

# THE METEORITICAL SOCIETY COMMITTEE ON METEORITE NOMENCLATURE (NOMCOM) PROCEDURES

ORIGINAL VERSION OCTOBER 1980

REVISED FEBRUARY 2010

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## A. Bylaw authorizing the NomCom.

Article 12 of the Meteoritical Society Bylaws describes the membership and general functions of the NomCom. The current text may be found at <https://meteoritical.org/society/governance/constitution-and-bylaws#bylaws-article12>.

## B. Duties and responsibilities.

- 1) The principal duty of the NomCom is to approve new meteorite names and, when necessary, change or abolish existing meteorite names. This includes voting on proposed pairs or separations, as well as creation of synonyms and abbreviations.
- 2) The NomCom creates and manages a system of provisional names for specimens found in areas of dense concentrations of meteorites.
- 3) The NomCom oversees the publication of the *Meteoritical Bulletin* (*MetBull*).
- 4) The NomCom creates rules for carrying out items 1 and 2 above, “*Guidelines for Meteorite Nomenclature*,” and publishes them on the *MetBull Database* website.
- 5) The NomCom oversees the online *Meteoritical Bulletin Database* (*MBDB*).
- 6) The Editors of the *MetBull* and the *MBDB* should endeavor to keep the meteorite classification terms used in the *Met Bull* and *MBDB* consistent and up to date.
- 7) The NomCom may also deal with other matters referred to it by the President or Council of the Society.
- 8) The NomCom is responsible to the Council of the Society, to whom the Chair will report.
- 9) The bylaws require the Chair of NomCom to consult with the President of the Society to help fill vacancies on the committee. The chair should provide the president with at least one nomination for each vacancy. Under normal circumstances, members of NomCom who have served two consecutive terms should not be nominated to a third term unless three years have elapsed since the end of their last term.

## C. Procedures for voting on NomCom

NomCom votes on the approval and publication of new meteorite names. It may also vote on the pairing and separation of meteorites, the approval of type-specimen repositories, the creation and modification of dense collection areas, the adoption of new classification schemes, the modification of committee procedures, and any other measured deemed appropriate by the Chair or *MetBull* Editor in the course of their duties.

Note that the *MetBull* Editor may delegate some of their duties in the following numbered paragraphs to the Chair, the *MBDB* Editor, or to an Associate Editor (AE).

- 1) Method of voting. Votes on NomCom may only be conducted during live (in person or online) meetings or with the online voting system designed for committee use. Proxy voting is not permitted.
- 2) Voting period. Votes conducted by the electronic system shall be held open for a minimum of two weeks, or longer should a quorum not be achieved in two weeks. In special circumstances, the chair and *MetBull* Editor may declare a shorter voting period and communicate this to the committee at the start of the vote.
- 3) Conflicts of interest. No member of the NomCom should obtain or appear to obtain special advantages for themselves, their relatives, their employer or their close associates because of their services on NomCom. Conflicts of interest may arise when NomCom members have a financial, professional, or personal interest in a submitted meteorite, participated in the classification or description of a meteorite, or work at the same institution as a person who played a significant role in preparing a submission. The *MetBull* Editor or chair shall make an initial evaluation of possible conflicts of interest and decide whether the conflict is of sufficient magnitude to require the member to refrain from voting and participating in the discussion. In cases of disagreement, the Chair shall adjudicate whether a conflict exists. If the Chair has a possible conflict of interest, the *MetBull* Editor will have this authority.
- 4) Voting members. According to the bylaws, all members, regular and ex officio, are eligible to vote. A member deemed to have a conflict of interest on a vote does not count as a voting member. Some members may also be designated as “voting optional” members. The VP of the society, by tradition, will always be considered a voting-optional member. Upon request, other members may be designated by the Chair as voting-optional for a mutually agreed length of time (e.g., to accommodate a prolonged field expedition, illness, or family-related responsibilities). The President of the society may also designate a new member to be voting-optional at the time of their appointment to the committee.
- 5) Quorum requirements. For live meetings (in person or online), a vote may not be conducted unless a majority of voting members are present (only counting voting-optional members if they are present). For votes taken using the electronic system, a quorum has been achieved at the end of the voting period when a majority of voting members have either voted or abstained; voting-optional members are not counted as voting members unless they cast a vote or abstain.
- 6) Approval of proposals. Passage of votes conducted in the electronic voting system shall require the presence of a quorum and a two-thirds majority of all votes cast,

not including abstentions. Proposals at live meetings (in person or online) only require a majority to pass.

