

Running for Office in Carlisle

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The League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle created this guide as a resource for Carlisle residents interested in running for local office. While we've made every effort to ensure the information is accurate, procedures and requirements may change. Please consult official sources for the most up-to-date details.

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 local matters. Carlisle became a town by a state Act of Incorporation in 1805, which established Carlisle as a municipality under Massachusetts law. The State Constitution and the General Laws define and limit the town's authority. Carlisle does not have its own Town Charter. Like all Massachusetts municipalities, Carlisle operates in the framework of state and federal law. Elected and appointed officials bring business matters to the voters at annual or special town meetings in the form of a warrant, which is a list of items to be considered. Individuals may also place items on the warrant through a petition process. During Town Meeting, registered voters in Carlisle vote on government structure, town finances, bylaws, capital projects, and other matters presented in the warrant.

Town Elections

Any voter registered in Carlisle may run for town office in one of three ways:

Annual Citizens' Caucus: The Carlisle Citizens' Caucus is nonpartisan and is open to all registered Carlisle voters. Nominations for each open office are made from the floor by attending voters. Up to two caucus nominees may appear on the election ballot for each open office. If more than two candidates are nominated for an open office, the caucus will vote and the two candidates receiving the most votes will appear on the ballot as caucus nominees.

Nomination Papers. Candidates who are not nominated by the Citizens' Caucus, or who choose not to participate in the Caucus, may qualify for the ballot by filing nomination papers. Nomination papers can be obtained at the Town Clerk's Office, and must be signed in ink by at least twenty-nine (29) registered Carlisle voters. The signatures must be certified by the Board of Registrars prior to the election. Deadlines for obtaining and returning nomination papers are posted on the Town of Carlisle [website](#).

Write-In Candidates: Voters may also elect a candidate by a write-in vote. Each office on the ballot will have a place for a write-in vote. A write-in vote is valid only if it includes the candidate's full name and residence.

Depending on the election, voters may have the option to vote by mail, early in-person, or by absentee ballot, if eligible. Information about registering to vote, running for office, voting, election deadlines, and absentee ballots is available at the Town Clerk's office and on the Town's [Election Information and Voter Registration](#) webpage.

Local Election calendar

- **Annual Town Meeting** – Spring date set by Select Board.
- **Citizens' Caucus** – Held annually before the Annual Town Election. Select Board calls the caucus and sets the date, time, and location. Check the Town Clerk website for the current election year.
- **Voter Registration Deadline** – 10 days before a given election. Can be done at the Town Clerk's Office, by mail, at the Registry of Motor Vehicles, or [ONLINE](#). If you are unsure of your voter status, contact the Town Clerk at 978-369-6155 or townclerk@carlislema.gov, or check online at the [Secretary of the Commonwealth's website](#).
- **Vote by Mail Application Deadline** – 5th business day before a given election. Vote by Mail applications are available to download on the [Town website](#).
- **In-Person Early Voting** – Election dependent. See the Town Clerk's website for specific election information.
- **Absentee Voting Deadlines** – Noon the business day before an election.
- **Town Election** – Date set by Select Board, usually 2-3 weeks after the Annual Town Meeting.

Carlisle Election Location:

Carlisle Town Hall-Clark Room
66 Westford Street, Carlisle, MA 01741

Elected Positions In Carlisle

More detailed descriptions of the powers, duties, and responsibilities of elected positions can be located on the Town's [elected officials](#) webpage.

Board of Assessors: 3 members, 3-year terms

Responsible for determining the full and fair value of real and personal property for property tax purposes. Maintains the Town's property assessment records.

Board of Health: 5 members, 3-year terms

Protects the public health and environment in Carlisle. Enforces MA General Laws pertaining to public health, control of disease, promotion of sanitary living conditions, and protection of the environment from damage and pollution. Promulgates local regulations and policies and ensures that needed health services are available.

Select Board: 5 members, 3-year terms

The Town's chief elected executive body. Charged with the general direction and management of the property and affairs of the Town. Employs a Town Administrator to manage the day-to-day business of the Town within the Board's policy direction. Appoints Finance Committee members. Appoints the Police and Fire Chiefs.

Library Trustees: 3 members, 3-year terms

Operates Gleason Public Library; determines its policies; administers its finances; appoints the Library Director; arranges for its maintenance; encourages good public relations.

Moderator: 1 moderator, 3-year term

Conducts Town Meeting: establishes protocols for speaking at the Meeting, assists citizens with developing motions to be presented, then presides at the Meeting. Recognizes speakers, keeps them within time limits, follows parliamentary procedure, and declares all votes. Procedure at Town Meeting is outlined in the handbook [Carlisle Town Meeting Introduction and Procedures](#).

