

How to Run for Stamford Municipal Elective Office 2021 Guide



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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in learning more about running for elected office in Stamford! This document was created by the Stamford Democratic City Committee (SDCC) and is consistent with our mission to elect Democrats up and down the ballot. This document serves as a general guide and reference for the elective process and provides links to more detailed information from direct sources. Choosing to serve in public office is an important decision and it is essential to have a clear understanding of what it takes to be a Democratic candidate and represent your fellow citizens. Please take time to review the enclosed information as part of your due diligence before deciding to run.

ELECTION TIMELINE

Below is the municipal election calendar for 2021 as issued by the Connecticut Secretary of State's office. For more information visit:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SOTS/ElectionServices/Calendars/2021Election/2021---Nov-Calendar.pdf>

DCC Party Endorsement	July 25, 2021 2:00 PM
Party Endorsement Certification	July 28, 2021
Primary Petitions Available	Available the day after the Party endorsements from the Registrar of Voters office
Primary Petitions Filed	August 11, 2021 Must be submitted by 4:00 PM to the Registrar of Voters office
Primary Election	September 14, 2021
General Election	November 2, 2021

BECOMING A DEMOCRATIC ENDORSED CANDIDATE

Below are the steps to becoming a candidate and seeking the Democratic endorsement:

1. A prospective Democratic candidate must be registered as a voter in Stamford and be registered with the Democratic Party. Contact the Town Clerk to find out the requirements for the particular office being sought.
 - Voter Registration - <https://portaldir.ct.gov/sots/LookUp.aspx>
 - Voting District - <https://www.stamfordct.gov/government/registrar-of-voters/find-your-voting-location>
 - Requirements for municipal office - <https://www.stamfordct.gov/government/town-clerk>
2. Prospective candidates should contact the Democratic City Committee by sending an email to info@stamforddems.com to state their interest and obtain more information about running.
3. Prospective candidates should attend information sessions about running for office offered by the SDCC and other organizations. They should be familiar with the responsibilities of the office they seek as well as know the current issues and other practical matters relating to that office.
4. All candidates must file the SEEC Form 1 and Form 1A or 1B with the Town Clerk. When completing SEEC Form 1, the candidate must indicate how their campaign will be funded, either by completing SEEC Form 1A (if registering a candidate committee) or by completing SEEC Form 1B (if filing an exemption from forming a candidate committee).
 - Links to those forms can be found here: <https://seec.ct.gov/Portal/data/Publications/FactSheets/2021MunicipalElectionCampaignOverview.pdf>
5. Candidates seeking the endorsement of the Stamford Democratic Party will first fill out the candidate screening application, which can be found on the SDCC website. Once an application is received, the SDCC Screening Committee will invite candidates for an interview. Per the SDCC bylaws, *Article III Section 1b*, "The screening committee shall screen potential candidates and present to the entire committee as a list...and they may make recommendations of nominees for office."
6. The full Democratic City Committee will meet to nominate and endorse municipal candidates in July 2021 per the election calendar previously listed.

HOW TO PRIMARY TO GAIN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY ENDORSEMENT

If a candidate does not receive the Democratic Party endorsement, the candidate may seek to challenge the endorsed party candidate by petitioning to force a primary election. In order to primary, a candidate must:

1. Obtain signatures of at least 5% of registered Democrats that reside within the district of the office being sought. Petition forms will be available from the Registrar of Voters office in late July, per the election calendar previously listed.
2. All signatures must be submitted to the Registrar of Voters office for verification by the indicated deadline. If the required number of signatures has been obtained and verified, the petition will be certified by the Town Clerk and a primary will be held on September 14.
3. The winner of the primary will become the Democratic endorsed candidate and will be listed on the Democratic line of the ballot for the November 2, 2021 election.

