



RUNNING FOR LOCAL OFFICE

Make a difference...

Serve your community!

Provided by the Office of the City Clerk



Dear Potential Candidate,

This brochure was prepared to assist Sonoma electors who are considering running for office. This guide is not all-encompassing; it merely summarizes the basic requirements to establish candidacy.

Candidates, political committees, and anyone interested in elective office should not, therefore, rely solely on this guide, but should seek legal counsel or contact the City Clerk's Office for more detailed information.

There are five elected positions in Sonoma: five Council Members. All of them are elected at large. In 2024, candidates may run for two council seats.

General municipal elections are conducted every even-numbered year and are consolidated with the municipal general election. The candidate with the highest number of votes will be elected.

I trust this brochure will address many of your preliminary questions, but please feel free to contact my office at (707) 933-2216 if you need additional information.

Best wishes,
Rebekah Barr, MMC
City Clerk

General Qualifications

to Run For & Hold Public Office

AGE AND CITIZENSHIP

A person must be 18 years of age and a citizen of the state at the time of his or her election. *Government Code §1020*

VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS

At the time nomination papers are issued, a person must be a registered voter of the City; at the time of assuming the office an elector of the City.

Government Code § 36502

CONVICTION OF CRIMES

A person is disqualified from holding any office upon conviction of designated crimes as specified in the Constitution and laws of the State. *Government Code §1021*

FILING FOR MORE THAN ONE OFFICE

No person may file nomination papers for more than one office at the same election. *California Elections Code §8003b, §10220.5*

Important Terminology

In Understanding Elections

Local Election:	City of Sonoma Election
Local Candidate:	City Council Candidate
Candidate for Local Office:	City Council Candidate
Agency (or Local Agency):	City of Sonoma
Jurisdiction:	City of Sonoma
Local Filing Official:	City Clerk of the City of Sonoma
Elections Official:	City Clerk of the City of Sonoma
Nomination Period:	The period when prospective candidates “pull” and file their paperwork to officially run for City Council.

Declaring Candidacy

In order to become a candidate, the first step in the process is to file a Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) Form 501 (Declaration of Candidacy) with the City Clerk. The form may be obtained in hard copy from the City Clerk or electronically from FPPC's website at www.fppc.ca.gov.

A candidate must form a campaign committee within 10 days of receiving \$2,000 in contributions by filing FPPC Form 410. The form may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office or the FPPC website. The candidate must file the originally signed form with the Secretary of State, and a copy with the City Clerk. The Secretary of State will then issue a campaign committee number for use on campaign literature and future campaign disclosure filings.

All recipient committees that file a Form 410 must pay an annual fee of \$50 to the Secretary of State until the committee is terminated.

Filing Nomination Papers

All candidates wishing to be placed on the ballot are required to complete the nomination process. To obtain nomination papers, schedule an appointment to meet with the City Clerk during the nomination period, which is 113 to 88 days prior to the election. For the November 5, 2024, General Municipal Election, the nomination period is July 15, 2024 – August 9, 2024. *Elections Code §10220*

During your meeting with the City Clerk, you will be given a Candidate Filing Guide containing useful information and regulations regarding your campaign. You will also receive the following documents to complete and file by the end of the nomination period:

- Nomination Petition
- Ballot Designation Worksheet
- Candidate's Statement of Qualifications Form (filing is optional)
- Code of Fair Campaign Practices (filing is optional)
- Form 700, Statement of Economic Interests
- Form 501, Candidate Intention Statement (if not yet filed)
- Form 410, Committee Organization Statement (if not yet filed)

Filing a Candidate's Statement of Qualifications to be printed in the voter information guide is optional. Candidates who choose to file a statement must bear the actual cost of printing and distribution. The Registrar of Voters will estimate the cost, and the candidate will pay the estimated cost at the time of filing nomination papers. Statements are limited to 200 words. *Elections Code §13307, Sonoma Council Resolution #28-2012*

Candidates and office holders are required to comply with federal, state and local campaign finance laws, as well as disclose their economic interests. They must file periodic reports on a schedule established by the Fair Political Practices Commission. Failure to file appropriate statements and reports can result in substantial criminal, civil, and administrative penalties. Failure to file within prescribed deadlines can also lead to monetary filing penalties for each day a statement is late. The appropriate forms may be obtained from either the City Clerk's Office or the FPPC website, www.fppc.ca.gov.