- 7) Initiation of electronic votes. The Editor of the *MetBull* shall receive and initiate electronic votes on all proposals within a reasonable amount of time following receipt, preferably two weeks or less. However, where information is clearly insufficient, the Editor shall have the option of seeking further details before calling for a vote. If the *MetBull* Editor has a possible conflict of interest, the Chair or the *MBDB* Editor shall act in his/her stead and assume all editorial duties for the vote,
- 8) Rejection without a vote. The *MetBull* Editor, in consultation with the Chair, may unilaterally reject a proposal (without a vote) that is clearly nonresponsive to the *Guidelines for Meteorite Nomenclature* or when a request for further required information is not satisfied. However, the submitter is entitled to protest such a decision in writing to the *MetBull* Editor in order to refer the matter to the full NomCom for a vote.
- 9) Revotes. The Editor of the *MetBull* may suspend an electronic vote at any time prior to the end of the voting period based on new information received or comments from committee members. The Editor may take one of three actions when a vote is suspended: a) If significant new information is added to the proposal, the Editor may call for a revote, clearing votes already cast. b) If the Editor's reason for suspending the vote becomes moot, the suspended vote may be resumed. c) The Editor may also follow section 8 and reject the meteorite without completing the vote.
- 10) Maintaining confidentiality. Committee members must keep confidential all oral and written discussion associated with any proposal, as well as the submitted text of the proposal itself. Only the *MetBull Editor* or NomCom Chair may communicate with a submitter about their submission. Only the submitter of a proposal is entitled to receive information about that proposal, regardless of its approval status.
- 11) Final approval. An electronic vote by the NomCom to approve a proposal constitutes a recommendation to the *MetBull* Editor. No proposal shall be accepted without this positive recommendation. However, if in the *MetBull* Editor's opinion, comments made by the NomCom raise significant issues, the Editor may seek revision of the information from the submitter and, if the *MetBull* Editor deems it necessary, restart the approval process. In contrast, votes conducted during live meetings are always considered final.
- 12) The Editor of the *MetBull* shall inform the proposer of the result of a vote as soon as possible. The Editor of the *MetBull* may, if appropriate, provide a summary of comments made by the NomCom during voting, as provisions for publication. All names or identifying comments will be redacted to preserve confidentiality. If a meteorite is rejected, the reasons for the rejection will be communicated to the submitter. Any appeal for reconsideration must be directed to the NomCom Chair, who will either let the decision stand or review the rejection and request NomCom to reconsider. If the submitter is not satisfied with the results of the appeals process, they can appeal to the Vice President of the Meteoritical Society

13) Certain types of meteorites may be approved unilaterally by the Editor of the *MetBull* without a NomCom vote. In all cases, the following basic conditions must be met:

- a. The meteorites have provisional names. Such meteorites, therefore, extend existing numbering systems in dense collection areas.
- b. The meteorites have routine classifications that do not include designations such as anomalous, ungrouped, intermediate, or ambiguous classifications.
- c. Type specimen requirements are met or exceeded.
- d. Classifications were made by widely accepted methods.
- e. The person who classified the meteorites has a proven track record in doing such analyses.
- f. The meteorite falls into one of the classification groups in the NomCom working document (see section D).

Approvals made by the *MetBull* Editor shall be reviewed by the *MBDB* Editor, who may verify that these conditions, and any specific conditions for various types of meteorites in the working document were met.

14) All committee votes that result in new, changed, or abolished meteorite names shall be announced at least once per year in the *MetBull*. This publication shall also contain descriptions of important, newly named meteorites and tables containing information about other new meteorites. It may also contain significant new information about existing meteorites. The Editor of the *MetBull* is responsible for the content and format.

15) The results of approved proposals, including those to approve or change meteorite names, should be made public in the *MBDB* within one week of approval. In cases of rejection, all submitted material shall remain confidential; however, if a provisional DCA name was assigned, that name shall be published in the *MBDB* and attributed to the submitter, but without classification, mineralogical data, or description.

#### D. Editorial-approval working document

NomCom shall maintain a separate working document of requirements for editorial approval (i.e., without a committee vote) of various types of meteorites. When this document is updated, the Chair shall notify council.