<https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Election-Services/Nominating-Petitions/Nominating-Petitions>

EXPECTATIONS OF ENDORSED CANDIDATES

If a candidate receives the Democratic endorsement, the candidate will be placed on the Democratic line of the ballot and the SDCC will support their candidacy in the general election. SDCC support is supplement to the candidates own campaign efforts and will not act as a substitute. There will be expectations of the Democratic endorsed candidates, including:

- Proper social media etiquette
- Participation in SDCC election events
- Attending coordinated campaign meetings
- Fundraising
- Engaging in field efforts, such as canvassing and phone banking (even if there is no opponent)
- Attending debates, town hall forums, and responding to inquiries from the media or other organizations

The chart below lists the municipal elected offices in Stamford that are up for election in 2021.

Municipal Office							
Municipal Office	Term (years)	Next Election	Party Endorsement	Primary (2021)	Term Begins	Salary (as of 2019)	Seats
Mayor	4	2021	July	September 14	Dec.	\$ 175,662	1 seat
Board of Finance	4	2021	July	September 14	Dec.	None	6 seats, 3* seats are elected every 2 years; max 4 Dem seats
Board of Education	3	2021	July	September 14	Dec.	None	9 seats, 3* seats are elected every year; max 6 Dem seats
Board of Representatives	4	2021	July	September 14	Dec.	None	40 seats, 20 districts, 2 reps/district
Town clerk	4	2021	July	September 14	Dec.	\$ 122,199	1 seat
Constables	4	2021	July	September 14	Dec	Fees	7 seats

*Due to majority/minority rule certain circumstances may apply as to how many seats are actually available in the 2021 election.

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

MAYOR

The Mayor serves a four year term, and is eligible for an unlimited number of terms.

How to run:

The Democratic party, through the SDCC, endorses a candidate for Mayor. After endorsements are made, any person may challenge said endorsement by petitioning for a primary election.

Duties:

1. The mayor is the chief executive officer of the city and responsible for the management and budgets of the following departments: police, fire, roads, sewers and other public works, building inspection, parks, recreation, law, human resources, parking services, fleet management, information technology and purchasing for such purposes.
2. The mayor appoints department heads, approves the budget, and signs ordinances and resolutions.
3. The mayor also focuses on special initiatives that directly impact our community, such as the Stamford Alert program, the Mayor's Youth Employment Program, the School Readiness Preschool Program and the Stamford Youth Services Bureau.

BOARD OF FINANCE (BOF)

The Board of Finance is composed of six members, each of whom hold office for a four year term, and can be re-elected for an unlimited number of terms. One half of the seats are up for election at each biennial (odd year) municipal election.

How to run:

The SDCC endorses up to three candidates for three open seats per election cycle. The three candidates can choose to run as a slate or as individuals. The three individuals who receive the highest number of votes are elected to the six member board. However, the city charter dictates no party may hold more than four seats on the board. As such, if there are five candidates of the same party on the board then the candidate with the highest number of votes from any other party is seated instead.

Duties:

1. The BOF is responsible for the oversight and administration of the city's financial affairs.
2. The BOF prepares and oversees the city's budget, subject to final approval by the BOR, and sets the tax rate. The BOF acts on interim appropriation requests, transfers, and allotments during the budget year and makes other financial decisions.

The Board of Finance holds regular meetings on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm. Meetings are open to the public and held in the Board of Finance Meeting Room on the 4th Floor of the Stamford Government Center (on Zoom currently). More information can be found here:

<https://www.stamfordct.gov/government/boards-commissions/board-of-finance>

BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE)

The Board of Education is composed of nine members, each of whom hold office for a three year term, and can be re-elected for an unlimited number of terms. A total of 3 seats are up for election each year.

How to Run:

The SDCC endorses up to three candidates for three open seats per election cycle. The three candidates can choose to run as a slate or as individuals. The three individuals who receive the highest number of votes are elected to the nine member board. However, the city charter dictates no party may hold more than six seats on the board. As such, if there are six candidates of the same party on the board then the candidate with the highest number of votes from any other party is seated instead.

Duties

1. The BOE is the policy making body of the school district, deriving its power, authority, roles and responsibilities from the Statutes of the State of Connecticut.
2. In general, the BOE has the power and duty to maintain and improve the City's public elementary and secondary schools, implement the educational objectives of the state, and provide other educational activities which, in its judgment, will best serve the interests of the school district.
3. The BOE is responsible for hiring and supervising the Superintendent of Schools, creating school district policies, and reviews and votes on the Superintendent's annual budget proposal for the operation of the city's schools.
4. The BOE negotiates and approves contracts with the bargaining units that represent the employees of the Board of Education.

