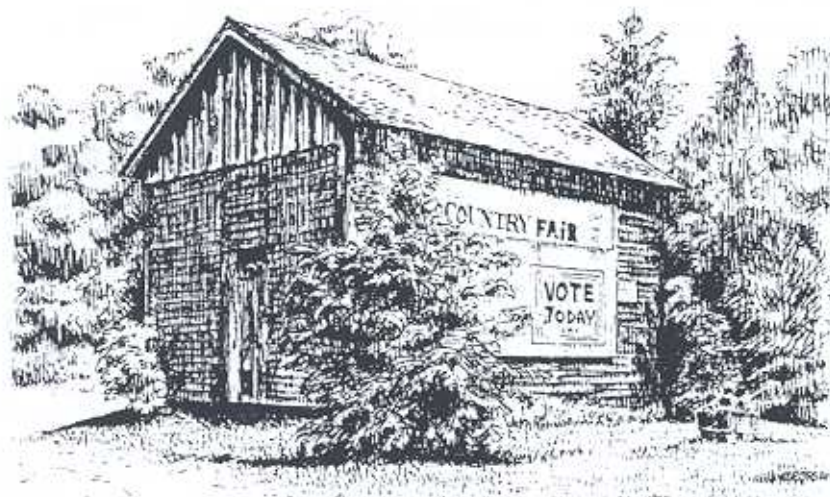


LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WESTON

GUIDE
TO
LOCAL ELECTIONS



ONION BARN c 1830 AND COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

Elective and Appointive Offices
Town Committees
Local Candidate Selection Process

TOWN GOVERNMENT/TOWN MEETING

The Town Meeting is a link with history, growing out of the type of decision-making first used in the American colonies over 300 years ago. It is the purest form of democracy—one person, one vote—and has been the foundation of Weston's form of government since incorporation in 1787.

The Town Meeting functions as the town's legislature and every qualified voter is therefore a legislator of the town. Qualified voters are all persons registered to vote in Weston, as well as U.S. citizens 18 years or older who own property in Weston assessed at \$1,000 or more.

How town government works is prescribed by the Town Charter and the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut. The Charter first became effective in 1967 and was revised in 1979. It provides that the Town Meeting shall act on the proposed annual town budget, certain other financial, real estate, and contractual matters, and other important proposals which may be brought before it.

Town Meetings may be called either by the Selectmen or by a petition of not less than 50 qualified voters. Final action at all Town Meetings is taken by a majority of those qualified voters present and voting.

ELECTIVE AND APPOINTED OFFICES

While most legislative power is vested in the Town Meeting, the remaining legislative power is vested in an elected Board of Selectmen. The First Selectman is the chief executive and administrative officer of the town who presides at Board of Selectmen meetings and initiates the annual town budget process.

The Board of Selectmen enacts and amends ordinances, creates, changes or abolishes agencies, makes official appointments, oversees the operation of town government and, at the direction of the First Selectman, is responsible for periodic reviews of Town needs. It has limited financial powers. The Town Charter provides a method by which actions of the Board of Selectmen may be overruled by a Town Meeting.

Selectmen and other town officials holding elective office are elected for two-, four-, or six-year terms at the November general election held in odd-numbered years. An exception is the election of the Registrars of Voters, who are elected for two-year terms during the biennial State elections held in even numbered years.

On Boards and Commissions, either elected or appointed, no more than a bare majority (a majority of one) may be of the same political party. (Exception: No more than half of the Justices of the Peace and members of the Panel of Moderators may be of the same political party.)

AD HOC COMMITTEES

Ad hoc committees may be created for specific purposes. Members have no formal term of office and the make-up of ad hoc committees need not satisfy Charter requirements concerning minority party representation. These committees disband when their work has been completed.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Two-Year Term

- Board of Selectmen (3)
 - First Selectman (Chief Executive and Administrative officer of the Town)
 - Selectman (Votes cast for unsuccessful candidate for First Selectman are included in determining election to the Board of Selectmen)
- Tax Collector
- Registrars of Voters (2)
(1 Democrat, 1 Republican)

Four-Year Term

- Town Clerk
- Board of Education (7)
- Board of Tax Review (3)
- Planning & Zoning Commission (7)
- Zoning Board of Appeals (5, 3 alternates)
- Board of Police Commissioners (7)
- Justices of the Peace * (10)