#### E. Procedures for Type Specimen Repositories

- 1) Guiding Principle. According to §7.1f of the *Guidelines for Meteorite Nomenclature*, type specimens of all new meteorites “must be deposited in institutions that have well-curated meteorite collections and long-standing commitments to such curation.”
- 2) Requirements for type-specimen repositories. An acceptable repository shall have the following characteristics:
  - a. A type specimen repository is defined as an institution such as a museum, university, government agency, research institution, or other similar organization, committed to housing permanent scientific collections.

- b. The institution must have identified personnel responsible for the curation of the meteorite collection.
  - c. The meteorite collection must be owned by the institution or be in the permanent custody of the institution.
  - d. The institution must have a stated intent to make meteorite type specimens available to qualified scientific investigators.
  - e. The institution must demonstrate a long-term commitment toward maintaining or establishing a curated meteorite collection.
- 3) Approval and rejection of type-specimen repositories.
- a. All repositories must provide information to the Nomenclature Committee (NomCom) of the Meteoritical Society describing the nature of the meteorite collection, ownership, contact information, and loan practices. The form of this information will be determined by the committee.
  - b. The *MBDB* Editor shall review all submitted information about new repositories for conformance to the requirements in Section E2. The *MBDB* Editor will then put the acceptance of the repository to vote by the NomCom. Voting will follow the procedure outlined in Section C, with the following exception:
    - i. The announced voting period may be shortened to as little as 24 hours if two-thirds of voting members vote unanimously either for or against the proposal and no items for general discussion have been offered.
  - c. If an institution is rejected as a type specimen repository, the reasons for the rejection will be communicated to that institution. Any appeal for reconsideration shall be directed to the Vice President of the Meteoritical Society, who will either let the decision stand, review the rejection and request that the NomCom reconsider, or forward the matter to the Executive Committee of the Meteoritical Society for a final decision.
  - d. At any time, NomCom may reconsider the status of any approved repository.
  - e. NomCom may, from time to time, request updates of information from approved repositories.
- 4) List of type-specimen repositories. The Database Editor shall maintain a publicly accessible list of approved repositories on the MetBull Database website.

F. Procedures for approval and publication of a new Dense Collection Areas (DCAs).

- 1) Regional consultants. The NomCom may work with regional consultants (RCs) who are familiar with the geography, language, and culture of regions where meteorites are found. The committee will work with the RCs to determine appropriate meteorite names, especially names for dense collection regions. These consultants are not members of NomCom but are officially recognized by the society for their important contributions to the work of NomCom. The Vice President of the Meteoritical Society may appoint any number of regional consultants, nominated by the chair, for terms of up to 4 years, each ending on December 31, and renewable without limit. At least 6 months prior to the end of

each consultant's term, the Vice President, in consultation with the chair, will consider the need for a continued consultant for that region, and if the need persists, the Vice President may either reappoint the consultant or solicit a new nomination from the chair. The Vice President shall communicate all changes to the roster of consultants to the Secretary of the society, so that the current names and terms may be posted on the society website.

- 2) When a meteorite is submitted that lies within in a DCA that has a provisional name (i.e., with a name in [square brackets]):
  - a. If the name is a placeholder of the form [AAAA000], where AAAA is the name or abbreviation for the country, this means a grid is in use, and this area is an unnamed extension of that grid.
    - i. The job containing the submission should be transferred to the AE (or Associate Editor) in charge of naming DCAs ("DCA-AE"), if one has been appointed by the Chair. If no DCA-AE has been appointed, the Procedures in this section will be followed by the MetBull Editor.
    - ii. The DCA-AE should check whether there are any existing finds already in the region dating from before the DCA was drawn. The name of an existing meteorite could serve as a name for the DCA. If there are such finds, the DCA-AE should make sure that the geographic feature for which the older find was named is actually inside the DCA; if not, the name cannot be used for the new DCA.
    - iii. If there is an RC for this country, the DCA-AE should write to the RC, copying the MetBull Editor and Database Editor, and ask them to recommend a name for the DCA. At this point, the DCA-AE can also suggest using either the name of an existing find, or a name suggested by the submitter. The RC needs to make a suggestion and communicate the nature and location of the geographic feature providing the name.
    - iv. If there is not an RC, the DCA-AE needs to work with the submitter and other committee members to identify a name.
    - v. The DCA-AE should go check the public Meteorite Bulletin Database site to verify that any candidate name is not already used for another meteorite.
    - vi. Once a potentially acceptable name is found, the DCA-AE enters the name into the electronic geographic system, still in square brackets to indicate its provisional nature.
    - vii. The DCA-AE then assigns a number to each meteorite in the new DCA. Normally the first such number would be [DCAname] 001. However, if the DCA is being named for an existing meteorite within the DCA, the first new number should be 002.
    - viii. The DCA-AE creates a kml/kmz file for the new DCA, and uploads this in the editor's comments for the first meteorite with this name. A comment is added indicating the committee needs to vote on the DCA and explaining the origin of the name. The comment should also indicate whether a consultant recommended the name.