Regular monthly board meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7 pm. The BOE also has five working committees, each chaired by a BOE member. Committee meetings are generally held on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Tuesday of each month. All meetings are open to the public, in the BOE board room on the 5th floor of the Stamford Government Center (on Zoom currently). More information can be found here: <https://www.stamfordpublicschools.org/district/board-education>

BOARD OF REPRESENTATIVES (BOR)

The Board of Representatives is composed of 40 elected officials. There are twenty districts, each electing two representatives every four years (concurrent with the Mayor's term) and can be re-elected for an unlimited number of terms.

How to Run

Candidates are nominated and endorsed by the two SDCC members from the respective municipal district. A petition to primary the endorsed candidate(s) may be obtained from the Registrar of Voters office after the endorsement of the party candidates.

Duties:

1. Enact ordinances for the government of the city, for the preservation of good order, peace and health, for the welfare and safety of its inhabitants and the protection and security of their property.
2. Adopt the submitted capital and operating budgets of the City and the Board of Education.
3. Approve submitted supplemental capital and operating budget requests.
4. Fill vacancies in elected offices (Mayor, Town Clerk, Board of Finance, Board of Education, Board of Representatives, and Constables); Approve the appointment of City Directors, the Director of Health, the Police Chief and the Fire and Rescue Chief; Approve appointments submitted by the Mayor of members to boards, authorities and commissions.
5. Establish fees charged by the City.
6. Approve all City personnel contracts; Reject negotiated and/or arbitrated labor contracts.
7. Approve large/multi-year contracts obtained as negotiated proposals.
8. Approve leases, sales, and purchases of City owned property.
9. The Board does not have the power to initiate, restore, reallocate or otherwise increase either capital or operating spending proposals.

BOR Committees:

The BOR operates on a committee system. All agenda items are assigned to one of the Board's 13 standing committees; Steering, Appointments, Fiscal, Personnel, Land Use/Urban Redevelopment, Operations, Public Safety and Health, Legislative and Rules, Parks and Recreation, Education, Housing/Social Services, State and Commerce, Transportation.

The full Board meets regularly the first Monday of every month at 8 PM on the 4th Floor of the Stamford Government Center in the Legislative Chamber. Board committees typically meet on weekday evenings during the remainder of the month. All meetings are open to the public (on Zoom currently). More information can be found here:

<https://www.stamfordct.gov/government/boards-commissions/board-of-representatives>

OTHER OFFICES

TOWN CLERK

How to run:

The Democratic party, through the SDCC, endorses a candidate for Town Clerk. After endorsements are made, any person may challenge said endorsement by petitioning for a primary election.

Duties:

Town clerk is a public information officer who serves as liaison between local government and the public. They are responsible for (1) public records, (2) vital statistics, and (3) licensing. They have certain duties in connection with elections; registrars of voters are responsible for others.

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2006/rpt/2006-R-0297.htm#:~:text=Town%20clerks%20are%20public%20information,voters%20are%20responsible%20for%20others.>

CONSTABLE

How to run:

The SDCC endorses up to four candidates for seven Constable seats per election cycle. The four candidates can choose to run as a slate or as individuals. The candidates receiving the highest number of votes will be elected. After endorsements are made, any person may challenge said endorsement(s) by petitioning for a primary election.

Duties:

Constables serve legal papers.

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/PS94/rpt/olr/htm/94-R-0903.htm>

Stamford City Charter - DIVISION 7. - ELECTIONS PROVISIONS

https://library.municode.com/ct/stamford/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH_PT1ORELPR_DIV7ELPR_SC1-70-3TEOFELOF

CAMPAIGNING

While Stamford voter turnout reached 86% in the 2020 presidential election year, only about 30% of Stamford's registered voters cast their ballots in the last municipal election. This difference in turnout is despite the fact that the municipal offices impact the local community most directly. The act of campaigning is the opportunity to a) introduce a candidate to the district represented, b) highlight the issues platform and reason for running, c) motivate and encourage the participation of the voters in that district. An effective plan and proper fundraising are keys to a winning campaign.

