

# Getting Elected In Carlisle, MA



Published as a service to Carlisle residents by  
The League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle [www.lwvcc.org](http://www.lwvcc.org)

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan grassroots organization of men and women formed in 1920 and dedicated to the principles of self-government established by the Constitution of the United States. The League works to promote political responsibility through the informed and active participation of citizens in government.

## Useful Resources

Town of Carlisle Website: [www.carlislema.gov/Pages/index](http://www.carlislema.gov/Pages/index)

Carlisle Town Clerk: 978-369-6155 Email: [townclerk@carlislema.gov](mailto:townclerk@carlislema.gov)

Carlisle Select Board: 978-369-6136 Email -

Carlisle Town Admin: 978-369-6136 Email -

Carlisle Public School: 978-369-6550 Website: [www.carlisle.k12.ma.us](http://www.carlisle.k12.ma.us)

Carlisle Mosquito Newspaper: 978-369-8313

Website: [www.carlislemosquito.org](http://www.carlislemosquito.org) Email: [mail@carlislemosquito.org](mailto:mail@carlislemosquito.org)

Massachusetts Office of Campaign & Political Finance: 1-800-462-6273

Website: [www.ocpf.us/](http://www.ocpf.us/)

The League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle welcomes your comments and questions. Please contact us at our website

[www.lwvcc.org](http://www.lwvcc.org)

## **CARLISLE TOWN GOVERNMENT**

Carlisle is governed by an Open Town Meeting where all registered voters residing in the Town may vote on local bylaws, the Town budget and other matters affecting local taxes and the quality of life. Carlisle became a town by Act of Incorporation in 1805. This enactment by the General Court of the Commonwealth is the legal basis for the authority of the town government. The State Constitution and the General Laws define and limit the town's authority. Carlisle does not have its own Town Charter. The local government has jurisdiction over the territory within its geographical limits, but operates within the framework of the state and federal governments. Carlisle itself transacts business under the town meeting form of government. Elected and appointed officials bring business matters to the voters at annual or special town meeting in the form of a warrant, or list of items to be considered. Individuals may also place items on the warrant through a petition process. The town votes on all department budgets, the purchase of new equipment, bylaw changes, funding methods, etc.

### **TOWN ELECTIONS**

Any voter registered in Carlisle may run for town office by being nominated at the town citizens' caucus, or by submitting a petition, or by organizing write-in votes. The citizens' caucus is nonpartisan and is open to all registered voters. Only two caucus candidates may appear on the ballot for one office. If more than two candidates are presented, a vote must be taken and the two candidates receiving the most votes are nominated. A petition requires 20 certified signatures and must be presented to the board of registrars for certification at least 28 days prior to the election. A write-in vote is not legal unless it includes the full name and residence of the candidate. Absentee voting is allowed in all elections. Information concerning registering to vote, running for office, voting, and absentee ballots is available at the town clerk's office and on the town website [www.carlislema.gov](http://www.carlislema.gov).

### **LOCAL ELECTION CALENDAR**

- Annual Town Meeting –Spring date set by Select Board.
- Citizens' Caucus – Date set by Select Board at least 31 days before Annual Town Meeting.
- Town Election – Date set by Select Board usually 2 weeks after the Annual Town Meeting.

## **ELECTED POSITIONS IN CARLISLE**

### **Board of Assessors:** 3-year terms

3 members

To list and appraise all real estate and personal property; to assess real property taxes; to determine the tax rate and consider abatements and exemptions.

### **Board of Health:** 3-year terms

3 members

To enforce health regulations set up by the State Sanitary Code and supplemented by the town bylaws and Board of Health regulations; to set other requirements deemed necessary in the best interests of the town; to carry out the required reporting under the state's Right to Know act.

### **Board of Selectmen:** 3-year terms

5 members

To establish policies and goals of the town; to administer the town on a daily basis; to appoint non-elective offices, boards and committees from the list of registered voters; to manage town departments; to prepare the warrant and town report; to pass resolutions.

### **Housing Authority:** 5-year terms

5 members

To support the development of housing for families or elderly persons of low income.

### **Library Trustees:** 3-year terms

3 members

To operate Gleason Public Library; to determine its policies; to administer its finances; to hire librarians; to arrange for its maintenance; to encourage good public relations.

**Moderator:** 1-year term

To preside at town meetings; to appoint temporary standing committees and a representative to the Minuteman Vocational Technical Regional High School

**Planning Board:** 5-year terms

7 members

To guide the development of the town; to administer the subdivision control laws; to advise the selectmen on business site-plan approvals; to study long-range problems; to initiate changes to the town's zoning bylaws; to hold scenic roads hearings.

**School Committee:** 3-year terms

5 members

To provide a total educational system based on the desires of the town and statutory requirements; to determine overall educational policy; to approve budgets and planning; to appoint the school superintendent. Two of the five members (voted and appointed by the five) also serve on the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee.

**Town Clerk:** 3-year term

To preserve all town records and reports; to take minutes of town meetings and present them to the selectmen within five days; to serve as a member of the board of registrars; to supervise election officers in the conduct of elections, counting votes and declaring results; to keep records of the voting and give notice in writing to those elected; to administer the Oath of Office to those elected or appointed, keeping a record of this; to submit a list of those elected and any changes in such offices to the Secretary of State; to submit a written report of appropriations made at town meeting within five days to the assessors, the town accountant and the Finance Committee; to record vital statistics; to issue dog licenses, fish and game licenses, marriage licenses and permits for burial; to hold office hours for the transaction of any town business.

