

# Getting Elected In Concord



Published as a service to Concord 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 Concord website - [www.concordma.gov](http://www.concordma.gov)

Concord Town Clerk                      978-318-3080  
E-mail - [townclerk@concordma.gov](mailto:townclerk@concordma.gov)

Concord Selectman's Office            978-318-3001

Concord Town Manager                978-318-3000

Superintendent of Schools            978-318-1500

Concord Housing Authority            978-369-8435

Concord *Journal*                        978-371-5742

Massachusetts Office of Campaign & Political Finance  
[www.mass.gov.ofpf](http://www.mass.gov.ofpf) 1-800-462-6273

*The League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle  
welcomes your comments and questions. Please  
contact us at our web site [www.lwvcc.org](http://www.lwvcc.org)*

## **Concord Town Government**

Concord 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. Concord's current Town Manager form of government was established in 1956 by a charter accepted by the voters and approved by the state legislature. Under the charter, administrative policy is set by an elected five-member Board of Selectmen which appoints a Town Manager responsible for the ongoing operations of the Town. A five-member School Committee elected by the voters sets school policies which are carried out by a Superintendent of Schools who is appointed by them. The Town Moderator is elected by the voters to conduct Concord's Open Town Meeting and to appoint the Town Finance Committee. Four members of the Concord Housing Authority are elected by the voters, and one member is appointed by the Governor. The Housing Authority is responsible for implementing state and federal subsidized low income housing programs in Concord. Municipal elections in Concord are nonpartisan, and all elected Town officers serve without compensation.

## **Nomination**

Concord's Town Election cycle starts with the Town Caucus which is held in January. The Town Caucus is an integral part of Concord's tradition of grass roots democracy. It is open to all registered Concord voters. They gather to nominate candidates to fill vacancies in the Town's elective offices – Moderator, Selectmen, School Committee members, and Housing Authority Commissioners.

The Caucus can nominate two candidates for each open seat. A nomination speech is given by a supporter of each candidate. No prior notice is necessary. A candidate may even make his or her own nomination speech. For each open seat, the two candidates who receive the highest number of votes will appear on the ballot as Caucus Nominees. To be nominated a candidate must receive at least 8% of the votes of the persons present and voting. Candidates who are not nominated at the Caucus may have their names placed on the ballot by

collecting at least 50 valid signatures of Concord voters on nomination papers available at the Town Clerk's office and by filing these papers with the Town Clerk 35 days before the Town Election. The Town Election is held in March.

## **Elective Offices**

The **Town Moderator**, who is elected each year, conducts the Town Meeting – establishing the protocols for speaking before the Meeting, assisting citizens with developing motions to be presented, reviewing the physical preparations, and coordinating the presentations – then presiding at the Meeting. He or she recognizes speakers, keeps them within time limits, follows parliamentary procedure, and declares all votes. Parliamentary procedure is defined in a handbook called *Town Meeting Time*. The official record of the Meeting is kept by the Town Clerk. In addition to the Town Meeting, the Moderator has the important task of appointing the Finance Committee members. This committee sets budget guidelines, reviews the Town and School budgets, and makes recommendations to Town Meeting on all expenditure items. The Moderator also appoints the Town's representative to the Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School District.

The **Selectmen**, who serve three-year terms, work closely as a Board with the Town Manager, Town staff and other Town boards and committees to implement the actions taken by Town Meeting and to develop initiatives affecting life in Concord. They administer the bylaws and the budget of the Town, call Town elections, set the annual tax rate, hold public hearings on the Town budget and make recommendations to Town Meeting, appoint members to several boards and commissions and approve certain appointments made by the Town Manager, acquire title to land approved for purchase by the Town Meeting and represent the Town on various regional agencies. Members of the Board may participate with the Town Manager in collective bargaining negotiations.

**School Committee Members**, elected for three-year terms, serve on both the Concord Public School Committee and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District Committee. They work closely with the Superintendent of Schools and staff in developing the annual budget, and they approve the budget which they then present to Town Meeting. The Town Meeting can vote only on the total budget appropriation, not on individual school budget figures.

The School Committee gives advice and consent to the Superintendent on such issues as school programs and schedules, develops long range plans, and makes recommendations to the Town Meeting about repairs, renovations or replacement of school buildings. All personnel matters are under the direction of the Superintendent; however School Committee members participate with the Director of Personnel in negotiating with the collective bargaining associations within the school system.

By tradition Selectmen and School Committee members serve no more than two terms.

**Housing Authority Commissioners**, who serve five-year terms, set policy for the implementation in Concord of state and federal subsidized low income housing programs. They appoint an executive director who handles all day-to-day administration and management of the existing housing units. They serve as advocates for building additional subsidized low income housing in Concord and take an active role in decision-making about planning and construction.

## **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 8<sup>th</sup> day preceding the election, on the 30<sup>th</sup> day after the election, and on January 20<sup>th</sup> 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

makes any expenditures, 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 at their website [www.mass.gov/ocpf](http://www.mass.gov/ocpf).

## **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 *Concord Journal* and *Concord.Patch.com* publishes articles announcing their candidacies. Closer to the election the *Journal* 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. Posting of signs on other municipal property requires prior approval of the Town Manager’s office. Please refer to Administrative Policies and Procedures (APP) #48 available on the Town of Concord website [www.concordma.gov](http://www.concordma.gov), under ‘Town Departments’, ‘Town Manager’.

The candidates and the campaign committee will recruit supporters to hold coffees, make contributions, write letters of support to the editor of the *Concord Journal*, sign campaign advertisements to be published in the *Journal*, place signs on their property, and hold signs at visible locations before the election and at polling places on election day.

Political advertisements must show the name and address of the responsible person or of the campaign committee and its chairman.

## **Voter Registration and Absentee Voting**

Citizens not registered to vote in Concord 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 House; they can also be requested by phone from the Town Clerk's office.

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. Applications must be returned by mail or in person to the Town Clerk's office in sufficient time to allow for the mailing of the ballot to the voter and its timely return. The Town Clerk's office number is 978-318-3080.

## **On 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 each polling place, and the candidates' supporters may view them and copy the results. The totals from each precinct are reported to the Town Clerk's office, and supporters may receive the final results there.