A GUIDE TO RUNNING FOR LOCAL OFFICE IN GRAFTON
The League of Women Voters of Grafton
Introduction

The League of Women Voters of Grafton works to energize an informed citizenry to participate actively in the political process. We thank the Westford League for their fine guide which we used as a model.

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MAKING THE DECISION TO RUN

Running for office can be a rewarding experience and candidates gain tremendous knowledge about themselves personally as well as professionally.

One of the first steps for successfully running for office is to think through your decision to run. Do you feel a civic responsibility to contribute and make Grafton a better place to live? Do you feel that you could perhaps contribute more? Are you tenacious and thick-skinned enough to withstand criticism? Talk to people who are on boards to get their experience. Be clear on your motives for running, as you certainly will be asked. If you have been more focused on a single hot-button issue, be aware that if elected, you will be representing the town on many other issues that come before boards and committees, and you should be ready to continually exhibit that same level of passion and dedication.

Running for office involves hard work, time commitment, and good planning. The specific elected office and the number of candidates running will also determine the amount of time required. A contested Select Board race, for example, will require more effort than an uncontested Library Trustee race. If elected, serving on a board will require time to attend meetings, as well as preparing for them, and also require time to respond to town resident phone calls, emails, and requests.
ELECTED OFFICIALS

The Grafton Town Charter established seven elected boards or positions in our town government. The Blackstone Valley School District position is established by the School District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elected Position</th>
<th>Number of Seats</th>
<th>Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackstone Valley School District</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select Board</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Authority</td>
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<td>5 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Board</td>
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<td>3 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board of Library Trustees</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Committee</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Town Clerk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Town Moderator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 years</td>
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Select Board

(a) **Composition, Term of Office** - There shall be a Select Board consisting of five (5) members elected for terms of three years each, so arranged that the term of office of as nearly an equal number of members as is possible shall expire each year. The Select Board meets on the first and third Tuesday of each month.

(b) **Powers and Duties in General** - The executive powers of the town shall be vested in the select board which shall be deemed to be the chief executive office of the town. The board shall have all of the executive powers it is possible for a select board to have and to exercise. The select board shall be responsible for the formulation and promulgation of policy directives and guidelines to be followed by all town agencies serving under it and, in conjunction with other elected town officers and multiple member bodies, the development and promulgation of policy guidelines designed to bring all town agencies into harmony; provided, however,
that nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize any member of the select board, nor a majority of such members, to become involved in the day-to-day administration of any town agency. It is the intention of this provision that the select board shall act only through the adoption of broad policy guidelines which are to be implemented by officers and employees serving under it.

(c) **Licensing Authority** - The select board shall be the licensing board for the town and shall have a power to issue licenses as otherwise authorized by law, to make all necessary rules and regulations regarding the issuance of such licenses and to attach conditions and to impose restrictions on any such license as it may issue as it deems to be in the public interest, and to enforce all laws relating to all businesses for which it issues any licenses.

(d) **Appointment** - The select board shall appoint a town administrator, constables, the members of the board of appeals, the registrars of voters (but not the Town Clerk) and other election officers, the conservation commission, the industrial development finance authority, other members of multiple members bodies the functions of which do not involve direct operating responsibilities, but, are primarily policy making or advisory in nature, and individuals who are to serve as representatives or delegates of the town to the governing or advisory boards of regional or district authorities.

(e) **Investigations** - The select board may make investigations and may authorize the town administrator to investigate the affairs of the town and the conduct of any town agency including any doubtful claims against the town. The report of the results of such investigation shall be placed on file in the office of the select board and a report summarizing the results of such investigation shall be printed in the next annual town report.
**TOWN MODERATOR**

(a) **Term of Office** - A town moderator shall be elected to serve for the term of three years.