HOW TO SET UP A CAMPAIGN

1. File the SEEC Forms for candidacy and fundraising
2. Select a Treasurer if you are running as an individual. If running as a slate you need a Treasurer and a Chairperson. Per State statute the Treasurer is responsible for approval and expenditure of all funds. Make sure to select someone detailed and reliable. <https://seec.ct.gov/Portal/treasurerCorner/TrsCorner>
3. Obtain an EIN number (see IRS website)
4. Open a bank account
5. Set up an Anedot (or other portal account) to collect online contributions if you will be fundraising
6. Select a campaign manager and volunteer team
7. Create a campaign platform and communications plan
8. Seek voter information through the Registrar of Voters and/or VAN database

Refer to State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) for more detailed information:
<https://seec.ct.gov/Portal/data/filingCalendars/2021/2021MunicipalCandidateGuidebook.pdf>

Note: the Citizen's Election Program is only available for statewide offices and the general assembly.

HOW TO FUNDRAISE

Below is a general list of guidelines when putting together a plan for fundraising:

- 1) Budget and Research - how much do you need to spend (raise to win) and what has been spent on this type of race before.
 - a) Are there contribution limits? (minimum and maximum thresholds)
 - b) Identify who you can contact to give money and who can help you raise the money
 - i) Friends and family (old and new, connections from various life stages)
 - ii) Colleagues and neighbors
 - iii) Previous donors
 - iv) Stakeholders/influencers/interest groups, organizations, PACs, labor unions (abiding by campaign finance rules)
 - v) Cold prospects
- 2) Make the appeal
 - a) Identify your goal and message
 - b) Set a specific amount (ask for the most you can get, tailored to each potential donor)
 - c) Ask directly and more than once
- 3) Set a timeline for the raise
- 4) Methods
 - a) Phone calls
 - b) In person meetings
 - c) Social media
 - d) Letters/emails
 - e) Events

SAMPLE CAMPAIGN BUDGET

Below is a comprehensive list of expenses to consider when running a campaign. Not all areas will apply depending on the level of the race being run.

Expenses:

- VAN access (voter database)
- Website (host fee and development)
- Direct mail program
- Lawn signs
- Palm cards
- Paid social media/digital ads
- Texting platform
- Automated robo calls
- Paid field (canvassing)
- Meet and greets/community meetings
- Fundraising/other events
- Print ads
- Photography and digital production
- Graphic artist fees
- Misc. expenses (printing, food, office supplies, postage, swag, bank fees, childcare, gas)
- Paid campaign staff (major campaigns)
- Office space

BOR district wide campaign expense estimate - \$6,000

BOE, BOF, Mayor, Town Clerk city wide campaign estimate - \$10,000-\$25,000+

RESOURCES

The Stamford Democratic City Committee

info@stamforddems.com 203-914-1144

<https://stamforddems.com/>

CT State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC)

www.ct.gov/seec email: seec@ct.gov

Candidate Services: 860-256-2985 Compliance: 860-256-2925

<https://seec.ct.gov/Portal/data/filingCalendars/2021/2021MunicipalCandidateGuidebook.pdf>

SEEC Treasurer's Corner

<https://seec.ct.gov/Portal/treasurerCorner/TrsCorner>

CT Secretary of State Election Calendar

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SOTS/ElectionServices/Calendars/2021Election/2021---Nov-Calendar.pdf>

Stamford Town Clerk - townclerk@stamfordct.gov

<https://www.stamfordct.gov/government/town-clerk>

Stamford Registrar of Voters - 203 977-4011

<https://www.stamfordct.gov/government/registrar-of-voters>

TRAINING

CT State Democrats <https://ctdems.org/>

National Democratic Training Committee <https://traidemocrats.org/candidates/>

Emerge Connecticut <https://ct.emergeamerica.org/about/about-us/>

The Campaign School at Yale <https://tcsyale.org/>