The 2011 Election Committee respectfully submits the following Mail- In voting concept for consideration by the Clintonville Area Commissioners.

**Background**:

Each year, three of the nine Clintonville Area Commission seats become subject to re-appointment. The ultimate decision of who will serve falls to the Mayor of the City of Columbus. The Mayor allows the community to conduct an “election” and suggest candidates for the Commission seats. Each year, the Commission, through its election committee, votes on election rules to be used for this candidate selection process. This year’s election committee was asked to consider voting options that would 1) provide persons who cannot make it to the polling location(s) on Election Day with one or more voting options and 2) eliminate the collection of confidential information related to the voter (i.e. driver’s licenses, passports, checks, utility bills, etc.). Any options considered by the committee must take into consideration that the committee has very limited resources (both manpower and financial).

**Committee Discussion:**

Under the existing election rules, if a person arrives at the polling location, without identification materials, the voter can vote but must complete and sign a statement that he or she is eighteen years of age or older and currently resides at a stated address within the election District in which he or she is voting. This statement is stapled to the ballot so that any person may challenge the residency of the voter. Any candidate, candidate’s witness Committee member, CAC member or poll worker may review the residency statement. Any disputes related to the veracity of a residency statement shall be resolved under the Complaints/Challenges section of the election rules. Under the currently in place polling procedures, by submitting a residency statement, a voter acknowledges that the ballot is no longer anonymous. The committee believes that this component of the existing process can be used to provide voters with a mail in voting option. That mail in option would be available to any eligible voter, including those who cannot be at a polling location, it would have no financial cost to the Commission, it can be administered with the limited human resources of the Election Committee and it would not require the collection of confidential information. As a result, we propose the following as an addition to the existing election rules.

**The Process:**

1) The Election Committee provides candidates and the local newspapers with a ballot request form. This form will be available beginning March 30, 2011. This form will be similar to the current residency statement that has been used for past elections. Some additional information will be collected:

 a) there will be a statement advising the requester that they must provide a self-addressed stamped envelope-no ballot will be issued if the envelope is not provided,

b) that the final due date/time to request a ballot is April 30, 2011,

c) that the ballot must be received in the secured box before 5/7/2011 at 10:00 am and that any ballots received after that date/time will be destroyed,

d) that if they do not receive their ballot within 3 business days of the request, they should contact the designated election official (this will be someone other than the Chair since it is assumed that the Chair did not process the request and a follow up is needed),

e) that the ballot cannot/will not be mailed to an out of community address (no ballots mailed to vacation locations, business offices, etc.) the ballot must be mailed to the voter’s residential address,

f) that the voter MUST provide a phone number on the request and

g) that by choosing this voting method, the voter acknowledges that the ballot is no longer anonymous.

2) The prospective voter completes the Ballot Request form and mails it to the Election Chair along with the self-addressed stamped envelope. The request will not be processed if the self-addressed stamped envelope is not provided.

3) The Chair issues a ballot to the requester using the self-addressed stamped envelope

4) The Chair logs the ballot # on the Voter’s Ballot Request form and files the Ballot Request Form in ballot number order by district

5) The Election committee will obtain a secured election address. That address may be a P.O box at the Post Office, a lock box at a Bank, or a UPS box. On the day of the election, at 10:00 am, two election officials will clear out the secured box and take the ballots to the count location.

6) On Election Day, the mail in ballots will be counted after the in person ballots. Preliminary results will be announced prior to beginning the mail in ballot count. Each mail in ballot will be opened and matched to the Ballot Request form. The Ballot numbers will be verified.

7) The mail in ballots with ballot request form will then be compared to the poll book. If a ballot was cast the day of the election, the mail in ballot will be voided and will not be counted.

8) The ballot request form will remain attached to the ballot until the challenge period has ended and the ballots are destroyed.

Again, this proposed mail in voting procedure is being suggested as an additional voting option. Because the process is grounded in the already existing election rules, the Committee hopes that the Commission would find favor in adopting this option for use in the 2011 election. The Committee seeks the input of the Commission prior to considering the formal incorporation of this feature in the Election Rules that will be presented to the Commission in the coming months.