, signed voter affidavit will be removed and displayed. The Committee will compare the voter affidavits with the signatures on the list of registered voters. Only after this process is completed shall the inner mail-in ballot envelopes containing the actual ballots be opened.

9.4.3 Once all mail-in affidavits have been validated and approved, the secured mail-in ballots will be removed from their inner envelopes and placed with the polling station ballots to be counted. The verified mail-in ballots and polling station ballots will then be mixed together so that when the ballots are counted it cannot be determined whether any individual ballot was voted as a mail-in or as a polling station ballot.

9.4.4 The Police Officer will read each ballot to the Committee for tallying and counting.

9.4.5 The Committee will tally and count the votes. The Committee will recount as many times as necessary to ensure accuracy. A recount will be taken automatically if a margin is ten votes or fewer.

9.5 Validity of Signatures. The Committee will compare voter signatures on a voter's affidavit of the mail-in ballots with existing examples of voter signatures on voter registration forms. If there is no signature on the affidavit, or if the voter instructions have not been followed so that it is not possible to determine the intent of the voter, such ballot will not be counted. If

the signature on the affidavit does not match a signature on file for that voter, such ballot will not be counted. Consistent with Rule 4.3 above, the Election Committee reserves the right to require a new signature for a registered voter in the event the signature on the registration form is illegible or the voter's signature on an affidavit in a previous election does not match the signature on the registration form.

9.6 Candidates with Highest Vote Totals Elected. Consistent with Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution, as amended, the candidate or candidates elected to office shall be determined as follows: The two candidates for Business Committee receiving the highest total number of votes in the Business Committee election shall be elected to the Business Committee. The candidate receiving the highest total number of votes in the Chairperson Election shall be elected Chairperson.

9.7 Certification and Presentation of Results. The results of the election will be officially certified by signature of the Election Committee Chair and of all Election Committee Members who participated in the count. The official certified results will be posted on the front window of the Tribal Center, shared via multi-media, and presented to the Business Committee at the first regular Community Council Meeting following the Election, or to the Business Committee offices on that same date in the event that Community Council meeting is canceled or postponed.

9.8 Tie Votes; Run-Off Election. In case of a tie between two or more Business Committee candidates, such that a run-off is needed to determine which of the candidates who finished in a tie shall be elected to the Business Committee, or between two or more candidates for Chairperson, a run-off Election will be held by secret ballot on the Saturday immediately following the respective Election. Not all ties in the Business Committee election will require a run-off. For example, if two Business Committee candidates finish in a tie with the highest number of votes, both will be elected and no run-off is necessary. But if three or more candidates finish in a tie with the highest total votes, then there will be a run-off to determine which two of the tied candidates shall be elected. Or, if two or more candidates finish in a tie with the second-highest total of votes, the candidate with the highest total votes shall be elected and the run-off will determine which of the tied candidates shall also be elected. In the Chairperson election, a run-off will only happen when there are two or more candidates tied with the highest number of votes.

9.9 Procedures for Run-Off Election. In the event a run-off election is necessary, voting will take place at the Lower Elwha Tribal Center from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on the Saturday immediately following the election for which the run-off is necessary. Mail-in ballots will not be used for such a run-off due to the amount of time that would take to prepare. If a run-off is needed for the Business Committee Election, this may cause a one-week delay in the Chairperson Election.

9.10 Ballot Security and Destruction after Election. After certification of the results, the ballots will be secured by the Tribal Police in case a recount is requested or required, for a

minimum of three (3) days, after which they will be archived. The ballots will be retained for a minimum of One (1) year. After One (1) year the Election Committee will determine whether there are any unresolved election issues that require continued retention of the ballots. Once the Committee has determined that the ballots are no longer needed, it shall provide written notice of that determination to the Police Department, and designate in writing at least two members of the Committee who will be responsible for appearing at the Police Station and destroying the ballots. These designated Committee members shall make a written record that the ballots have been destroyed.

10. Election Contests

10.1 Procedures for contesting vote count or election results. Within three (3) days following the announcement of the results of an election, any qualified voter may challenge the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribal Election Committee, the vote count, or Election results by submitting a signed statement to elections@elwhaelections.org setting forth his or her grounds for the challenge, together with the substantiating evidence thereof. If the Election Committee determines that the evidence shows that these Rules were violated and that the objections on which the challenge is based are valid, the Election Committee shall take appropriate action as needed. Minor violations that do not affect the outcome of an election will not result in a new election.

10.2 Challenge Does Not Stay Next Election. The filing of a challenge to the Business Committee election does not automatically stay the process for the Chairperson election unless and until so determined and announced in writing by the Election Committee.

11. Prohibited Conduct

Electioneering Defined and Prohibited. Transporting voters to or from the polling station is permitted but the following activities are not:

11.1 In the Tribal Center Building at 2851 Lower Elwha Road, or in the Parking Lot thereof, NO PERSON may suggest or persuade or attempt to suggest or persuade any voter FOR or AGAINST any candidate OR engage in any practice which interferes with the freedom of voters to exercise their voting rights or which disrupts or obstructs the polling place.

11.2 There will be no display of campaign signs or circulation of campaign flyers in the Tribal Center or any other tribal facility, or in the parking lots or premises thereof, during the election season from April 9, 2026, through the final determination of the Chairperson election.

*Approved by 4-0 vote of the Election Committee
At its Duly Called and Noticed Meeting of March 13, 2026.*