County Law 224 of the State of New York authorizes the establishment of county or regional extension service associations that operate “…under a form of organization and administration approved by Cornell University as agent for the state.” That form of organization and administration is the association constitution. To remain current with local needs and best practice, the board should review its constitution every 3 years and compare it to the current constitution template for any changes that may need to be made.

To avoid potential delays and “do-overs,” proposed changes to an association constitution must be pre-approved by the Director of Extension BEFORE action at the association annual or special meeting.

The typical revision process works as follows:

A. The Board President appoints a small committee of the executive director and 2-3 Board members to review the association’s current constitution, compare it to the appropriate on-line template (either directly-elected board members or elected program committee board members), and propose desired changes based on local need.

B. The proposed changes are sent to the association’s State Extension Specialist who will forward it on for review, discussion if necessary, and pre-approval by the Director of Extension.

C. Once the document has been pre-approved by the Director of Extension the constitution is:

1. Presented to the association Board for its approval; then
2. Presented to Association voters for their required affirmative vote typically at an annual or special meeting.

   - The Board must determine whether the vote will be taken by mail ballot, or at an annual or special meeting of the association (NOT the Board of Directors).
   - A summary of changes should be sent to eligible voters in advance of the meeting or with the mail ballot. In addition, the association must make copies of proposed and current constitutions available upon request by any citizen OR provide a redline version.
   - Public notification must be provided per current bylaws or constitution and New York State Open Meetings Law.
○ Copies of the current constitution and the proposed changes must be readily available before and during the meeting.
○ At the meeting, a CCE leader will present a verbal summary of major changes (typically the revision committee chair)
○ The motion, second, and vote outcome must be documented in meeting minutes OR if the vote was taken by mail ballot, a written report signed by CCE officials designated to count the votes.

D. Execution

○ Once pre-approved constitution is approved by the association, the Board President signs and dates 2 copies.
○ Send the 2 signed copies to Deena Haines at Cornell, 365 Roberts Hall, Ithaca, NY, 14853, along with minutes or ballot documentation from your annual meeting (listed above).
○ The State Extension Specialist and Deena will facilitate signing of both copies by the Director of CCE.
○ One original is filed at Cornell, the second is returned to the association.