

# **FCA – FAC Workshop**

## **How to Organize an All-Candidates Meeting**

**March 30, 2022**

# What this workshop will cover:

- Why hold an All-Candidates Meeting?
- Organizing to organize (i.e. The Committee)
- Setting the Date
- Finding the Venue (and ...)
- Setting the Format
- Inviting the Candidates
- Publicizing your Event
- Running the Event

# Why hold an All-Candidates Meeting?

- The Ontario provincial election will be held this June 2.
- The Ottawa municipal election will be held this October 24.
- In a democratic representative government system, voting is how citizens elect their government to set laws, provide services, and collect taxes.
- Voting is also how elected officials are held accountable for their actions.

# Why hold an All-Candidates Meeting?

- However, voter turnout has been declining:

In the 2018 Ontario provincial election, voter turnout was 56.7%.

In the 2018 Ottawa municipal election, voter turnout was 42.5%.

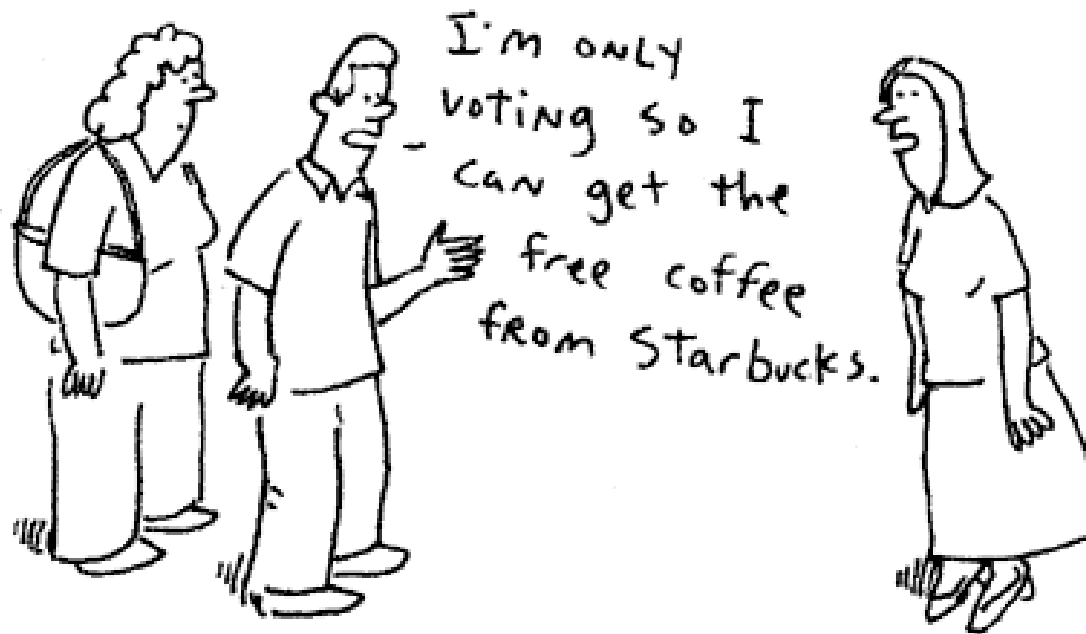
# Why hold All-Candidates Meetings?

- Research shows that most people who do not vote do so because they feel inadequate and/or uninformed.
- Here is the opportunity for a community association to provide a service to its residents, to help inform them of the candidates on the ballot, and raise local issues.

# Why hold All-Candidate Meetings?



# Why hold All-Candidate Meetings?



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# Organizing to Organize

- Start with a committee – jobs include:
  - setting a budget
  - selecting a date
  - selecting a venue (in person or virtual?)
  - determining the format
  - contacting the candidates
  - publicizing the event
  - running the event
- Do you want to partner with another community association to share the work, broaden participation?



# Selecting the Date (Provincial)

- Most parties will have their candidates in place by the beginning of May.
- The Writ for the provincial election (the official campaign start) falls on Wednesday May 4.
- Nominations to get on the ballot close on Thursday May 12.
- Victoria Day this year is Monday May 23.
- Advance polls run from Thursday May 19 to Wednesday May 28.
- Provincial Election Day is Thursday June 2.
- So the campaign period is approximately 5 weeks(!).

# Selecting the Date (Municipal)

- Nominations for municipal office open on May 2, close on August 19.
- Advance polls in selected buildings/locations in each ward are held on Friday October 7 and Friday October 14.
- Thanksgiving Monday is October 10.
- The municipal election is held on Monday October 24.
- So, from Labour Day to Municipal Election Day is approximately 7 weeks.

# Selecting the Venue

- The traditional venue is a school gym, community centre or church hall.
- There are 266 elementary schools, 66 high schools and 52 city facilities (community centres, recreation centres, etc.) to choose from.
- School boards have community use policies (check the web sites) but will charge (as will the City). Elementary schools are cheaper, but do not always have appropriate sound systems.
- Sound systems can be a significant cost depending on format chosen: i.e. a microphone for the meeting chair, a microphone to be shared among candidates, plus a microphone for questions (and the ability to shut them off during the debate!).