Six-Year Term

- Board of Finance (7)

APPOINTED OFFICIALS

One -Year Term

- Municipal Animal Control Officer
- Jury Committee (3)
- Municipal Agent for the Elderly
- Tree Warden

Two -Year Term

- Treasurer
- Assistant Treasurer
- Civil Preparedness Director
- Town Attorney
- Assistant Town Clerks (3)
- Community Services Advisory Council (7)
- Commission for the Elderly (7)
- Deputy Registrars of Voters (2)
- Southwestern Regional Mental Health Board
- Communications Center Committee (5)
- Cultural Events Committee

Staggered Term

- Building Committee (7)
(4 for 3 years, 3 for 2 years)

Three-Year Term

- Westport-Weston Health District (1)

Four-Year Term

- Assessor
- Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector
- Library Board (9)
- Parks & Recreation Commission (7)
- Conservation Commission (7)
- Panel of Moderators (4)

Five-Year Term

- Historic District Commission (5, 3 alternates)
- Building Board of Appeals (5)

Indefinite Appointments

- Fire Marshal
- South West Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) (2)
- Weston Health Committee (5)

* Elected by party caucus in even-numbered years

TOWN COMMITTEES

The Democratic and Republican political parties in Weston each have a Town Committee traditionally comprised of 25 members.* Members are elected every two years (even-numbered years) by the party membership at the party caucus called for that specific purpose. Copies of each party's rules are available at the Town Clerk's office.

THE TOWN COMMITTEE . . .

- Represents all party members in town
- Selects a slate of candidates for local elective office
- Recommends individuals for appointive office
- Represents the town at state political conventions
- Works for the success of the party and its candidates
- Raises and distributes campaign funds
- Promotes party programs and activities

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF A TOWN COMMITTEE . . .

- Notice of Committee vacancies appears in local newspapers
- Interested party members contact Town Committee by a specified date

DEMOCRATIC

- Candidate Search Committee puts together a slate
- Slate is presented to party caucus for vote
- Nominations from the floor are in order

REPUBLICAN

- Names of all interested people are put on a list (no screening)
- Anyone who has failed to respond by date required can present a signed petition to the Town Committee before caucus, in accordance with party rules, and that name is then placed on the ballot
- List is presented to party caucus for vote - no nominations from the floor.

* Political parties are listed alphabetically throughout this Guide.

SELECTION PROCESS FOR LOCAL ELECTIVE OFFICE

DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE SELECTION

I. IN TOWN COMMITTEE . . .

Democrats

- Advertisements or notices describing the position are placed in local newspapers by the Town Committee's Nominating (Search) Committee
- Potential candidates are interviewed and screened
- Qualified candidates are recommended by Nominating Committee to Town Committee
- Town Committee endorses each candidate, creating a SLATE
- SLATE is presented to party CAUCUS for approval

Republicans

- Advertisements or notices describing the position are placed in local newspapers by Town Committee
- Qualified candidates are interviewed by the Town Committee
- Town Committee endorses each candidate, creating a SLATE
- SLATE is presented to party CAUCUS for approval

II. AT CAUCUS (open to all party members) . . .

- Town Committee-endorsed SLATE presented
- Challengers (those *not* endorsed by Town Committee) may be nominated as follows:

Democrats

- Nominations may be made from the floor

Republicans

- Challenge petition submitted to Town Committee before caucus, in accordance with party rules
- Name is then presented to caucus as a "challenge" candidate

THE PARTY CANDIDATES WHO APPEAR ON THE ELECTION DAY BALLOT ARE SELECTED BY THOSE PARTY MEMBERS VOTING AT CAUCUS.

III. CHALLENGES TO PARTY SLATE . . .

PRIMARY

Persons interested in becoming candidates *with party endorsement* who are not selected at the party caucus for inclusion on their party's slate, may *petition for a challenge primary*.

THE WINNER OF THE PRIMARY BECOMES THE CANDIDATE ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT.

