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The Role of a Borough Councilperson

Residents of the borough elect councilpersons, who serve their community by addressing local issues, ensuring good governance, and fostering a vibrant, thriving community. They must be approachable, informed, and proactive in their duties, often balancing multiple tasks while being accessible to the citizens they represent. A Borough Councilperson plays a critical role in local government, acting as a bridge between the residents and the municipal administration. A councilperson's primary responsibilities as a member of the borough council include legislating, policymaking, and overseeing the effective delivery of public services. [<Top>](#)

Legislation and Policy Making

- Drafting, debating, and voting on local laws and ordinances that impact the community, as well as developing policies to guide the administration of borough services such as sanitation, police protection, and public works.

Budget oversight

- Examining and approving the borough's annual budget and ensuring the efficient and transparent allocation of public funds.

Constituent Services

- Acting as a point of contact for residents to express their concerns, suggestions, and complaints about local issues; helping constituents navigate municipal services; and advocating on their behalf.

Community Development

- Promoting economic development initiatives to enhance the local economy and supporting community projects and programs that improve the quality of life for residents





Representation

- Representing the borough at county, regional, or state meetings and functions, as well as collaborating with other council members and government officials to address broader issues affecting the borough and neighboring areas.

Transparency and Accountability

- To foster trust and accountability, maintain transparency in all actions and decisions, participate in public council meetings, provide reports, and keep the community informed about ongoing projects and initiatives. [<Top>](#)

Eligibility and requirements

To run for the position of Borough Council Person, candidates must meet specific eligibility criteria. State and local laws typically establish these criteria to ensure that candidates have a vested interest in the community and are adequately prepared to represent their constituents. [<Top>](#)

Age

- Candidates must meet a minimum age requirement, which is often 18 years old or older, at the time of filing their candidacy. Some jurisdictions may have a higher age requirement, so it is important to verify with local election officials.

Residency

- Candidates must live in the borough they wish to represent. The required duration of residency can vary, but typically, candidates need to have lived in the borough for at least one year prior to the election. Proof of residency may be required, such as a driver's license, utility bill, or other official documents listing the candidate's address within the borough.



Voter Registration

- Candidates must be registered voters in the borough where they are running for office. This validates their voting rights and, consequently, their election eligibility. The voter registration must be valid and not subject to any restrictions, such as suspension or revocation.

Disqualifying Factors

- Candidates cannot hold public office due to certain criminal convictions, convictions for corruption or electoral fraud, or other legal impediments. Candidates should ensure that they do not hold any other office or employment that might conflict with their role as councilperson, as dictated by local statutes.

Good Standing

- Some jurisdictions require candidates to be in good financial standing, meaning they should not have any unresolved federal, state, or local tax obligations. Candidates might also need to demonstrate that they do not have significant outstanding debts or legal judgments that could impact their ability to serve.

Verification Process

- Candidates should verify their eligibility by consulting with the local election board or the municipal clerk's office. These entities can provide detailed information about the specific requirements for candidacy, including any documentation needed to establish eligibility. Additionally, attending pre-election meetings or workshops hosted by these offices can be invaluable in clarifying any uncertainties regarding eligibility criteria. [<Top>](#)

Preparing to file candidacy

Reporting on nominations and announcements

Candidate announcement

- Candidates typically announce their intention to run several months before the filing deadline in order to start fundraising and campaigning early. While there is no formal deadline for this announcement, an early declaration can be advantageous.

Filing nomination papers

- Typically, the deadline for filing nomination papers is the tenth Tuesday prior to the primary election. For exact dates, candidates should consult the Pennsylvania Department of State's election calendar or the local election office. [<Top>](#)

Necessary documents and paperwork

Nomination form

- Candidates must obtain and file the official nomination petition, available from the County Election Office or the Pennsylvania Department of State's website. The local election office can confirm the exact number of signatures required on this form from registered voters in the borough.

Financial disclosure forms

- Candidates are required to file a Statement of Financial Interests with the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission, along with their nomination petitions. This form details the candidate's financial interests to ensure transparency and prevent conflicts of interest.

Candidacy Affidavit

- This document attests that the candidate meets all qualifications to run for office.

Campaign Finance Forms

- These are used to track and report all campaign contributions and expenditures in accordance with state law.

