

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

In Re:)	
)	Administrative Order
Shango Taylor, Candidate)	No. 26-016
)	Appeal of Preliminary Determination
)	

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

This matter came before the District of Columbia Board of Elections (“the Board”) at a special meeting on March 30, 2026. It is an appeal from the Board’s Executive Director’s preliminary determination that Shango Taylor, candidate for the Democratic State Committee Ward 5 Committeeman (“Committeeman”) in the June 16, 2026 Primary Election (“the Primary Election”), could not have his name appear on the ballot as “Shawn Taylor.” Board Chair Gary Thompson and Member Karyn Greenfield presided over the hearing on this matter. The Candidate and Board’s General Counsel were also present.

BACKGROUND

On January 28, 2026, Candidate Taylor picked-up his petitions and submitted a Declaration of Candidacy form (“the Declaration”) in support of his candidacy for the Committeeman seat.¹ That form contained a field for a candidate to enter their name and another field for the candidate to enter how their name should be printed on the ballot. Specifically, the Declaration form provides with emphasis in a boxed-off section:

¹ The Declaration of Candidacy form must be filed by candidates seeking to have their names printed on the ballot. 3 DCMR § 601.1 *et seq.* While Declarations can be filed as late as 90 days before the election (in this case March 18, 2026), the Board’s regulations require that candidates must file Declarations before nominating petitions will be issued to them. 3 DCMR §§ 601.5, 1605.2, and 1705.2 (90 days before the election).

INDICATE IN THE SPACE BELOW HOW YOUR NAME SHOULD BE LISTED ON THE BALLOT:

Please complete this section carefully. [...]

While confirming on the Declaration that “Shango Taylor” is his name, the Declaration shows that the Candidate wished “Shawn Taylor” to be his ballot name.

On March 23, 2026, the Board’s Executive Director issued a preliminary determination finding that Candidate Taylor was eligible to run for the Committeeman seat.² Her determination however also notified Candidate Taylor that his name would appear on the ballot as “Shango Taylor,” thereby alerting the Candidate to the fact that the name “Shawn Taylor” would not appear on the ballot.

On March 26, 2026, Candidate Taylor sent an email to the Board’s Office of General Counsel seeking a Board hearing with respect to the Executive Director’s preliminary determination as to his ballot name.³ He subsequently amended his appeal to request that his designated ballot name be “Shawn Taylor,” the ballot name he had included on his Declaration of Candidacy form.⁴

Later on March 26, 2026, the Board’s Office of General Counsel (“OGC”) notified Candidate Taylor that a prehearing conference before OGC on his appeal of the Executive

² 3 DCMR § 601.6 (providing that the Board’s Executive Director or his designee will, three days after the filing of a Declaration of Candidacy, issue a preliminary determination as to a candidate’s eligibility). The preliminary determination of eligibility set forth in the Board’s regulations goes to the candidate’s qualifications for office. *See* D.C. Code §1-1001.05(a)(14) (providing that the Board issue regulations necessary to determine that candidates meet the statutory qualifications for office). It does not concern the adequacy of the candidate’s nominating petition.

³ 3 DCMR § 601.11 (providing that the candidate must appeal a preliminary determination within three days after receipt of notice of an adverse determination).

⁴ Initially, the Candidate appealed saying that he wished his ballot name to be in “the form designated on my Declaration of Candidacy, as “Shango Shawn Taylor’.” When OGC later noted that the representation of his Declaration’s ballot name was incorrect, the Candidate amended his appeal to ask that his ballot name appear as “Shawn Taylor.”

Director's preliminary determination would be held on March 27, 2026. The Candidate was informed that the purpose of the hearing was to identify the evidence he intended to submit to the Board and to confirm the issue(s) he intended to raise. During the prehearing conference, the Candidate was asked by the assigned OGC attorney to provide any documentary evidence and a list of potential witnesses by 4:00 pm that day. He later provided OGC with the names of several witnesses who could attest to his use of the name Shawn Taylor.

Candidate Taylor was duly notified that a hearing would be held on March 30, 2026, on his appeal of the Executive Director's preliminary determination.⁵ At the Board hearing, the General Counsel summarized the procedural history of the case and described the issues presented by Candidate Taylor at the prehearing conference and the evidence he had offered. The Board then heard from Candidate Taylor. Candidate Taylor represented that he has long been well-known to the public as "Shawn Taylor." He reiterated that his preferred name for the ballot was "Shawn Taylor" and he noted that he had witnesses available to testify to his use of that name.

After hearing the evidence, the Board Chair made a motion to grant Candidate Taylor's request to waive the Board's regulation and allow Candidate Taylor to be listed on the ballot as "Shawn Taylor." The motion was duly seconded and passed unanimously.

ANALYSIS

The pertinent Board regulation provides that:

The name of a candidate for election shall appear on the ballot in the form designated on the Declaration of Candidacy executed and filed by the candidate . . . provided, that the name conforms to . . . the given name or names, or the initial letter of a given name, if any, and surname.

⁵ 3 DCMR § 601.12 (providing that the Board shall hold a hearing on preliminary determination appeals within three days).

... The Board may permit a candidate to specify a modified form of his or her given name or names on the ballot if the Board finds that the change shall not confuse or mislead the voters and is legally acceptable.⁶

The Board has previously explained that the regulation at issue serves the valid election administration interests of the Board, including that the ballot not be improperly used as a billboard for political advertising and the objective of avoiding voter confusion as to the identity of the candidate. Where, however, a candidate is known to the community by another name that is not confusing or otherwise improper, the Board has waived its regulation to allow a candidate to have their preferred name appear on the ballot. *See Rodney Grant*, BOE Case No. 24-003 (March 19, 2024) at p. 5 and cases cited therein.

Here, it is undisputed that the Candidate's given name is "Shango Taylor." That said, the evidence here is that Candidate is well-known in the community as "Shawn Taylor." That name does not inappropriately convey a campaign slogan. As there is nothing facially confusing with respect to that name, we accept the Candidate's representation as to the name by which he is generally known to voters and whether voters would be able to identify him on the ballot were he to use his given name of "Shango Taylor."

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, it is hereby

ORDERED that the Executive Director's preliminary determination that Candidate Taylor cannot use the name "Shawn Taylor" in lieu of "Shango Taylor" on the 2026 Primary Election

⁶ 3 DCMR §§ 1203.1-1203.2. The regulations also provide that the use of titles, degrees, and prefixes on the ballot is prohibited.

ballot is **REVERSED**. Subject to any successful petition challenge that might be filed, the name to be printed on the ballot for Candidate Taylor shall be “Shawn Taylor.”

Dated: March 30, 2026



Gary Thompson
Chair, D.C. Board of Elections