(b) **Powers and Duties** - The town moderator shall be the presiding officer of the town meeting, shall regulate its proceedings, decide all questions of order and shall have such other powers and duties as may be provided for that office by general law, by this charter, by by-law and by other vote of the town meeting.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

(a) **Composition, term of Office** - There shall be a school committee consisting of five members elected for terms of three years each, so arranged that the term of office of as nearly an equal number of members as is possible shall expire each year. The committee meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

(b) **Powers and Duties** - The school committee shall have all of the powers and duties school committees may have under the constitution and general laws of the commonwealth, and it shall have such additional powers and duties as may be authorized by this charter or by by-law. The powers of the school committee shall include, but are not intended to be limited to the following.

1. To appoint a superintendent of the schools and all other officers and employees connected with the schools, to fix their compensation, define their duties, make rules concerning their tenure of office and to discharge them;

2. To make all reasonable rules and regulations consistent with law for the administration and management of the public schools and for the conduct of its own business and affairs.
**TOWN CLERK**

(a) **Term of Office** - There shall be a Town Clerk elected for a term of three years.

(b) **Powers and Duties** - The Town Clerk shall be the keeper of vital statistics for the town; the custodian of the town seal; shall administer the oath of office to all persons, elected or appointed to any town office; shall issue such licenses and permits as are required by law to be issued by town clerks; supervise and manage the conduct of all elections and all other matters relating to elections be the clerk of the town meeting, keep its records and in the absence of the town moderator or deputy town moderator to preside pending the election of a temporary town moderator. The Town Clerk shall have such other powers and duties as are given to Town Clerks by general law, by this charter, by by-law or by other vote of the town meeting.

**PLANNING BOARD**

(a) **Composition, Term of Office** - There shall be a planning board consisting of five members elected for terms of three years each, so arranged that the term of office of as nearly an equal number of members as is possible shall expire each year. The Planning Board meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month.

(b) **Powers and Duties** - The planning board shall make careful studies of the resources, possibilities and needs of the town and shall make plans for the development of the town. The board shall have the power to make a comprehensive or master plan, setting forth in graphic and textual form policies to govern the future growth and development of the town. The board shall have the power to regulate the subdivision of land within the town by the adoption of rules and regulations. The planning board shall make recommendations to the town meeting on all proposed warrant articles which affect land use and development, including but not limited to proposals to amend the zoning by-law and zoning map. The planning board shall make an annual report, giving information regarding the condition of the town and any plans or proposals for its development and estimates of their costs. The planning board shall have all of the other powers and duties which are given to planning boards by general law, by this charter, by by-law or by other town meeting vote.
BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

(a) **Composition, Term of Office** - There shall be a board of library trustees consisting of seven members elected for terms of three years each, so arranged that the term of office of as nearly an equal number of members as is possible shall expire each year. The Board of Library Trustees meets the 4th Wednesday of each month.

(b) **Powers and Duties** - The board of library trustees shall have the custody and management of the public library and of all property of the town related to the said library. All funds of money and property that the town may receive by gift or bequest for the purpose of library support or maintenance shall be administered by the board in accordance with the provisions of any such gift or bequest. The board shall have all of the other powers and duties which are given to boards of library trustees by general law, by this charter, by by-law or by other town meeting vote.

GRAFTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

(a) **Composition, Term of Office** - There shall be a housing authority consisting of five (5) members, four (4) of these members shall be elected by the voters and one shall be appointed in the manner provided by general law. All of the members shall serve for five-year terms, so arranged that the term of office of one member shall expire each year. (b) **Powers and Duties** - The housing authority shall make studies of the housing needs of the community and shall provide programs to make available housing for families of low income and for elderly persons of low income. The housing authority shall have such other powers and duties as are given to housing authorities by general law.

BLACKSTONE VALLEY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BVT’s School Committee is comprised of 13 individuals, elected district-wide, with representation from each of member town. They oversee operations and set District policy. Members are elected locally every four years by ballot vote.
Members of elected boards may also serve on subcommittees to work on specific short-term projects for their boards. Some members may serve on behalf of their board as liaisons to committees to facilitate communication. (The Library Board of Trustees, for example, appoints one Trustee to attend the Friends of the Library monthly meetings.) This may increase the amount of meeting and preparation time involved.