Gathering the necessary signatures

Candidates must collect a specific number of signatures from registered voters within [REDACTED] Borough. The exact number can vary based on the position and the election year, typically ranging from 10 to 100 signatures. Candidates should confirm the exact requirement with the [REDACTED] County Election Office. [<Top>](#)

Guidelines for valid signatures

- Signatures from registered voters in [REDACTED] Borough are required.
- Each signer must list their address as registered in their voter registration.
- Signatures should be legible and match the name as registered.
- Duplicate signatures, or those from outside the borough, are invalid and will not count toward the total.

Strategies for collecting signatures

- Door-to-Door Canvassing: This involves visiting voters at their homes to explain your candidacy and request their signature. It's an effective method for personal engagement and allows you to discuss your platform directly with constituents.
- Organizing Signature Events: Host events in community centers, parks, or during local gatherings where you can meet multiple voters at once. Ensure you advertise these events well in advance to maximize attendance.

- Utilizing Social Gatherings: Attend local events, fairs, and community meetings where you can interact with a large number of borough residents at once, increasing your chances of collecting more signatures.
- Tips for verifying and organizing signatures
- Regularly verify that the signatures correspond to registered voters by checking against voter registration lists, which can often be obtained from the local election office.
- Remove any duplicates or ineligible signatures to ensure all entries on your petition are valid.
- Keep records organized by collecting contact information along with signatures to follow up if needed. Use a spreadsheet or database to track the status of your signature collection efforts, noting any issues with specific entries.
- Always adhere to legal guidelines regarding signature collection, including respecting privacy and not coercing signatures.
- Be aware of any deadlines for submitting petitions and plan your signature collection schedule accordingly.

Building a campaign team

When assembling your campaign team, consider both experience and passion for local governance. Diverse skills and backgrounds can enhance problem-solving and outreach efforts. To foster a unified and effective team environment, ensure that each team member understands their role as well as the campaign's overall goals. [<Top>](#)

Campaign Manager

- The campaign manager acts as the primary point of contact between the candidate and other stakeholders. They oversee all aspects of the campaign, including strategy, day-to-day operations, and coordination of team efforts. They are essential to the campaign's success. This role involves strategic decision-making, day-to-day campaign management, and ensuring that all campaign activities align with the candidate's goals. A competent campaign manager can anticipate issues, manage crises, and keep the campaign focused and motivated. Selecting



a campaign manager with strong organizational skills, experience in local politics, and a deep understanding of the community can make a significant difference in the outcome of the election. [<Top>](#)

Treasurer

- The individual manages campaign finances, ensures compliance with campaign finance laws, and handles all financial reporting.

Communications Director

- Develops and manages the campaign's messaging across various platforms, including press releases, social media, and advertising. Handles media relations and public communications.

Volunteer Coordinator

- Recruits, organizes, and manages volunteers. The individual is responsible for scheduling volunteer activities and ensuring the effective use of volunteer resources. [<Top>](#)

Field Director

- Organizes canvassing, phone banking, and other voter outreach efforts. He analyzes data to effectively target campaign efforts.

Digital Manager

- Manages the campaign's online presence, including social media accounts, email campaigns, and the campaign website. The campaign manager engages with constituents online and drives digital fundraising.



Tips for recruiting and managing volunteers

Recruitment

- Utilize social media, local community events, and word-of-mouth to reach potential volunteers. Clearly communicate the campaign's mission and the roles available to attract like-minded individuals. [<Top>](#)

Engagement

- Provide training sessions to volunteers to ensure they are well-prepared and motivated. Regularly update volunteers on campaign progress to keep them engaged and feeling valued.


Recognition

- Recognize volunteers' contributions through recognition events, thank-you notes, or public acknowledgements. As an incentive, consider offering leadership roles or increased responsibility to highly engaged volunteers.

Developing your campaign platform

A strong, relevant campaign platform is essential for connecting with voters and addressing their needs and concerns. This chapter provides guidance on identifying key community issues, engaging with the public to gather insights, crafting a resonant message, and ensuring your platform is inclusive and focused on community improvement. [<Top>](#)

Ways to identify key issues in your community

- Conduct surveys, town hall meetings, and informal discussions to gather feedback on the issues most important to the residents of  Borough.
- Attend community events and engage in daily interactions with locals to hear firsthand what matters to them. Consider using social media analytics to understand the concerns raised by

the community online. Consult with local business owners, school boards, law enforcement, and social services to gain a broad perspective on the community's needs.

