



Office of the Town Clerk  
TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN

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## **A CANDIDATE'S GUIDE TO RUNNING FOR TOWN OFFICE IN BELCHERTOWN**

(This is only a guide designed to help you work your way through the election process. This is not a comprehensive list of elections laws. This is not legal advice.)

- **Preparing to Run:**
- **Prior to Obtaining Nomination Papers:**
  - Review Town Clerk's Website (<https://www.belchertown.org/clerk/index.php>) for:
    - Listing of positions available on this year's ballot and The Annual Town Election Calendar for important deadlines (dates and times):
      - Date Nomination Papers will be made available;
      - Last day Nomination Papers can be obtained;
      - Last day to submit Nomination Papers;
      - Last day to register to vote;
      - Last day to object or withdraw;
      - Absentee Voting/Early Vote-By-Mail Availability;
      - Early In-Person Availability; and
      - Election Day hours and location
  - Ensure that the name you registered to vote as is the name you want to appear on the ballot. Your registered name will appear on your nomination papers and on the ballot.
- **Obtain Nomination Papers from the Town Clerk's Office:**
  - At the Town Clerk's Office, you will fill out a contact information sheet.
  - At the Town Clerk's Office, you will receive:
    - Your Nomination Papers;
    - Calendar of Election Deadlines and Dates;
    - Campaign Finance Guide;
    - CPF M102 Campaign Finance Report; and instructions
    - No Financial Activity Form CPF M102 – 0 or Form M109
- **Circulating Papers for Signatures:**
  - A Candidate must have fifty (50) certified signatures to be placed on the ballot.
  - Signatures must be made by Belchertown registered voters.
  - A registered voter must only sign a candidate's nomination papers once.
  - A registered voter may sign more than one candidate's nomination papers.
  - All signatures must be legible and written substantially as registered by the signer.
  - The law allows a registered voter to insert or omit a middle name or initial and still have the signature deemed valid.

- Those signing should not use nicknames or initials in place of full names.
- Those signing should not sign with a spouses name as their own. (“Helen Smith” not “Mrs. John Smith.”)
- It is recommended that you submit more than the required number (50) for certification. You do not want to fall short in the event of some signatures not being certified.
- It is recommended that you submit your signatures early. If you do not have the necessary number of certified signatures, you will want to have time to rectify the situation.

### **The Campaign:**

- Create Your Campaign Committee:
- You do not need a committee. But it is highly recommended that someone other than you serve as your treasurer.
- Campaign officers must be over 18 years old and cannot hold public office.
- There are many restrictions about a public employees running for office:
  - Watch this video for introductory information:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOvAUnFlv4w>
- Public Employees should contact the Massachusetts State Ethics Commission prior to running for office if there are any possible conflicts:
  - 617-371-9500
  - <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/state-ethics-commission-contactinformation>

### • **Campaign Finance Activity:**

- State law requires an accounting of all money received or spent during a political campaign.
  - Even if that number is zero.
  - Even if you do not have a Campaign Committee.
- It is the responsibility of all those participating in political campaign financing in Massachusetts to become knowledgeable with the provisions of the campaign finance law and its regulations. Violations of the law carry serious penalties of fines, imprisonment or both.
- The OCPF website (<https://www.ocpf.us/>) is a great resource on campaign finance requirements. Anyone can contact them with questions.
- Candidates are required to comply with the campaign finance laws and procedures, and to submit regular campaign finance reports at the following intervals:
  - Eight (8) days prior to the election;
  - Thirty (30) days after the election (Win or Lose); and
  - End of the year report by January 20th. (Win or Lose) (If elected you need to submit an end of the year report every year that you are in office, not just the year you ran).

### • **Campaigns must record and report:**

- Full name and residential address of each contributor where the contribution was in excess of \$50.00 (or >\$50/year);
- Date of the deposit and amount of contribution;
- Contributor’s occupation and employer if aggregate contributions by that contributor has equaled or exceeded \$200.00 for the calendar year.
- In the case of a credit card contribution by a trust, foundation, or association, other than a political committee, the names and addresses of its principal officers shall also be disclosed as required by M.G.L. c. 55, § 10.

### • **Political Sign Regulations:**

- It is recommended that political signs only be placed on private property with the permission of the property owner and that they be out of the right of way, and not obstruct vehicle or pedestrian traffic.
- Belchertown Bylaws Chapter 145-22(D)(3)(i) further states “no sign shall be placed on Town property or within the right-of-way of the Town without the approval of the Select Board.

- On the day of the election, political signs are allowed on School property and must be removed the same day, at the close of the election. Any signs left on school property will be removed the following day and discarded by the Town.
- **Ballot Information:**
  - Your name will appear on the ballot as you have registered to vote.
  - Candidates for re-election will be listed first.
    - Candidates for re-election:
      - A candidate for re-election must have already been elected to the office that they are running for again, to be considered a candidate for re-election.
      - A candidate who currently holds an office but was not elected to it is not considered a candidate for re-election.
  - Candidates for re-election will be listed alphabetically by last name.
  - The remaining candidates will be listed alphabetically by last name after the candidates for re-election.
- **Campaign Activities on Election Day:**
  - Massachusetts state law and regulations prohibit electioneering, campaigning, and specific other political activities within one hundred fifty (150) feet of a polling place on Election Day.
    - Prohibited actions include: holding any campaign signs; circulating or distributing campaign materials; wearing any campaign buttons or identifying signage; soliciting a person's vote for or against a candidate or question on the ballot; and distributing stickers.
  - Extended time, talking with Election workers or other residents in the polling location after you have voted, may appear to be campaigning.
  - Vehicles displaying campaign materials are also prohibited within the 150 feet of the entrance.
  - Exhibition, Circulation, and Distribution of Materials intending to influence the action or decision of a voter at the ongoing election may not be exhibited, circulated, distributed, posted, or otherwise displayed within the area subject to the 150-foot Rule. This includes, but is not limited to, posters, stickers, cards, leaflets, handbills, placards, pictures, and circulars. G. L. 54, § 65.
- **After the Election:**
  - **Win or Lose:**
    - Remove: campaign materials, signs, trash, etc. from outside the polling place;
    - Remove lawn signs;
    - File your 30 days after the election Campaign Finance Report; and
    - File your end of the year Campaign Finance Report by January 20<sup>th</sup>
  - **Win:**
    - Be sworn in at the Town Clerks Office (You cannot act in an official capacity until you are sworn in).
    - Sign for packet which contains:
      - Information on completing the Ethic Commission's on-line training program;
      - A copy of the, "Open Meeting Law Guide and Educational Materials," from the Office of the Attorney General;
      - A copy of the, "Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law for Municipal Employees" (As an elected official you are considered a Municipal Employee under the Conflict of Interest Law)
    - Once you have completed the Ethics Commission's on-line training program, notify the Town Clerk's Office.