If an elected board member resigns prematurely, the Selectmen and the board will jointly appoint an interim member to serve until the next town election, the following May, at which time the position becomes open but only for the remaining years of the original term.

See the town website or refer to the Annual Town Report for more information on these elected boards. The Town Charter describes how the town is to be governed under a select board.

A chart showing the relationship between elected officials, appointed officials, and town employees is at the end of this guide.
HOW TO START

Once you have made the decision to run for a specific position, talk to as many people as possible to understand the issues and topics that are important to them. Attend board meetings, talk to committee heads and board chairs to get their perspectives, and share your intention to run. Attending these sessions in person is also another opportunity to gain campaign visibility.

Watching committee meetings on Grafton Cable TV Channel and reading town-posted meeting minutes are additional ways to familiarize yourself with the issues and decisions being made.

Previous committee experience is always a plus, and you may consider first serving as an appointed member of a committee to gain experience and knowledge about the town’s operations. Residents interested in volunteering for a committee can use the town website to reach the online Citizen Activity Form.

You can also review the town website to familiarize yourself with posted material on current town budgets, the Comprehensive Master Plan, the Open Meeting Law, and other information that could help you.

When considering what town board to run for, consider the meeting schedule of that board. Boards have a regular schedule (for example, the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m.) Be sure you are able to make these meetings before deciding to run for a position.

NOMINATION PAPERS

In order to run for elected office in Grafton, you have to get your name on the ballot for the May town election. This is accomplished by collecting a minimum of 50 valid signatures of registered Grafton voters. It is recommended that you submit at least 75 signatures.

The Town Clerk will provide hard copy Town Nomination Papers and will send other documents you will need to your email. This letter is included in the Town Clerks documents:
Dear Candidate:

So you have decided to run for public office in 2020. How exciting! Enclosed you will find some documents to help you along the way:

- The political calendar will give you all the important dates for the election year 2020. The most important date you need to remember is Tuesday, March 31, 2020. That is the date you need to return your nomination papers to this office for certification.
- Excerpts from the sign bylaw regulating campaign signs
- Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance’s Campaign Finance Guide. This will guide you through the process if you decide to form a political committee and raise and expend funds for your campaign.
- Local Candidates can now use OCPF’s R7 to file their Campaign Finance forms directly to the state online. For more information, visit: https://www.ocpfreporter.us/onlineorganization/signup.
- Form CPF M102 – Campaign Finance Report and Instructions – If you decide to form a committee and raise and expend funds, this report will need to be filed on the 8th day preceding the election (May 11), disclosing all activity through 10 days before the due date (May 1). Then file again 30 days after the election (due June 18) showing all activity from the date of the last report through 10 days before the due date (June 8). Then, the final report for the year will need to be filed on or before January 20, showing all activity through Dec. 31. **The candidate is personally liable for a $25 per day late fine for each day a report is late.**

IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO FORM A COMMITTEE OR RAISE OR EXPEND FUNDS, YOU NEED NOT FILE THE FORM M102, YOU CAN COME TO THE TOWN CLERK’S OFFICE AND SIGN A BLANKET FORM CPM M-102-0.

You must secure 50 signatures of registered voters in Grafton in order to appear on the ballot. It is suggested that you secure more than the 50 minimum signatures, as some may not certify.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the office. Jayne, Paul or I will be happy to assist you.

Good luck in the Town Election on May 19!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kandy L. Lavallee, Town Clerk
It takes time to collect signatures, but it is acceptable to have others help you circulate the papers. (Be wary of duplicate signatures, however.) Meetings of town boards and committees are good locations for collecting signatures. Board members and those attending their meetings understand the process and are usually willing to help.

Collecting signatures is an opportunity to meet the voters and to introduce yourself and your positions. Aim to fill sheets completely and return them to the Town Clerk before the deadline of 49 days before the election. This year that date is **Tuesday, March 31**, before 5 p.m.

