



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

League of Women Voters – Acton Area
How to Run for Office

CANDIDATE CHECK LIST

BEFORE YOU RUN

You're considering running for office; that's great because the community needs good people. There's a lot of satisfaction in community service. Just be sure you know what the job entails, your reasons for running and the time commitment required both in running and in serving.

POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- Your goals for the office
- Your interests, talents
- Concerns about the office
- Desire to contribute to community
- Your ability to commit the time for the full term
- Other reasons

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Do you know what the job is all about? Observe the board in action. Attend a few meetings before making your decision. How will you fit on the board?
- Do you know what can, cannot be done within the scope of the office?
- Consider the issues: Are you interested in the office because of a single issue? If so, you might be doing a disservice to yourself and the town. Do you have time to research the issues? Your positions should be based on facts, not emotions.
- Is your family supportive?
- Do you have the time?
- Can you work with colleagues with different opinions?
- Can you take criticism- fair and unfair?
- Will you listen to constituents- reasonable and otherwise?
- Can you campaign-- Meet the public? Deal with the media? Do you really want to win?
- Do you know the provisions of the Open Meeting Law? <https://www.mass.gov/the-open-meeting-law>

FILE YOUR NOMINATION PAPERS:

There are some basic rules to follow when gathering signatures. Be sure everyone helping you knows the score.

- Obtain from Town Clerk's office
- Know the procedures for gathering signatures
- Be sure campaign workers know procedures for gathering signatures
- Know deadline for filing papers



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FORM A CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE - DON'T GO IT ALONE

A Committee is not legally necessary (see Office of Campaign Finance Municipal Forms and Publications at <https://www.ocpf.us/Home/Publications#muniForms>). You must have a Treasurer if any money is raised or expended. It is the responsibility of all those participating in political campaign financing in Massachusetts to become knowledgeable with the provisions of the law and regulations.

Sign up several people to help and put them to work; that's why they volunteered. . . Let them help you plan your campaign strategy:

- Campaign manager: time spent on administrative activities is time away from meeting with voters. The job probably should not be held by an immediate family member.
- Treasurer: required if any money is raised or expended
- Publicity / Media
- Fund raiser
- Community contacts

It's worth getting to know your Town Clerk – resource on all the legal aspects from campaign finance to nomination papers to voter registration...and overall community knowledge and insight.

THE CAMPAIGN

Find out what the customary campaign techniques are in the community, but don't be afraid to try new methods.

- Talk with a former elected official or community leader you trust for opinions, advice
- Plan a campaign strategy
- Research issues important in the office
- Prepare statements of your views, how they differ from your opponent's
- Develop a succinct statement about why you're running and what you hope to accomplish
- Draw up a timeline: Announcement to post-election
- Meet, listen to voters
- Create a website
- Attend candidate forums, coffees, talk with the press
- Meet with community organizations, be inclusive
- Consider door-to-door campaigning
- Write position papers on issues
- Campaign in person at popular sites, e.g. landfill/transfer station
- Have a publicity plan - meet deadlines



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FINANCES

After you plan your campaign strategy, draw up a budget if you plan to spend any funds and decide how you will raise the funds.

- Draft a budget - if you are running unopposed, you do not have to spend or raise money
- Fund raise - across community
- Treasurer keeps track of expenditures, donations
- File campaign finance reports, as required
- Keep track of fund raising, expenditures for filing
- Check deadlines for filing financial reports

EFFECTIVE PUBLICITY AND CAMPAIGN TECHNIQUES

Be absolutely honest in your campaign material and dealing with the media. Remember that what you say can follow you forever. What works varies from town to town and area to area. Here are some techniques:

- Campaign signs: Lawn signs should be simple with one or two colors. Keep the number manageable as they will have to be maintained frequently. Select sites that have good visibility. Only private property can be used for political signs and you must get permission from the property owner. Be sure to pick them up the day after the election.
- Brochures & Flyers: A simple flyer can be used at candidates' events, for mass mailing, for handouts when meeting people at large gatherings or at shopping areas.
- Coffee parties: If new people can be attracted to a neighborhood coffee, it is an effective use of campaign time.
- Candidates' Events: Organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, will hold candidates' nights. Always attend these events and come prepared to answer hard questions.
- Dear Friend cards: "Dear Friend" postcards are a personal way to contact voters. The postcard is preprinted with a message, given to friends who are asked to sign, address and mail them to 25 or 50 friends right before the election.
- Letters to the editor: Ask some well-known friends to write short letters to the local newspaper highlighting a few of your positive qualities. Letters should run for the few weeks preceding the election.
- Paid advertising: This is a costly technique and if the ads are signed by people endorsing your campaign, you must have their written permission. Keep the copy simple.
- Telephoning: A well-organized telephone canvass a few days before the election is very effective in reminding people to get out and vote.
- Email and Social Media: Different segments of the population will be reached through different social media methods. A website and Facebook page should be kept current and relevant. Develop and use a contact list for any methods you use: email, phone call, text,



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tweet, etc. to keep your supporters up to date on events, your positions and opportunities for them to help. Be sure to include opt-in and opt-out ability for recipients.

THE MEDIA – NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE

The media, old school and social, can help you get your message across to the voters. Be prepared to answer questions honestly and to the best of your ability. If you don't know, say you'll get back to them and DO IT, taking the time to find the right answer before responding on social media is better than responding too quickly and having to make corrections.

- Announce candidacy
- Deliver written announcement to paper in person, if possible (?)
- Have appropriate photo, biographical data, views on issues
- Double space material to press
- Observe press deadlines
- Be prepared to answer questions

GET-OUT-THE-VOTE STRATEGY

It is not enough to work hard to take your message to the voters. You have to get them to the polls to vote for you.

- Get voter registration list from Town Clerk
- Telephone/text blitz to get out the vote
- Have campaign workers checking off voters at the polls to have non-voters called to remind them to vote
- Be at polls, if possible, observing required distance from polling place
- Have sign holders at polling place - be sure campaign workers know regulations

AFTER THE ELECTION

Win or lose, have a party for your supporters - they worked hard for you. Then assess the campaign and finish the paperwork.

- Have a 'Victory' party; win or lose
- Thank workers - in person or by letter
- Analyze what went well, what you'd change
- Congratulate yourself for winning or trying
- File campaign finance reports

If you win, enjoy your community service - you can make a difference. If you lose, try again; many of the nation's finest leaders lost elections, tried again, and won.