# Selecting the Venue

- However, COVID has introduced a new means of holding meetings virtually, over the Internet via such services as ZOOM, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teamworks.
- Virtual meetings can be more inclusive, and cheaper.
- If you are using such services, make sure you have booked sufficient time for your meeting.
- And you will need a “techie” or two to run the logistics, to keep microphones muted, recognize speakers (using the “hand” function) and/or take questions from the “chat” function.

# Setting the Format

- The typical format is 5 minute opening statements (sequence chosen by lot), then answers to questions by rotation (usually 2 minutes), followed by closing statements (5 minutes) in reverse order from the opening.
- But, how many candidates? And how will the questions be asked?

# Setting the Format

- In a 4 candidate format, it goes like:

Opening (5 minutes each): A B C D

Questions (2 minutes each): B C D A

C D A B

D A B C

(continue)

Closing (5 minutes each): D C B A

- In a 2 hour meeting that's time for **9** questions.
- In a 2.5 hour meeting that's time for **13** questions.

# Setting the Format

- In a 5 candidate format, it goes like:

Opening (5 minutes each): A B C D E

Questions (2 minutes each): B C D E A

C D E A B

D E A B C

E A B C D

(continue)

Closing (5 minutes each): E D C B A

- In a 2 hour meeting that's time for **6** questions.
- In a 2.5 hour meeting that's time for **9** questions.

# Setting the Format

- In a 6 candidate format, it goes like:

Opening (5 minutes each): A B C D E F

Questions (2 minutes each): B C D E F A

C D E F A B

D E F A B C

E F A B C D

(continue)

Closing (5 minutes each): F E D C B A

- In a 2 hour meeting that's time for **5** questions.
- In a 2.5 hour meeting that's time for **7** questions.



# Setting the Format

- In the last provincial election in Ottawa, there were on average 7 candidates per riding, with a range of 6 to 9.
- There are 23 parties registered in Ontario(!).
- And, what do to with the Independents?
- You will have to decide who to invite, and be able to explain the rationale(!).

# Setting the Format

- In the last Ottawa municipal election the average number of candidates per ward was 4, but the range was 2 to 17 (!).
- **YOU WILL HAVE TO DECIDE** – because it affects how many questions can be asked/answered. If not everybody, then you will need to have a justification as to why.

# Setting the Format - Questions

- Your community association may take the opportunity to begin the question period with a specific question about a local issue.
- At an in-person event questions can come from the floor via a floor microphone (problem of stacking, plus questions from outside interest groups).
- Option: residents can fill out question slips when entering the venue – these may be selected by the meeting chairperson & presented to the candidates.
- At a virtual event questions can be posted in the “chat” function.
- Screening questions can avoid duplication, improve clarity.
- Other options ...

# Inviting the Candidates

- Candidates need to be invited and informed of the format and other meeting details. The contact person is usually the candidate's campaign manager.
- For the provincial election party websites list their candidates by riding (including contact info). Another source of information is Elections Ontario.
- For the municipal election the City of Ottawa Elections Office (on the City web site) will have candidate information.

# Publicizing your All-Candidates Meeting

- You will need a strategy of how you will inform your residents of your event, whether by poster, facebook page, newsletter, whatever – this IS your responsibility!
- You should also let the media know well in advance so they can list it on their web sites: the basic media list is CTV, CBOT, Rogers Cable 22, CBO radio, News 1310, CFRA, the Ottawa Citizen, and (if you have one) your community newspaper (remember their deadline!).

# Running your Meeting – in-person

- You will need a Chairperson to run the meeting, and a timerkeeper, plus the ability to control the microphones.
- Your Chairperson should tell the assembly at the beginning on how the meeting will proceed and how questions will be dealt with.
- You will need to set groundrules regarding the distribution of literature (On the seats? At the door? On tables provided?).
- Your candidates will appreciate water.
- Your Chairperson must be able to enforce order, and keep the meeting on time.

# Running your Meeting – virtual

- You will need a Chairperson to run the meeting (with a timer), and a “techie” to control (mute) microphones and pull/screen questions posted in the “chat” function.
- Your Chairperson should tell the assembly at the beginning on how the meeting will proceed, and how questions will be dealt with – allowing questions from attendees or taking them from the “chat” function (recommended).
- Your Chairperson must be able to enforce order, and keep the meeting on time.

# Running Your Meeting

- People expect a **fair and efficient meeting** – they are there to see (and hear) the candidates perform. They will generally support a Chairperson that tries to make this happen.
- It is also an opportunity for your community association to publicize its role in providing service to its community. Take advantage of that.
- And, at the end of the meeting, thank the candidates for their public service, and remind people when voting day is!



# Re-Cap:

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**QUESTIONS?**