When you are at the Town Clerk’s office, consider asking for a town’s full voter list and past election voter activity. There is a lead time for that report and if the report can be e-mailed there will be no cost.

You may bypass the above nomination process by running a write-in campaign. Your name doesn’t have to appear on the ballot—your supporters can write in your name and address.

**DATES TO REMEMBER**

Town elections are set by town bylaws with elections held on the first Tuesday in May. In unusual cases, town elections can be moved slightly to correspond with a state special election.

The above Town Clerk’s letter envelope lists important dates for your campaign documents. Other dates to remember are:

- The League helps inform voters about the candidates in local elections. The league’s Candidates’ Night is planned for April 26.

- Last day to register to vote for Annual Town Election: 20 days prior to the election is April 21.

- **ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION - May 19, 2020**
  - Polls open 8 am – 8 pm.
  - Precincts 1, 2, and 3 vote at the Grafton Middle School
  - Precincts 4 & 5 vote at the Millbury Street Elementary School

- Elected officers need to be sworn into office before their first meeting of the board.
CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Based on the competition in your race, a team can be helpful in sharing the burden of organizing and implementing your election activities. Try to gain the support of the town’s influential people before they announce their support for your opponents.

As early as possible in your campaign, generate a list of potential financial and political supporters to contact personally. Add names to this list as the campaign progresses and the word of your candidacy spreads. Know that a good portion of campaign expenses may come out of your own pocket. Consider organizing a kick-off event to generate support and to raise money. Invite absolutely everyone, particularly those who may be wavering in their support for you.

Below is a suggested list of campaign activities. Not all campaigns will warrant this depth and breadth. Running in a contested race with contentious issues can require much time, money, and hard work. On the other hand, running in an uncontested race can require little effort and no money at all.

- **Campaign Manager** You may want to recruit someone to help manage the overall progress of the campaign, freeing you up for other candidate activities.

- **Treasurer (Required by state law)** If you collect or expend money on your campaign, you are required by law to have a treasurer.

  The treasurer will control and record the flow of campaign contributions and expenses, and take on the responsibility of maintaining financial records and filling out the required campaign finance reports. Campaign expenses may include lawn signs, “Dear Friend” cards, and position mailings.

  The treasurer will help you set up a campaign account at a local bank. Find a bank manager who has done this before.

- **Media** An experienced person to organize your media outreach can be a real plus. They can help design lawn and campaign signs, format campaign literature and mailings, and take advantage of various electronic and social media for your campaign, such as creating an attractive Facebook page, using texting, Twitter, and other social media.
• **Lawn Signs**  You may want help to coordinate all activities associated with posting of lawn signs: maintaining a list of those who agree to have lawn signs, those who have them for distribution, and those who will plant the signs on your supporters’ lawns. Design your sign so that it can be reused at your next election. (For example, do not add dates to your signs, or use the slogan “It’s time for a change!”, if you might reuse the same signs in a re-election bid.) And don’t forget to pick up your signs immediately after the election.

• **Visibility**  Consider maintaining a list of volunteer campaign sign holders, those supporters who will hold your campaign signs at selected times and locations showing their enthusiastic support for you.

On Election Day, enlist sign holders throughout the day to greet voters at the polling locations. By state law these signs cannot be held closer than 150 feet from the entrance to any polling location and they cannot be left unattended.

• **Photography**  Look to your talented friends and neighbors to help create a professional look to your campaign literature and your Facebook page.

• **Publicity**  A savvy wordsmith can help craft your position statements and your letters to the editor so that your public image is clear and appealing. At the least, have someone proofread all campaign material and mailings to look for inadvertent misstatements and not-so-obvious blunders.

**CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

Campaign finance regulations at the state level specify how your campaign needs to handle and report any finances raised as part of your campaign. Even if you do not decide to raise or spend any money on your campaign, there are three campaign finance reports that must be filed with the Town Clerk’s office.

