



TOWN of BROOKLINE

Massachusetts

CHARLES CAREY
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

333 WASHINGTON STREET
BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS 02445
TEL. (617) 730-2200
FAX: (617) 730-2054
www.brooklinema.gov

To: Town Department Heads
Dr. Linus Guillory, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools

From: Charles Carey, Town Administrator

Date: March 31, 2023

Subject: Election Season Activities

Now that Brookline's ballot questions have been set and election season is officially underway, I want to remind everyone that Town and School employees are governed by strict requirements when it comes to our own political activities. Please circulate this message to members of your staff.

First, as a general rule: if you have any questions or concerns about what you can or can't do, please reach out to Town Counsel's office before you do anything. Their email is towncounseloffice@brooklinema.gov and their phone number is 617-730-2190. Don't feel embarrassed telling anyone "I'm sorry, but I just need to quickly check to see if that's okay."

Second, the Massachusetts conflict-of-interest law applies with special relevancy here. I strongly encourage you to review the following Advisory from the State Ethics Commission: [Advisory 11-1: Public Employee Political Activity](#). It features clear overviews of what we as local employees can and can't do.

Third, because the ballot questions have been finalized, Massachusetts campaign finance law now applies. The law prohibits the use of municipal resources to influence the outcome of elections. I therefore also strongly encourage you to review this interpretive bulletin from the Office of Campaign and Political Finance: [OCPF IB-91-01](#).

Many of you will receive questions about the two questions with tax implications on May's ballot. As a general rule, you may not, while "on the clock," advocate for or against those questions. And you may never use Town or School resources to do so. Those resources include things that you would immediately think about, like printer paper or an office phone, but also less obvious things, like time spent on a Town-owned computer or your professional title.

The Town has an Override Central page, <https://www.brooklinema.gov/override>, offering explanations of the debt exclusion/override, as well as a calculator for people to determine how

the passage of either or both would impact their taxes. It's often easier to refer interested parties to that page.

Fourth, be mindful of requests from candidates on the ballot. They are citizens of the Town and should be treated respectfully and courteously in accordance with our Code of Conduct, but do not allow yourself to inadvertently be drawn into campaign matters. Something as innocuous as an informational meeting or a photograph together at a Town event could be construed as using municipal resources to provide political support. If you are not prepared to offer the same level of service or access to all candidates who request things from you, I would suggest asking them whether they can delay their requests until after the election on May 2 or limit them strictly to routine non-political matters.

Above all, please err on the side of caution. This is a very engaged political community, as you all know, and we should strive to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. We don't want to impact the trust we all continually try to build and maintain with the public.

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