



City Clerk's Office

2019 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE ELECTION INFORMATION

Congratulations on making the decision to run for a seat on the Cedar Springs City Council! Councilmembers are happy to see interest on the part of City residents to serve their community. I am happy, as well, to provide you with some State and City Election Law requirements. I hope that you will find the information helpful as you begin your campaign.

Election law mandates certain requirements regarding the filing of nominating petitions. The City Clerk is the designated official within the City government to handle and run all City Elections. The City's Charter, adopted when Cedar Springs became a City in 1959, also mandates certain requirements, which in some cases takes precedence over State Law.

Cedar Springs City Charter states that anyone seeking office must be a qualified elector of the City, a United States citizen and cannot be in default to the City, County or School District. ***This means all current City and School tax statements, water bills or any other financial obligations to those entities must be current.***

The election of all City officers is on a nonpartisan basis. You do not need to declare party preference in order to run for office.

The first step in the process is to file a nominating petition for the office of City Councilor. These petitions are available through the City Clerk's office and must be filled out by the City Clerk. The City's Charter mandates the City Clerk fill in the name of the person running as a candidate and the office for which he/she is running. Petitions which do not have this information as provided by the City Clerk will not be accepted. Petitions are due in the Clerk's office by **4:00 p.m. April 23, 2019**. State law sets a 4:00 p.m. filing deadline. If you show up after 4:00 p.m. on **April 23rd**, your petitions **will not** be accepted. It is a good idea to try to turn the petitions in as soon as possible after taking them out because the names, signatures and addresses on the petitions must be matched against the voter registration files. If you turn them in early and do not have enough signatures, it will allow you time to garner the necessary number before the deadline. Some people will sign your petition and may not be a registered voter. If an individual is not registered, his signature will not count toward your total number of signatures. ***City Charter calls for a minimum number of 25 but no more than 50 valid signatures on the nominating petitions.***

Please bear in mind, nominating petitions must contain signatures of electors who have signed the petition in your or in the presence of the person circulating the petition. It is a violation of election law to leave petitions out for persons to sign without the circulator

being present to witness the signature. Please do not sign or date the petitions until all signatures have been gathered. To do so would invalidate the nominating petition.

There is **one** four-year seat open on the City Council this year. The City's Charter allows residents to sign the same number of petitions as there are openings. As there is **one** seat open this year, residents may only sign **one** nominating petition. If a resident signs more petitions than is allowed, the Clerk will determine which signatures to invalidate.

Election law also allows you the opportunity to withdraw from running for office after you have filed your petitions. The deadline for withdrawal is by **4:00 p.m. April 26, 2019**. You must inform the City Clerk **in writing** of your decision to withdraw as a candidate.

You will also be required to turn in an Affidavit of Identity form when your petitions are filed. This form is available from the City Clerk and is included in this candidate package. This form must be signed by a Notary Public. The City has registered notaries on staff. However, if any are out of the office at the time you turn in your petitions, it is your responsibility to have the Affidavit of Identity notarized. If this Affidavit is not filed, your name will not appear on the ballot. Please print your name clearly and legibly as the way your name appears on the ballot will be the same as you supply it on the Affidavit of Identity. Once this information is turned in, it cannot be changed and your name will appear on the ballot the way you have indicated it to be on the Affidavit. There are several stipulations regarding the manner in which a candidate may have his or her name printed on a ballot. Please follow the guidelines listed on the back of the Affidavit of Identity for reference. You will also be required to sign a Ballot Proof Receipt which will be sent to you during the ballot proofing process. You will be asked to approve the spelling of your name as it appears on the ballot.

A Post Election Campaign Finance Compliance Statement is another requirement. This form must be filed by those candidates who receive or expend over \$1,000.00 during the election cycle. This paperwork will be sent to you from and must be filed at the Kent County Clerk's office, located at 300 Monroe Ave. NW, Grand Rapids. This form must be on file prior to taking the Oath of Office, should you be elected. Additional information can be found at <https://mertsplus.com/mertsuserguide/index.php?n=MANUALS.Candidates> and https://www.accesskent.com/Departments/Elections/campaign_finance.htm

Once all your paperwork has been submitted and the deadline for withdrawal has passed, you will receive a packet of financial information requirements from the Kent County Clerk's office. All of that information is to be filed with the County Clerk's office.

City Charter requires an August Primary for City Council seats if valid petitions have been filed for more than twice the number of persons to be elected. If we do not have more than **two** candidates filing nominating petitions by the **April 23rd** deadline, the names of the City Council candidates will be on the **November 5, 2019** General Election Ballot. If **three** or more candidates do file petitions by **April 23rd**, those candidate's names will be on the **August 6, 2019 Primary Ballot** and the run-off would be held at the **November 5, 2019 General Election**.

Candidates may also run as a write-in. Forms for this are available through the office of the City Clerk. If you choose to run as a write-in, you must file a Declaration of Intent to run as a write-in candidate with the City Clerk. The deadline for the **August 6, 2019**

Primary Election [if there are sufficient number of candidates to have names on the August Primary ballot] is by 4:00 p.m. **July 26, 2019** and **October 25, 2019** for the **November 5, 2019** General Election. If you have not filed to run as a write-in, your name will not be counted on election night. Election law requires Declaration of Intent forms to be filed appropriately in order to count those names written on ballots. If this is not done, the votes are not counted. The other post election paperwork also applies to this candidacy.

Some candidates wish to display signs as a part of their election campaign. **All signs must bear the name of the committee working to elect the individual.** Please note the City has a Sign Ordinance which must be followed. A copy of the appropriate language regarding the posting of signs is included in this packet.

I hope that this information has answered most of your questions. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any further assistance or you have additional questions. I can be reached during normal business hours Monday through Thursday 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at 616.696.1330 ext. 101. You may also reach me by email at clerk@cityofcedarsprings.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Johnson
City Clerk