

Candidates Forums

Who: All candidates running for elected office (selectmen, budget committee, library trustees, school board, etc.)

What: A moderated forum (not a debate!) that gives candidates an opportunity to share with the community their reasons for running and their positions on current local issues. Also, an opportunity for the community to get to know those running so they can make informed decisions on election day.

Where: If space allows, the library in an open area where a long table for the candidates to sit at, a podium for the moderator, and chairs set up in rows for attendees.

When: In Bristol we have hosted ours on Saturdays at 2pm. They typically run for 1.5-2 hours with people mingling for 30 minutes or so after.

What you will need:

- Official list of all candidates running and their mailing addresses from your town clerk
- Invitations to all candidates
- RSVP sheet so that when candidates call, staff can mark whether they will be attending or not
- Promotion (this is one you definitely want to get in the local newspaper, as well as regular channels such as posters, newsletter, etc.)
- Moderator (someone outside of the library who has experience facilitating conversation or who has been a moderator and is perceived by the community to be a politically neutral figure)
- Questions for the candidates (open statements, their stance on current hot-button issues)
- Refreshments (Friends group, volunteers can help with this)
- Someone with a timer/stopwatch to time the responses and notify candidates with a wave of the hand and/or a red piece of paper that their time is running out or is out.

Other tips:

Invite the town to have the person in charge of the local access channel to record the event to be shown on television leading up to elections

Find people who are involved in the town who may be able and interested in helping coordinate the moderator, promotion, etc.

Invite your local political reporter (as a former journalist, I know this is an easy way to get a great and timely story without much legwork)

Respectfully submitted,

Brittany Overton
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