



# Ward and Town Committees

Election 2020



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Secretary of the Commonwealth

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## WARD AND TOWN COMMITTEES — 2020

### Election and Organization

The basic legal organization of political parties in Massachusetts are the ward and town committees. Each political party may elect a ward or town committee consisting of three to thirty-five members in each ward of a city and in each town for a four year term. Members of ward and town committees serve in the following capacities:

- represent their party at the local neighborhood level;
- promote the objectives of the party; and
- work for the nomination and election of party candidates.

### ELECTION PROCEDURES

#### Number of Members Elected

On or before Thursday, August 1, 2019, all ward and town committees are required by law to notify the Secretary of the Commonwealth of the exact number of members they wish to have elected at the presidential primaries in 2020. If notification is not received by August 1, 2019, the number of members to be elected will be the same as 2016.

This notification determines the full number of voting committee members for the ensuing four years, as does the number of members assigned to such a committee in cases where no notification is received. New political parties will be assigned 10 members, unless their state committee requests otherwise in writing by August 1, 2019.

#### Nomination Papers

Traditionally, there are three ways to run for ward or town committee:

- Incumbent members of the current committee often form their own slate. An interested person may request a place on this slate by contacting the chairperson whose name is available at the local election office in the city or town hall.
- A candidate may run on another slate.
- A candidate may run as an individual.

Nomination papers will be available on Tuesday, August 6, 2019, in the Elections Division, Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, One Ashburton Place, Room 1705, Boston, Massachusetts 02108 and thereafter at select clerk's offices in each city and town.

## Ballot Format

Ward and town committee nomination papers are “group” or “slate” papers. Though one may run as an individual, there is an advantage to running as part of a “group” or “slate.” Massachusetts law requires that groups appear first on the ballot and candidates running as individuals appear last.

Three or more candidates on a nomination paper will be treated as a group. A paper with fewer than three names is not considered a group, and those names will appear alphabetically after the groups on the ballot.

When 2 or more groups are to appear on the ballot in any ward or town, ballot order will be decided by the drawing of lots by the Secretary of the Commonwealth. This drawing will take place in the Secretary’s office, most likely in early December.

The order of the names on the ballot for the group will be the same as the order of the names as filed on the nomination papers.

Vacancies which occur on the slate through withdrawal or other circumstances may not be filled. Should there be fewer members elected than the number designated, the committee, when elected, may fill the vacancies by vote at its first meeting after the election, or at any later meeting.

## Instructions to Candidates

Each candidate for ward or town committee must be a registered voter in that ward or town and enrolled in the party during the 90 days before the filing deadline for nomination papers with the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, or a newly registered voter enrolled in that party. A candidate cannot have been enrolled in another political party during the one year period before the filing deadline. Each candidate’s name must be certified by the registrars of voters or election commission. At least three registrars of voters or election commissioners must sign the enrollment certificate.

### **Names and addresses of candidates should be typed or printed clearly.**

Beside each candidate’s name there is a space for written acceptance, which must be signed by each candidate personally. By law, ward and town committee nomination papers do not contain a statement of public office.

A paper with more candidates’ names than there are positions to be filled will be considered invalid, unless notarized withdrawals are filed by the deadline to reduce to the allowable number. Also, a candidate’s name cannot be printed on the ballot on more than one slate or both on a slate and as an individual. A candidate may allow his or her name to be circulated on more than one slate, and/or as an individual, but must withdraw from all but one ballot position by

the final date for withdrawal (Friday, November 22, 2019) or the candidate's name will be removed and will not appear on the ballot at all.

**Nomination papers cannot be altered in any way. Additional markings on the papers may disqualify any signatures contained thereon.**

### **Signatures of Voters**

On the reverse side of the nomination papers there are spaces for the signatures of registered voters who wish to nominate the candidates listed on the front of the nomination paper. These must be voters who are enrolled members of the party or who are not enrolled in any party. **It is possible for the candidates on the slate to nominate themselves by signing the back, as voters, in addition to signing the front (in the written acceptance area), as candidates.** Five certified signatures are all that are necessary to nominate a full slate, although it is strongly advised to obtain more than five signatures. The certification of signatures must be signed by at least three registrars of voters or election commissioners.