Please be aware that all statements and information submitted in conjunction with the statements are a matter of public record, available for review by any requester.

STATE REQUIREMENTS

The Political Reform Act (Title 9 of the Government Code), in part, provides that:

- Receipts and expenditures in election campaigns should be fully and truthfully disclosed in order that the voters may be fully informed and improper practices may be inhibited. *Gov. Code §81002(a)*
- Assets and income of public officials that may be materially affected by their official actions should be disclosed, and in appropriate circumstances the officials should be disqualified from acting in order that conflicts of interest may be avoided. *Gov. Code §81002(c)*

Forms and manuals may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office or the FPPC website, www.fppc.ca.gov.

LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

Sonoma's elections are conducted in accordance with the California Elections Code. In addition, the City has imposed contribution limitations on campaigns for City elective offices. These requirements and limitations, which are in addition to state requirements, are contained in Municipal Code Section 2.02, a copy of which may be obtained either from the City Clerk's Office or the City's CivicWeb Portal at <https://sonomacity.civicweb.net>. City candidates must report contributions and expenditures on the FPPC forms and comply with disclosure requirements and filing deadlines set forth in the Political Reform Act.

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The Federal Election Campaign Act (2 U.S.C. Section 441e) prohibits contributions from foreign nationals in connection with any local, state, or federal election for political office.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q Must I live in the City of Sonoma in order to run for elected office?

A **You must be a registered voter of the City to run for a seat on the City Council.**

Government Code § 36502

Q If a person owns a business in Sonoma, but does not live in Sonoma, is she or he able to sign the nomination petition?

A **No, only persons residing and registered to vote in Sonoma may sign the petition.**

California Elections Code §10220

Q Are the council positions partisan or non-partisan?

A **Elections for city offices are non-partisan, meaning candidates do not have to declare a political party in order to run for office.**

California Elections Code §334

Q How many signatures are required on the nomination petition?

A **A minimum of 20 and a maximum of 30.**

California Elections Code §10220

Q Do I have to wait until the nomination filing deadline to turn in my nomination petition and other forms?

A **No, you may turn in the forms as soon as they are complete. Candidates are encouraged to make an appointment with the City Clerk to file nomination papers. Candidate statements are confidential until the conclusion of the nomination period.**

Q Who do I contact if I have additional questions?

A **The City Clerk is the Elections Official for Sonoma and will answer your questions or refer you to the appropriate person or agency. The City Clerk may be reached at (707) 933-2216.**

Important Contacts



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

Rebekah Barr, MMC

No 1 The P, Sonoma, CA 95476

Phone: (707) 933-2216

www.sonomacity.org

- Campaign Statements for Local Committees and Candidates
 - Forms and Manuals
 - Filing Schedules

SONOMA COUNTY

Registrar of Voters

435 Fiscal Drive, Santa Rosa CA 95403

Phone: (707) 565-6800 or (800) 750-8683

www.vote.sonoma-county.org

Mail Ballots

- Voter Index/Precinct Lists
 - Mailing Labels
 - Voter Registration

SECRETARY OF STATE

Political Reform Division

1500 11th Street, 4th Floor, Room 495, Sacramento, CA 95814 Phone:

(916) 653-6224

www.sos.ca.gov

- Committee Identification Numbers
- Formation and Termination of Committees

FAIR POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION

428 J Street, Suite 620, Sacramento, CA 95814

Phone: (866) 275-3772 (Toll Free) www.fppc.ca.gov

- Campaign Disclosure
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure

A Few Things to Think About

As a person considering public office, you face an important decision. Public service offers the opportunity to address real community problems and help shape the community's future.

Public service also requires courage and personal sacrifice. You will be asked to make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions. Your actions will be scrutinized as never before. The law and the public's expectations are likely to affect what you can do or not do to a greater extent than you are used to.

Below are just a few:

- As an elected official, you will be subject to the Political Reform Act, which means you will be required to disclose your personal and business finances. This includes your salary, investments, business interests, property, etc.
- As an elected official, you will be subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act, the open government law of California.
- As an elected official, you will be subject to the California Public Records Act, which means any email, letters, text messages, etc. that you create, receive, or respond to are open for public disclosure.