- ix. The job containing the meteorite(s) in the new DCA is transferred back to the *MetBull* editor, or to an AE who will manage the voting procedure.
- b. If the name is not a placeholder (i.e., it is a real placename in brackets), this means a consultant has already been involved with selection of the candidate name. This name still needs a Nomenclature Committee vote to approve it, however. The job can be transferred to the DCA-AE, who can do steps 1a.vii-ix, or the editor handling the job can do these steps themselves they know what to do.
- 3) If the meteorite does not lie within an existing DCA, but the handling editor thinks it should be in a new DCA, this should be discussed with the DCA-AE, plus other NomCom members as needed. If it is agreed that a new DCA is warranted, the job is transferred to the DCA-AE, who will create the DCA in the geographic system and the new DCA a provisional name of the form [AAAA000]. Then the DCA-AE follows section 1a to identify a candidate formal name for the DCA.
- 4) Once a vote is taken:
  - a. If the new DCA is approved, the editor or AE handling the submission can simply approve the meteorite with the DCA name still in brackets. The database editor can work with the DCA-AE to remove the brackets from the name and release the meteorite(s) to the public.
  - b. If the new DCA name is rejected, the editor or AE handling transfers the job back to the DCA-AE for further action to identify a new name.

#### G. Embargoes of approved meteorites

The submitter of a proposal to name a new meteorite may request that, if approved, the information be placed under embargo for some period, usually so that it may be announced in the *MBDB* at the same time as a press release or publication about that meteorite. The following procedures are used in these cases.

- 1) The request for embargo must be made at prior to the start of voting by the committee. The request must explain the reasons for the embargo, the expected end-date of the embargo, and the conditions for ending the embargo.
- 2) The Chair, *MetBull* Editor, and *MBDB* Editor shall discuss each request for embargo. The Chair is responsible for negotiating the terms of the embargo with the editors and the requestor.
- 3) If an embargo is approved, the chair or editors will add the phrase “[EMBARGOED UNTIL <date>” to the meteorite name in the voting system. The Editor’s Comment field shall be altered to include the complete details of the embargo, including the end date and conditions for ending the embargo.
- 4) Requested embargo periods must be for less than 6 months. If the requestor wants a longer time, the Chair should ask the requestor to submit the meteorite at a later date.
- 5) If the meteorite name under embargo fails to get approved, the submitter is informed of the rejection by the usual process, and the embargo becomes moot. If resubmitted later, a new embargo may be requested.

- 6) Once the agreed-upon conditions for ending the embargo are met, the meteorite will immediately be published in the MBDB.
- 7) If the embargo period ends without the embargo conditions being met, the Chair will inform the requestor and discuss with them whether an extension is warranted. A single and final extension not to exceed 6 months may then be granted.
- 8) In the event that the embargo period and any extension have expired, the requestor shall be offered a choice: immediate publication of the meteorite; or rejection of the meteorite, any recorded vote to approve the meteorite notwithstanding. A meteorite rejected under these circumstances may be re-submitted at any time, but a new embargo may not be requested for at least 6 months subsequent to the end of the previous embargo.

#### H. Meteoritical Bulletin Database.

- 1) The *MBDB* Editor is responsible for maintaining and updating the *MBDB*.
- 2) The *MBDB* shall contain all of the information published in the *MetBull*, a complete listing of provisional meteorite names that have been assigned by the NomCom, and information about approved meteorites that have not yet been published in *MetBull*.
- 3) The *MBDB* may also contain other compiled information about meteorites at the discretion of the Editor.
- 4) New information about meteorites with approved names may be accepted for publication in the *MBDB*. This may include revisions, corrections, and amendments to data that have been published in the *MetBull* or entirely new information. All information published in the *MBDB* should be observational in nature, not interpretive. This might include new petrologic descriptions, new information about known masses, discovery of new masses, revised geographic coordinates. Reclassifications are acceptable if they are deemed likely to be noncontroversial. All such information must be reviewed and accepted by the *MBDB* and *MetBull* Editors prior to release. In some cases, the Editors may decide to present information to the NomCom for approval prior to release.