

Dear PSPB Members,

I feel that I owe you, and Gianluca Setti, a further explanation concerning my protest of the Nominations and Appointments (N&A) Committee recommendation for him to serve as Editor-in-Chief (EIC) of Proceedings of the IEEE (PIEEE). This is nothing personal against Gianluca, for whom I have high regard.

I considered the current editorial board to review their activities. Three were outstanding: they had served on the editorial board a long time, had been or were currently guest editors, had been to all or almost all of the editorial board meetings and had been very active in reviewing proposals for papers and special issues for the proceedings. I talked to each of them to determine their interest in the EIC position and willingness to serve. After finding that all three were interested and were willing to serve, I decided that all three should be nominated. I helped them by making suggestions for their forms for biographies, qualifications and position statements. I wrote a letter giving my assessment that all were very qualified and all would be a good EICs. I included my ranking of the three, which was based on relatively small differences. I submitted my letter and the nominations on time.

After the deadline passed, I learned that Gianluca Setti was a self-nominee. This was surprising, since in an email related to the process, Dawn Melley had stated,

“According to the PSPB Ops Manual, for Proceedings, the EIC must have served on the editorial board and can only be nominated by the EB itself, the current EIC, or the Managing Editor. For Access, the EIC must have served on the editorial board and can only be nominated by the EB itself, the current EIC, or the PSPB OpCom.”

I was unaware of any self-nomination process for PIEEE. Gianluca had been mentioned to me as a possible nominee by Managing Editor Vaishali Damle. However, compared to the other candidates, he had not been on the board as long and had a very poor record of responding to requests for reviews of papers and proposals. I rejected him based on his poor record. However, Vaishali mentioned him a couple more times during phone conversations or chats. It seemed that he had support among the IEEE staff who pushed for his nomination. I recalled that he was pushed by the staff for inclusion on the editorial board after he had completed his term as chair of PSPB. I did not particularly need someone with his background on the board, but Fran Zappula and Vaishali made several comments strongly recommending him. It was evident that the staff was promoting him for board membership. The staff influence was mentioned by Sheila Hemami in her statements during the PSPB meeting on 22 June 2018. I now see this recommendation by the N&A Committee in a new light.

I decided to write a revised letter to the N&A Committee, so it could be considered prior to the PSPB meeting. I was surprised that the N&A Committee presented a single candidate to the PSPB at the meeting without discussion of the other nominees. The biographies were included in the material available online, but there was no opportunity for the PSPB members to discuss the relative merits of the four candidates. I would have thought the N&A Committee would have sought input from the entire PSPB as

they do in the case of editorial board members. Such an action would have demonstrated transparency.

I found the comment that the N&A Committee opted to consider my revised letter even though it was past the deadline a bit strange. Given that EIC nominees are required to be current PIEEE Editorial Board members, it would seem necessary to get the evaluation of the current EIC for ALL nominees. I believe a record for excellent service on the PIEEE Editorial Board would be a prerequisite for an EIC. I believe that the N&A Committee should inform the current EIC of any nominations submitted without his/her knowledge and solicit an evaluation. I do not understand why it would not wish to have such an evaluation.

From comments made at the June meeting, I judge that staff input was ranked very highly. This is something of a surprise. I would agree that demonstrable problems interacting with the staff might be good reasons to disqualify a nominee. Such interactions were considered for the three candidates that I nominated. I know of no problems in the case of any of these nominees. In fact, all were rated highly by the managing editor. While there may be some problems of which I am unaware, it is highly unlikely that all three have problems that would make Gianluca, with a poor service record, preferable. While problems with interactions with the staff are important, I don't think that staff preferences should carry much weight. Good relations are built over time with frequent interactions, and just because the staff likes a candidate does not indicate there would be problems with another candidate. Staff preferences should not have nearly the same weight as performance and qualifications. In any case, the opportunity to discuss such issues should have been available to the PSPB.

In conclusion, I found the selection process of the nominee for PIEEE EIC to have been less than transparent. I would suggest some changes to make this process better defined and more transparent. I would recommend the PIEEE explicitly solicit nominations from the Editorial board. Anyone who has an interest in the position can inform the EIC, who can give additional information to the candidates.

As for the N&A Committee, I recommend that the decision on the nominee to be put forward should be done only after a discussion of the PSPB.

In the interests of transparency, it would be helpful for the N&A Committee to give some reasons for their choice(s) for names to put forward. In most cases, where discussions usually consist of positive endorsements from the PSPB committee, as is the case when considering members of editorial boards or nominees for members-at-large, a general statement giving the qualifications that were considered and noting that some candidates were judged better than others is probably sufficient. In the case where there are large differences in the candidates' qualifications among the various attributes required for the position under consideration, more needs to be said. How is a distinctly poor rating in one trait compensated by an outstanding rating in another? This information is needed for transparency in the current decision and for consideration for future nominations.

In the current case under consideration, I heavily weighted the performance of the candidates during their tenure on the PIEEE Editorial Board. Only after this was deemed excellent, did I consider other characteristics such as IEEE service, publications, experience and leadership in IEEE societies, etc. There is no question about Gianluca's relatively poor performance record on the PIEEE Editorial Board. The proposal review numbers are not subjectively determined and Gianluca's (3) are greatly below those of the three I nominated (19 to 25). I think it is insufficient for the N&A Committee to say simply that they considered all aspects and concluded that Gianluca was the best candidate. The committee should give their ratings of the importance of the traits that were considered. Above all, the N&A Committee should avoid recommendations that have the appearance of favoritism.

I note that in discussions with Michael Pecht, the EIC of IEEE Access, I understand that he had similar expectations and concerns and his top choice of the candidates was different than the selected person.

Joel Trussell 7/3/18