Municipal elections in Carlisle are nonpartisan, and all elected Town officers (with the exception of the Town Clerk) serve without compensation. The League of Women Voters recommends that anyone thinking of running for a town office position, first attend and observe the regularly scheduled meetings of the board or committee for a significant period of time in order to learn about the culture of the town and the committee of interest. All committees and boards are subject to the Open Meeting Law (OML) in Massachusetts so it is advised that candidates familiarize themselves with the Open Meeting Law Guide which can be found on the MA Attorney General's website:

<http://www.mass.gov/ago/government-resources/open-meeting-law/attorney-generals-open-meeting-law-guide.html>

### **CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

Under the state campaign finance law (Chapter 55 of the Massachusetts General Laws) all candidates for municipal office must file campaign finance reports with the Town Clerk on the 8th day preceding the election, on the 30th day after the election, and on January 20th of the following year (with certain exceptions). Incumbents must file annually as long as they hold office. Reporting forms are available from the Town Clerk's office. The total amount of contributions and expenditures during the reporting period must be listed along with the names of all donors of more than \$50 and all disbursements over \$50. Contributions by an individual to a candidate or candidate's committee are limited to \$500 in a calendar year. Contributions from corporations are prohibited. There is no limitation on what candidates can spend from their personal funds. In recent years, candidates in contested Town elections have spent in the range of **four to eight thousand dollars**. A candidate may choose to establish a campaign committee to accept contributions and make expenditures. The candidate then selects a treasurer and a chairman, although the treasurer and chairman may be the same person. Before the committee accepts any contributions or expends any money, the treasurer, chairman (if any) and the candidate must sign a Statement of Organization to be filed with the Town Clerk. They then open a business checking account to use for depositing contributions and making disbursements. All expenditures should be made by check. For further information candidates are urged to consult the "Campaign Finance Guide" available from the state Office of Campaign and Political Finance website: [http://files.ocpf.us/pdf/guides/guide\\_pub\\_emp.pdf](http://files.ocpf.us/pdf/guides/guide_pub_emp.pdf)

## **CAMPAIGNING**

Candidates usually publicize their campaigns by holding coffees in the homes of supporters or at non-governmental public locations to build support and raise funds. The Carlisle Mosquito, which is the local newspaper mailed weekly to all Carlisle residents, publishes candidate and their supporters' letters to the Editor, ads and/or articles announcing candidacies. Closer to the election the local newspaper usually prints articles about each of the candidates and their answers to questions posed by the newspaper. Prior to the election the Concord-Carlisle League of Women Voters holds a candidates forum, which is usually broadcast on the local cable station, CCTV Channel 8 or 9. If there is a contest, the candidate or campaign committee may decide to have bumper stickers and lawn signs printed. **Political signs must not obstruct traffic or visibility and may be displayed no longer than 60 days.** The placement of political signs on public property in front of a candidate's or supporter's home does not require Town approval, provided that the sign meets certain criteria. The candidates and the campaign committee will recruit supporters to hold coffees, make contributions, write letters of support to the editor of the Carlisle Mosquito, sign campaign advertisements to be published in the Mosquito, place signs on their property, and hold signs at visible locations before the election and at polling places on the day of the election. Political advertisements must show the name and address of the responsible person or of the campaign committee and its chairman.

## **VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINES**

Citizens not already registered to vote in Carlisle may register up to 20 days before the election either by mail or in person at the Town Clerk's office. Registration applications are available at the Town Hall; they can also be requested by phone from the Town Clerk's office or you can register online. Voters unable to go to the polls because of absence from the Town on election day, disability, or illness may vote by absentee ballot either by voting in person at the Town Clerk's office before noon of the day before the election, or by requesting an absentee ballot in writing from the Town Clerk's office. Their ballot will be mailed to them, and it must be returned either by mail or in person to the Town Clerk's office by the voter (or a family member) before 8 p.m. on Election Day. Applications for absentee ballots may be requested from the Clerk's office and may be filled out either by the

voter or by an immediate family member (which is on a different form). Applications must be returned in sufficient time to allow for the mailing of the ballot to the voter and its timely return to Town Hall.

### **ELECTION DAY**

For most elections the polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Supporters may hold signs or pass out leaflets no closer than 150 feet from the entrance to the polling place. No signs, literature, campaign buttons or T-shirts may be visible within the 150 foot area, and no electioneering may take place there. Inside the polling place supporters may observe the voting process, including the counting of ballots after the polls close, as long as they are not within the actual voting area and do not disturb the voting or counting. When the vote count is completed, the results are posted at Town Hall, at the Police Station and on the Town Website.

### **THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING A RUN FOR PUBLIC OFFICE!**

Not everyone wins an election but the process of running for office is an experience in itself. Take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about your town and the people who volunteer countless hours in service to your community. Competitive races make stronger candidates and better government.

Carlisle is a small town of approximately 5000 residents and relies heavily on volunteers who are appointed or elected to committees and boards and help to run the town government. Carlisle volunteers are well respected in town and their responsibilities and contribution to the town is highly regarded and greatly appreciated. Please consider joining the team of committed Carlisle volunteers! Be a part of solving the problems and resolving the issues in our town.