



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

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

## **Preparing to Run:**

- **Prior to Obtaining Nomination Papers:**
  - Review Town Clerk's Website (<https://www.townofsharon.net/town-clerk>) 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
  - 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:**
  - To save time you can call ahead to the Town Clerk's Office (781-784-1500 x1201), so the papers can be prepared prior to your arrival.
  - At the Town Clerk's Office, you will fill out a contact information sheet.
  - At the Town Clerk's Office, you will receive:
    - A Copy of this Guide;
    - Your Nomination Papers;
    - Calendar of Election Deadlines and Dates;
    - Campaign Finance Guide;
    - CPF M102 Campaign Finance Report; and
    - No Financial Activity Form CPF M102 – 0
- **Circulating Papers for Signatures:**
  - A Candidate must have fifty (50) certified signatures to be placed on the ballot.
  - Signatures must be made by Sharon 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 spouse's 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, unless you are a public employee, 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 employee 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:
    - 617-371-9500
    - <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/state-ethics-commission-contact-information>
- Open an account for the campaign – bank, PayPal. Most banks will require an EIN (not a personal social security number) for the account. Click here for steps to take in opening an account: <https://www.ocpf.us/Filers/BankDepository>

- **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
  - An end of the year report by January 20<sup>th</sup>. (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

- **Street Listing:**

- Contains address information on all residents who filled out the annual census, except for minors, and public safety personnel and those living at said personnel's address.
- You can request a free digital copy from the Town Clerk's Office; or
- You can purchase a physical copy from the Town Clerk's Office for \$10.00, while supplies last.

- **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.
- Sharon Bylaws Chapter 221-14 C (<https://ecode360.com/31017470>): Unlighted, temporary signs of no more than six square feet pertaining to a specific noncommercial event, cause, or expression of political, religious, or ideological views, require no sign permit, except as otherwise provided in this bylaw.
- MGL Chapter 87, Section 9 (<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter87/Section9>): Whoever affixes to a tree in a public way or place a notice, sign, advertisement or other thing, whether in writing or otherwise, or cuts, paints or marks such tree, except for the purpose of protecting it or the public and under a written permit from the officer having the charge of such trees in a city or from the tree warden in a town, or from the department in the case of a state highway, shall be punished by a fine of not more than fifty dollars. Tree wardens shall enforce the provisions of this section; but if a tree warden fails to act in the case of a state highway within thirty days after the receipt by him of a complaint in writing from the department, the department may proceed to enforce this section.
- MGL Chapter 266, Section 126 (<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartIV/TitleI/Chapter266/Section126>): Whoever paints, or puts upon, or in any manner affixes to, any fence, structure, pole, rock or other object which is public property or the property of another, whether within or without the limits of the highway, any words, device, trade mark, advertisement or notice which is not required by law to be posted thereon, without first obtaining the written consent of the municipal or public officer in charge thereof or the owner or tenant of such property, shall, upon complaint of such municipal or public officer, or of such owner or tenant, be punished by a fine of not less than ten nor more than one hundred dollars, and in addition shall forfeit to the use of the public or private owner of such property or the tenant thereof the cost of removing or obliterating such defacement to be recovered in an action of tort. Any word, device, trade mark, advertisement or notice which has been painted, put up or affixed within the limits of a highway in violation of this section shall be considered a public nuisance, and may be forthwith removed or obliterated and abated by any person.

**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:**

- On Election Day, at the polling place, political signs must be held by a person.
- No signs may be hung on fences.
- 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 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, pasters, 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); and
    - A copy of, "A Guide to the Massachusetts Public Records Law."
  - Once you have completed the Ethics Commission's on-line training program, provide a copy of the completion certificate to the Town Clerk's Office.