Planning Board: 7 members, 3-year terms

Guides land use planning and development in Carlisle; administers the Subdivision Control Law and the Board's Subdivision Rules and Regulations; advises the Select Board for the acceptance of Town ways and the Zoning Board of Appeals for Comprehensive Permits on affordable housing development; guides Zoning Bylaw amendments through Town Meeting; holds scenic roads hearings.

School Committee: 5 members, 3-year terms

Provides a total educational system based on the educational needs of the community and state law; determines overall educational policy; approves budgets and planning; appoints the school superintendent. Two of the five members (voted and appointed by the five) also serve on the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee.

Municipal elections in Carlisle are nonpartisan, and all elected Town officials serve without compensation. The League of Women Voters recommends that prospective candidates attend several meetings of the board or committee they are considering, to become familiar with its work and responsibilities. All committees and boards are subject to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law (OML). Prospective candidates are encouraged to review the Attorney General's Open Meeting Law Guide before running for office. See the [MA Attorney General's OML website](#).

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 may contribute to their own campaign. The cost of running for local office varies depending on the office sought, whether the election is contested, and the campaign methods a candidate chooses to use, such as signs, mailings and advertising.

A candidate may choose to establish a campaign committee to accept contributions and make expenditures. The candidate then appoints a treasurer and a chair, although the treasurer and chair may be the same person. Before accepting contributions or making expenditures, the treasurer, chair (if applicable), and the candidate must sign a Statement of Organization to be filed with the Town Clerk. The committee then opens a campaign checking account to deposit contributions and make disbursements. All expenditures should be made by check. For additional information, candidates are encouraged to consult the OCPF Campaign Finance Guide and other resources available on the state [Office of Campaign and Political Finance's website](#).

Campaigning

Many candidates set up a website with information about their campaign and may choose to use social media and email newsletter tools to further promote their candidacy.

Candidates often engage with potential supporters and voters by holding coffees in the homes of supporters or at non-governmental public locations to build support and raise funds. Support for a candidate can include hosting coffee events, making contributions, writing letters of support to the editor of The Carlisle Mosquito, placing signs on one's property, and holding signs before the election and outside the polling place on election day. Campaigning at the polls on election day must be done outside of 150 feet of any entrance to the polls.

The Carlisle Mosquito publishes candidates' announcements, letters to the Editor, paid ads, and provides election coverage. Closer to the election, the local newspaper usually prints articles about each of the candidates and their answers to questions posed by the newspaper. Candidates who are considering placing ads in the newspaper should refer to [Carlisle Communications, Inc.](#)

[Handbook](#) for their policy on political advertising in the Carlisle Mosquito.

Prior to the election, the League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle hosts a candidates' forum, typically held in person and also broadcast on the local cable station, Minuteman Media Network (MMN) TV Channel 8 or 9, and available via Zoom. A recording is made available via the MMN and [LWVCC YouTube Channels](#).

In a contested election, the candidate or campaign committee may decide to use lawn signs, postcards, bumper stickers, or other campaign material. Campaign signs must not obstruct traffic or visibility. Campaign signs may not be posted on Town property. However, the Town's policy does not restrict individuals from holding or attending to campaign signs on Town property consistent with applicable law. Candidates should consult the Town's [Placement of Private Signs on Town Property Town Policy](#).

Massachusetts campaign finance law may require political advertisements to identify the person or committee responsible for the communication. Even when not required by law, including this information helps make campaign communications clear and credible, and demonstrates good faith and adherence to sound campaign practices.

Voter Registration And Voting

Information about voter registration and ways to vote, including in-person voting, mail-in, and absentee voting, can be found on the following websites:

- [Town of Carlisle Election Information and Voter Registration](#)
- [Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#)
- [League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle Voter Information](#)

You can also contact the Carlisle Town Clerk's office for questions. The Clerk's office phone number is 978-369-6155, or you can reach the office via email: townclerk@carlislema.gov.

Election Day

For most elections, **polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.** Carlisle has one polling location for all voters, at Town Hall. Supporters may hold signs or distribute campaign literature, provided they remain at least 150 feet away from the entrance to the polling place. No signs, literature, campaign buttons/stickers, or campaign T-shirts may be visible within the 150-foot area, and no electioneering may take place there. Supporters may observe the voting process, including the counting of ballots after the polls close, as long as they remain within the designated observer space outside the polling area and do not disturb the voting or counting. The unofficial election



results are posted at Town Hall and on the Town Website following the closing of the polls, then updated once finalized.

Resources

- [Town of Carlisle](#)
- [Carlisle Town Clerk](#)
- [Carlisle Public Schools](#)
- [The Carlisle Mosquito](#)
- [Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance](#)
- [Massachusetts Moderator Association](#)
- [Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#)
- [League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle](#)