UNAFFILIATED CANDIDATE SELECTION

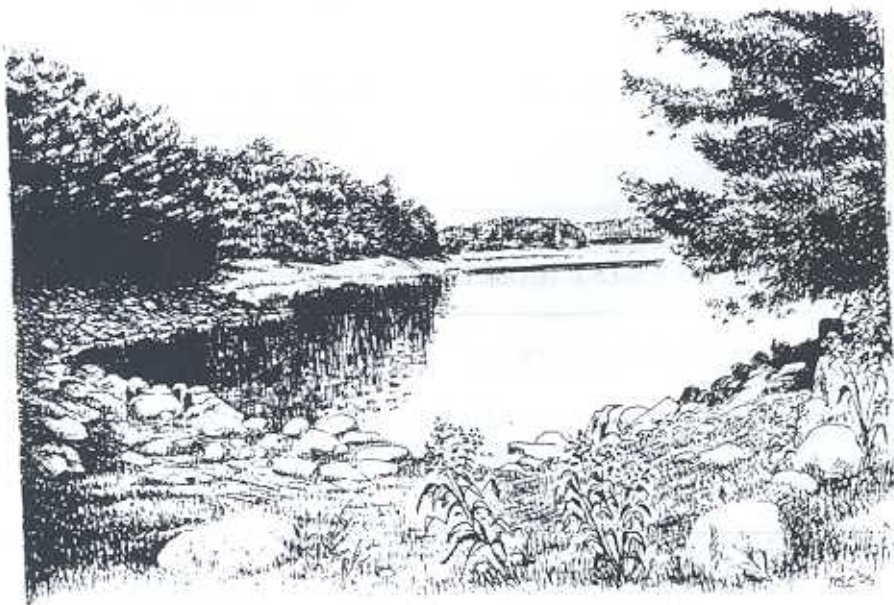
I. By Petition

Persons interested in being candidates for local office who are unaffiliated with a party and those who may be party members but wish to run without party endorsement may petition to have their names placed on the November ballot.

Specific information on current petition procedures, signature and filing requirements, must be obtained from the Town Clerk and/or the Secretary of State.

II. By Endorsement

An unaffiliated voter can be endorsed by either party as a candidate through each party's normal selection process.



SAUGATUCK RESERVOIR

POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATION ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Except for the Board of Selectmen, which is usually contested, it has become local party custom to present on the slate only as many candidates as *can be seated* (safe-seat candidates). Even though the party is entitled to present on the slate as many candidates as voters can vote for (full slate), *most often candidates selected at Weston's party caucuses are unopposed on election day.*

- The majority party in Weston is the party with the greatest number of registered voters.
- Connecticut State statutes provide for minority party representation on each Board and Commission.
- Weston's Town Charter further mandates that any party can have only a *bare majority* on any Board or Commission.

EXAMPLE

7-member Board or Commission

- 4 seats party A(majority)
- 3 seats Party B(minority)

When 4 seats are up for election (2 of each party)*:

VOTERS MAY VOTE FOR 4 CANDIDATES
EACH PARTY MAY PRESENT 4 CANDIDATES

BUT...

PARTY A (majority)

- Only 2 candidates are entitled to be seated to conform to "bare majority" regulation.
(*Town Committee is reluctant to present more candidates than can be seated.*)

PARTY B (minority)

- 2 candidates are assured seats on the Board, or . . .
- 3 candidates may be presented hoping to upset the majority party and gain an extra seat on that Board (thereby becoming its new majority party).
(*Frequently the Town Committee representing the minority party has chosen to present only "safe seat" candidates, and has not attempted a challenge.*)

RESULT:

VOTERS MAY VOTE FOR 4 CANDIDATES
EACH PARTY PRESENTS 2 CANDIDATES

NOTE : Unless contested at a party primary or by a petition candidate on Election Day,
WINNERS ARE DETERMINED AT CAUCUS WHEN
"SAFE-SEAT" SLATE IS APPROVED.

* Exception: For Board of Education, State statutes mandate that voters may only vote for a bare majority, or half of the seats available.

IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL PARTY MEMBERSHIP

THE KEY TO VOTER CHOICE IN WESTON

Political Party Membership

Attendance at Party Caucus

MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT!

• JOIN A POLITICAL PARTY

Unaffiliated voters cannot exercise their full voter choice in local elections because candidates are selected at party caucus, where unaffiliated voters have no vote.

The Registrars of Voters, or the Town Clerk, will enroll you in the party of your choice at:

Town Hall
Norfield Road
Monday-Friday
9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

• ATTEND YOUR PARTY'S CAUCUS

Get your vote counted when candidates are being selected!

GET INVOLVED!

• BECOME A CANDIDATE

- For Town Committee
- For Town elected office
- For appointed positions

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