- Through canvassing initiatives, knock on doors and ask people about their concerns.
- Review local government reports, crime statistics, economic data, and previous election results to identify trending issues and areas needing attention.
- Engage with community leaders and activists who have deep insights into ongoing issues and potential solutions. [<Top>](#)
- Develop clear and concise messaging that directly addresses the identified issues and outlines your proposed solutions. Use language that is accessible and relatable to all constituents, avoiding jargon and overly complex explanations. [<Top>](#)
- Craft messages that not only inform, but also evoke an emotional response by highlighting personal stories or testimonials that exemplify the issues and your commitment to resolving them. Show empathy and understanding for the challenges faced by the community.

Tips for inclusive and community-focused platforms

Inclusivity

- Ensure your platform addresses the needs of all community segments, including marginalized or underrepresented groups. Propose policies that promote equality, accessibility, and opportunity for everyone, regardless of their background. [<Top>](#)

Community Focus

- Emphasize community empowerment and development through local initiatives and partnerships. Include plans for community centers, improved public services, local economic development, and environmental sustainability.

Feedback Mechanisms

- Incorporate ways to continuously receive and integrate community feedback into your platform, even as the campaign progresses.

- Show a commitment to adapting your approach based on community input and changing circumstances.
- There are regularly scheduled "listening tours" where you visit different parts of the borough to engage directly with citizens.
- Utilize social media platforms not only to broadcast your message but also to listen to and respond to community concerns.
- Consider establishing a campaign hotline or email where constituents can directly share their thoughts and concerns. [<Top>](#)

Campaigning Effectively

Strategies for effective campaigning

Visibility

- Increase the candidate's visibility by participating in or sponsoring local events, parades, and festivals. These are opportunities to meet voters, understand their concerns, and present the campaign's goals.

Personal Connection

- Door-to-door campaigning allows for direct, personal interaction with voters, making it one of the most effective ways to build relationships and trust.

Targeted Approach

- Use voter lists and data analytics to target receptive neighborhoods and households, maximizing efficiency and impact.

Training Volunteers

- Ensure that all volunteers are well-trained, polite, and knowledgeable about the campaign's platform, key messages, and the candidate's background.



Networking

- Use these events for networking with local leaders, businesses, and influencers who can amplify your campaign's message.

Volunteer Involvement

- Encourage campaign volunteers to participate in these events to spread enthusiasm and gather support.

Repetition of Core Messages

- Consistently repeat core messages to ensure they resonate with voters. Repetition helps solidify the candidate's stance and ensures that key points are remembered.

Follow-Up

- After door-to-door visits or events, follow up with potential supporters through thank you notes, emails, or calls. This can reinforce the positive interaction and increase the likelihood of their support.

Adapt and Respond

- Be ready to adapt strategies based on feedback and changing circumstances. Monitoring social media trends and voter responses can provide valuable insights that guide campaign adjustments.

Managing campaign finances

Effective management of campaign finances is crucial for any political campaign, ensuring transparency, legal compliance, and ethical conduct. This chapter covers the essentials of opening a campaign bank account, understanding contribution and expenditure limits, and adhering to legal and ethical standards. [<Top>](#)



Opening a Campaign Bank Account

Account creation

- Choose a bank that offers services suited to campaign needs, such as online banking and simple access to detailed statements. Open the account under the campaign's official name to ensure that all transactions are clearly distinct from personal finances.

Account documentation


- Provide the bank with your campaign's Employer Identification Number (EIN), which you can obtain from the IRS. Typically, you will also need to provide personal identification, the campaign's registration documents, and possibly a resolution from the campaign authorizing you to open the account.

Account management

- Designate a trustworthy treasurer or finance officer responsible for managing the campaign finances. To maintain a clean financial record, ensure that all campaign income and expenditures flow through this account. [<Top>](#)

Understanding Limits on Contributions and Expenditures

Limits

- Familiarize yourself with federal, state, and local regulations regarding contribution limits. Depending on the jurisdiction and the office you are seeking, these can vary significantly. The county or city level in Pennsylvania should verify local campaign contribution limits as they may impose specific restrictions.
- Some localities may have expenditure limits for campaign spending. Verify if such limits apply in  Borough and plan your budget accordingly. Keep detailed records of all expenditures to ensure that they do not exceed these limits and are properly reported. [<Top>](#)

Legal Compliance and Ethical Considerations

Campaign finance laws

- Adhere strictly to all campaign finance laws, which include reporting all contributions and expenditures on the schedules mandated by local election boards. Maintain detailed and accurate records of financial activities to ensure transparency in reporting. [<Top>](#)

Ethical Fundraising

- Engage in ethical fundraising practices, avoiding any actions that could be perceived as offering favors in exchange for campaign contributions. Maintain clear boundaries between campaign requests and the potential promises of political action or influence.