### **Filing Nomination Papers**

Please refer to the schedule on the inside back cover for filing deadlines. Nomination papers must be submitted to the local board of registrars or election commissioners for the certification of names no later than **5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 8, 2019**. Nomination papers must be picked up from the local election officials and filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth no later than **5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 19, 2019**.

## **ORGANIZATION PROCEDURES**

### **Organization of Ward and Town Committees**

Following the presidential primary elections, each elected ward, town and city committee is required by law to organize by meeting within ten days following the 30th day after their election. At this first meeting the committee will elect a chairperson, a treasurer and a secretary. The committee may also fill any vacancies that have not been filled at the presidential primary and has the right to break any tied vote for a position on the committee by choosing between the two or more candidates who were tied.

Any ward or town committee member who moves to another ward or town automatically loses his membership on the committee at the end of that calendar year, if they don't resign sooner. Any member who changes party enrollment or unenrolls from the party immediately loses his or her membership from the committee. Vacancies may be filled by vote of the committee. A committee may

also appoint associate members. There is no limit on the number of associate members, but associate members do not have the right to vote at committee meetings.

A city committee is not separately elected, but is composed of the several ward committees in a city. At its organizational meeting, which is held between the 31st and 40th days after the presidential primary, the city committee is required to elect a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer.

### **Filing Officers' List and Acceptances**

After the organizational meeting, the secretary of each city, ward and town committee is required to file lists of officers and members, with their addresses. Additionally, in order to qualify for office, the treasurer of each committee is required to file a signed acceptance of the office of treasurer with the Office of Campaign and Political Finance. A treasurer has not fully qualified for office until such filing is complete. **To meet all of the above filing requirements, a reporting form, available from the Office of Campaign and Political Finance, must be filed with the four offices listed below. File the original report with the Office of Campaign and Political Finance, and file copies with the three other offices listed:**

- 1. Office of Campaign and Political Finance**, One Ashburton Place, Room 411, Boston, Massachusetts 02108 (617-979-8300);
- 2. Secretary of the Commonwealth**, Elections Division, One Ashburton Place, Room 1705, Boston, Massachusetts 02108 (617-727-2828);
- 3. State Party Committee Headquarters**; and
- 4. City/town clerk or Election Commission.**

Ward committee secretaries are also required to file such lists with the city committee chairperson within ten days after organizing.

### **Failure to Organize**

If a city or town committee fails to meet and organize between the 31st and 40th day after the presidential primary, the state committee is required to set a time and place for an organizational meeting and to appoint a person to preside. In the event that a ward committee fails to organize, the city committee must do the same for the ward committee.

If a ward or town committee fails to meet and organize when notified to do so, the election of each is void, and the city committee or state committee, respectively, must appoint persons who are registered voters in the ward or town and enrolled members of the political party to the committee.

**MASSACHUSETTS ELECTION CALENDAR  
WARD AND TOWN COMMITTEES  
2020 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY**

Calendar of Events	Deadline Dates
Last day for city and town committees to notify the Secretary of the Commonwealth of the number of members to be elected to each ward and town committee.	Thursday, August 1, 2019
Nomination papers available at the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Elections Division, and thereafter at city and town clerk's offices.	Tuesday, August 6, 2019
Last day for a candidate running for ward or town committee to enroll in the party.	Tuesday, August 20, 2019
5:00 p.m. last day and hour to submit nomination papers to local registrars of voters and election commissioners for certification of signatures. (Registrars must sign both sides of the nomination papers.)	Friday, November 8, 2019
5:00 p.m. last day and hour for registrars to complete certification of signatures for ward, town, and state committee.	Friday, November 15, 2019
5:00 p.m. last day and hour to file papers with the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Elections Division.	Tuesday, November 19, 2019
5:00 p.m. last day and hour to file withdrawals of or objections to nomination papers with the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Elections Division.	Friday, November 22, 2019
<b>PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY</b>	<b>Tuesday, March 3, 2020</b>

*For further information, please contact:*

Secretary of the Commonwealth - Elections Division  
 One Ashburton Place, Room 1705  
 Boston, Massachusetts 02108  
 617-727-2828 or 800-462-VOTE

