

FCA – FAC Workshop

How to Organize an All-Candidates Meeting

March 15, 2018

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 7.
- The Ottawa municipal election will be held this October 22.
- 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 2014 Ontario provincial election, voter turnout was 52.2% (in Ottawa 55.3%).

In the 2014 Ontario municipal elections, voter turnout was 43.1% (in Ottawa 39.9%).

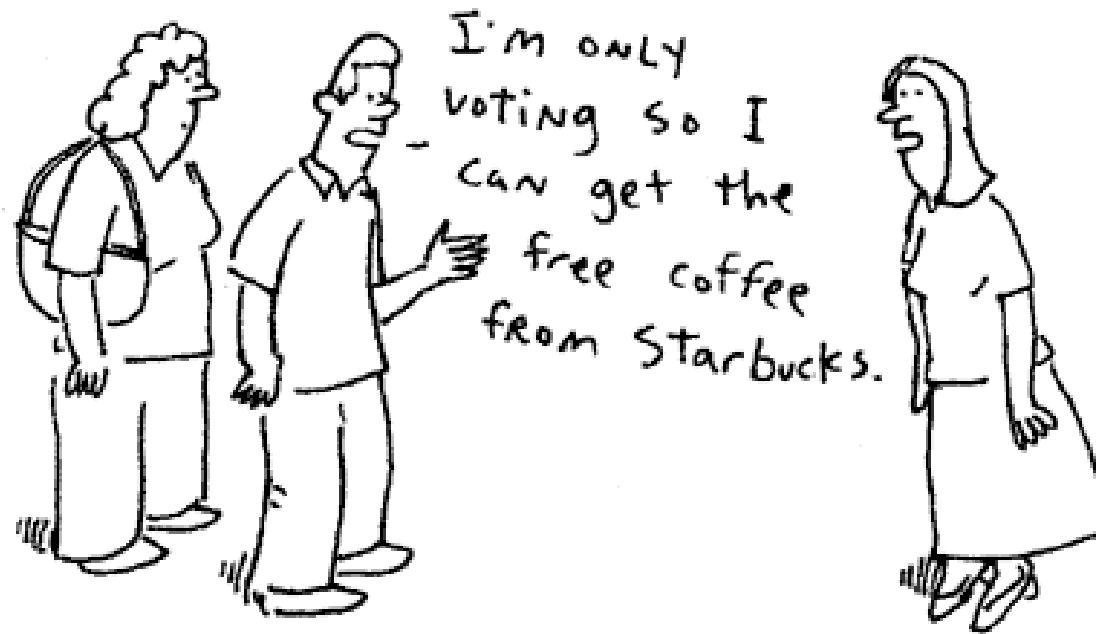
Why hold All-Candidates Meetings?

- 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
 - 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 9.
- Nominations to get on the ballot close on Thursday May 17.
- Victoria Day this year is Monday May 21.
- Advance polls run from Saturday May 26 to Wednesday May 30.
- Provincial Election Day is Thursday June 7.
- So the campaign period is approximately 5 weeks(!).

Selecting the Date (Municipal)

- Nominations for municipal office open on May 1, close on July 27.
- Advance polls in selected buildings/locations in each ward are held on Friday October 12.
- The municipal election is held on Monday October 22.
- So, from Labour Day to Municipal Election Day is approximately 7 weeks.

Selecting the Venue

- 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!).

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 **4** 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 5 candidates per riding, with a range of 4 to 7 (Green, Liberal, Libertarian, New Democrat, Progressive Conservative).
- There are over 20 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 were 5, but the range was 2 to 11 (!).
- **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.
- 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.
- 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 – 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

- You will need a Chairperson to run the meeting, and a timer, 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

- 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?