Handling Donations

- Carefully screen donations to ensure they comply with legal standards, rejecting any contributions from prohibited sources. To maintain the campaign's integrity, return any contributions that exceed legal limits or that come from questionable sources. [<Top>](#)

Regular audits and reviews

Conduct regular audits of campaign finances to catch any discrepancies early and address them promptly. This not only helps to maintain legal compliance, but it also helps to build trust with your supporters by upholding high standards of accountability and transparency. [<Top>](#)

Pre-Primary Report - Due on the sixth Tuesday prior to the primary election.

Pre-Election Report - Due on the fifth Friday before the election.

Annual Report - Filed each year on January 31, covering the previous calendar year's activities.

Day of the Election

Election day is the culmination of all the hard work put into campaigning and is a crucial time for any candidate. This chapter outlines what to expect on election day and provides last-minute tips to boost voter turnout, ensuring a smooth and effective final push for the campaign. [<Top>](#)

What to Expect on Election Day

Poll monitoring

- Deploy trusted campaign volunteers to serve as poll watchers to monitor the voting process and ensure that it runs smoothly without any unfair practices. Poll watchers can provide assistance by answering questions about polling locations and voting procedures, but they must adhere to specific regulations regarding behavior at polling places.

Voter assistance

- Offer assistance to voters, such as transportation to polling places or information on voting procedures, especially in areas with historically low turnout. To prevent any perception of coercion or impropriety, make sure to provide all assistance in a non-partisan manner.

Communication lines are open

- Keep communication lines open with your team to address any last-minute issues that might arise at different polling locations. Be ready to respond quickly to any problems, such as reported voter suppression or misinformation spreading.

Prepare for media interactions

- You or a designated spokesperson should be prepared to interact with the media, giving updates about the campaign's perspective on voter turnout and any anticipated results. [<Top>](#)



Last-Minute Tips for Boosting Turnout

Increase visibility

- On election day, increase your visibility by having volunteers in high-traffic areas with signs encouraging people to vote. Use social media platforms to remind supporters to go to the polls, share images of campaign team members voting, and encourage followers to post about their votes with your campaign hashtags. [<Top>](#)

Direct voter contact

- Implement a robust get-out-the-vote (GOTV) strategy that includes phone calls, text messages, and door knocking up until the polls close. Focus on supporters who might need a reminder or extra motivation to vote. Personalized contact, such as direct phone calls or texts from the candidate, can be especially effective.

Utilize email and social media blasts

- Send out email blasts and social media posts throughout the day to remind your supporters about the importance of their vote and provide practical information, such as polling place locations and hours. Keep the tone upbeat and motivational, emphasizing the difference each vote can make.

Address transportation obstacles

Organize carpools or arrange transportation for voters who may face difficulties getting to polling stations. Partner with local businesses or community groups that might be able to provide transportation or support your efforts.

Thank your team and supporters

Throughout the day, make sure to thank your volunteers and staff who are working hard to ensure a successful election day. Expressing gratitude can boost morale and keep the team motivated until the polls close. [<Top>](#)



After the Election

The outcome of an election, whether victorious or not, marks the beginning of an important phase for candidates. This chapter provides guidance on the steps to take following the election results, detailing actions for both elected candidates and those who do not win, as well as advice on transitioning from campaigning to holding office. [<Top>](#)

Concession and support

- Offer a public concession to acknowledge the winner, demonstrating respect for the democratic process and maintaining a positive community spirit.
- If appropriate, offer to assist with the transition, sharing insights or resources accumulated during your campaign.

Evaluating the campaign

- Conduct a post-campaign analysis with your team to understand what worked, what didn't, and gather insights for future endeavors.
- Document these lessons, both as a resource for future campaigns and as a way to improve ongoing political engagement.

Maintaining engagement

- Continue to engage with the community and support local initiatives. Your involvement in local issues can still make a significant impact and prepare you for future opportunities.
- Consider staying active in local politics or community organizations to build your network and influence. [<Top>](#)



Transitioning from campaigning to holding office

Shift in focus

- The focus shifts from campaign promises to actual policy-making and governance. This involves a shift from persuasive campaigning to collaborative and pragmatic decision-making.

[<Top>](#)

Building relationships

- Establish and strengthen relationships with other council members, government officials, and community leaders to facilitate effective governance.

Continued learning and adaptation

- Embrace a mindset of continuous learning and adaptation to new challenges and responsibilities as you move from a candidate to a council member. [<Top>](#)