If you decide to raise and spend money as part of your campaign, there are procedures you need to follow for managing, spending, and reporting money in your campaign. You should be familiar with the state law governing this area. The state Guide is provided in the Town Clerk’s envelope.

There is a short form to file if you have no campaign organization and have collected and spent no money on your election. Every elected office holder must file an end of-the-year report even if elected in a prior year.
PUBLICITY

Take every opportunity to build your brand and make yourself visible and your positions known. The type of position and campaign you are running will determine to what degree you pursue these activities, but when in doubt, more publicity is better than less.

• Attend events in town that provide an opportunity to speak to Grafton voters.

• Send a press release to all media including The Grafton News.

• Solicit the support of friends and neighbors to place signs on high-visibility, private properties in high-traffic areas in town.

• Create a broad distribution list if you choose to mail campaign flyers or cards. Include hand-written notes if possible.

• Put together a broad contact list for communicating via electronic media and use it to get out your message. On Election Day, email, text, or tweet your supporters to remind them to vote!

• Create a Facebook page, and get your friends and supporters to “Like” it. Post regularly.

• Place an ad in the local papers or online, though traditionally this is not often done in town elections

LWV Candidates’ Night

Whether or not you’re running in a contested race, consider attending this event, since the moderator will announce that you declined the opportunity to participate if you choose not to be there. Voters deserve the opportunity to get to know you better and hear what you want to accomplish once you take office. The League will send you an invitation to participate which includes details about the event. Come prepared and understand that the event is recorded and will be repeatedly played on Grafton Cable TV, allowing for much broader audience viewing. Both of these activities are opportunities to get your positions and personality before the voters for free.
**Other Tips**

- Generate a timeline to organize your events, those that you control, such as letters to the editor, and those you cannot, such as Candidates’ Night. Use the election time line published on the town website as the basis for your scheduling.

- Learn the news media deadlines and plan accordingly.

- Consider scheduling campaign events such as: an announcement in the local media, supporters’ letters to the editor (one a week would be ideal), town wide mailings, posting the first campaign signs, sending “Dear Friend” cards, a kick-off party, and an election celebration.

- Keep press releases short and simple. Include most essential information up front, to plan for the potential of the article being cut back. Include a photo.

**CAMPAIGNING**

There are many ways to hit the campaign trail. Choose those activities that are most comfortable to you.

- Knocking on doors is one traditional way. Canvass neighborhoods, listen to the issues that are important to people, be sincere, and ask for their support.

- Attend as many public events as possible and introduce yourself to other attendees.

- Make the phone/social media your friend. Obtain a list of potential supporters and call/text them. Introduce your candidacy, your position, and ask for their vote on Election Day.

- Have friends and supporters organize small house parties for a more personal meet and greet. Whatever your style, build relationships and make a connection. Look for opportunities to seek common ground, and value all ideas brought to the table.
FUNDRAISING

Fundraising can be one of the most awkward activities for most candidates. Although your budget may not be high, you will most likely need some amount of funds for day-to-day campaign activities. For example, you may need postage for vote cards, as well as thank you notes to those who made contributions to your campaign.

There are limits for donations. For more information on individual limits for donations refer to the state guide that is included in the Town Clerk’s envelope of candidates.

CONCLUSION

The League encourages you to consider running for local office. It can be an incredibly rewarding experience. Grafton is very fortunate to have many dedicated volunteers, both elected and appointed. Whether you want to run to address a concern you have, or just to become more involved in the town, running for local office is a way to learn more about yourself and your town. The League hopes that this Guide starts you on the path to a successful run for local office.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Town of Grafton
grafton-ma.gov
Town Clerk’s page has election information

The Office of Campaign and Political Finance
One Ashburton Place, Room 411
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 979-8300 or 1-800-462-OCPF
mass.gov/ocpf

Massachusetts General Laws, Chapters 50–56 are available in local libraries and on the internet at:
mass.gov

Massachusetts Secretary of State Elections Division
www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleidx.htm