

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR HOSTING A NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL SPONSORED CANDIDATE FORUM

A candidate forum is a public event where candidates running for office are invited to express their positions and introduce themselves to the community. However, there are various laws that restrict the use of public resources in relation to election matters. Please be sure to review the “Guidelines for Hosting Candidate Forums” handout and to consult with your Neighborhood Empowerment Advocate to assist your Neighborhood Council in organizing a candidate forum.

Here are some best practice guidelines for your Neighborhood Council to consider:

Agendize Board discussion, funding and approval for the Candidate Forum/Meeting

Consider the following:

- Establish an Ad Hoc Elections Committee to work out the logistics of the securing date, time, venue and budget for the forum/meeting.
- Bring the item(s) back to the Board for final approval and submit an [Event Approval Form](#), [Event Check List](#), and the [BAC](#) to the City Clerk’s Funding Team at least 30 days in advance of the event.
- Best practice is submitting the forms at a minimum of 60 days in advance of the event and to work with your NEA early in the planning process to allow the Department time to assist.

Promote the Candidate Forum/Meeting

- If creating a flyer, best practice is to allow the Board to review and approve the final draft. Otherwise, the Board should discuss delegating the authority to a person/committee.
- If using public funds, a neighborhood council may not mail, including email, more than 200 invitations or flyers referencing any candidate. However, you may mail a Neighborhood Council agenda to those on your mailing list.

Posting an “Agenda” for Candidate Forum/Meeting

It is best practice to agendize the Candidate Forum/Meeting and to follow the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners’ (BONC) [Agenda Posting Policy](#). Though your forum/meeting may not include Board discussion nor action, because there may be a majority of the Board attending, it is best to publically notice the event to allow all Board Members to be able to attend. Don’t forget to include the required ADA language on the agenda as well.

Remember that the forum/meeting should remain non-partisan and that all speakers are treated fairly and equally. Be sure to provide each speaker with an equal amount of speaking time and consider bringing in a neutral third-party facilitator to moderate the event.

Candidate Forum/Meeting Sample Agenda

1. Welcome/Introductions/Ground Rules
2. General Public Comments
3. Speaker #1
4. Speaker #2
5. Speaker #3
6. Question and Answer
7. Adjournment