
Elections and Voting Information

Elections and Administration

The Town Clerk's office administers elections and elections-related processes and functions. There are four Registrars of Voters who are appointed by the Selectmen, each serving a three-year term. Registrars of Voters represent each of the two leading political parties, with not more than two members of the same party.

The Town Clerk supervises all presidential primaries, state primaries, state and presidential elections, and the Town's general elections. Related activities of this function include: voter registration; candidate nomination papers; initiatives and referenda; certification of signatures on nomination papers and petitions; printing ballots for Town elections; maintenance of elections equipment; recruitment of poll workers; tallying elections results; and maintaining election records.

List of Voters

The Town Clerk maintains the voters roll for Phillipston. This includes the addition of newly registered voters; the removal of those who have passed away or moved out of the area; and the update of those who change party affiliation.

Voter Registration

Voter registration in Phillipston has never been easier than it is today. Mail in Voter Registration Forms can be found on-line: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/2013-Voter-reg-mail-in.pdf> Or, you may obtain one from the Town Clerk's Office in Town Hall, the Phillipston Free Library, United States Post Offices and various other locations throughout the state. In addition, the state registries of motor vehicles, social service agencies and military recruitment offices provide voter registration services. Further voter Registration information can be found at: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleifv/howreg.htm>

NEW : As of August 1, 2012 : MA Voter Registration Forms are now available on-line at [:http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/2013-Voter-reg-mail-in.pdf](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/2013-Voter-reg-mail-in.pdf)

Applicants can complete the forms using the computer (similar to the way the national form works), but will still have to print and sign and return to the Town Clerks Office, 50 The Common, Phillipston, MA 01331.

Any person who is a Massachusetts resident, a United States citizen and will be eighteen years old as of the next election is eligible to register to vote. You do not need a drivers license or any other form of identification to register. However, when you sign the registration form, you must attest, under the pains and penalties of perjury, that you are legally eligible to register and that the information you provide is accurate and truthful. The penalty for fraudulent registration has increased recently to a fine of ten thousand dollars or imprisonment for up to five years or both. When you register, you may choose to become a member of a political party, select a designation for a political organization which has not achieved party status in the state, or choose to become an "un-enrolled" voter (commonly referred to as "independent"). Remember that if you register in a party or select a political organization designation, in a primary election you may receive a ballot for only that party. Un-enrolled voters may request any ballot in a primary election. There are no primary election ballots for political designations.

You will remain on the list of voters as long as you vote regularly and complete and return the annual municipal census. If you move to another city or town or state, you must re-register in your new

community. You should also send a letter to the old Town's clerk. Any and all registered voters must sign the letter to be deleted.

Registration Deadlines

Be aware that there are voter registration deadlines. You must register to vote at least twenty (20) days before any Town or State election, Annual Town Meeting, or the Presidential Primary. You must register to vote at least ten (10) days before any Special Town Meeting.

Annual Municipal Census

The Town Clerk conducts the annual census of Phillipston's almost 700 households and publishes the results in a printed residents' lists that is commonly known as the "Street List". The publication contains an alphabetical-numerical list of all residents seventeen and older. The Town Clerk also prepares a non-public list of persons age three and older for the School Department. The largest user of these street lists are the Emergency Services (fire, police and ambulance).

Caucus, Nominations and Petition Papers

A non-partisan town caucus is a meeting at which voters of the community of Phillipston nominate candidates who will appear on the local election ballot. Candidates do not use party labels. Any voter of the town may attend caucus and vote. Twice the number of candidates to be elected to each office - those who receive the highest number of votes - will appear on the town election ballot designated as caucus nominee. Other candidates may run in the town election by filing nomination papers.

To run for office or to place a question on the ballot, gather the required number of signatures of registered voters on petition papers. The number of signatures depends on the office or the type of question. (See the various elections [Elections Guides] for the required number of signatures for a particular nomination or question time tables and other requirements). The Town Clerk supplies the petition papers.

Candidates or question proponents must gather the required number of signatures on the petition papers supplied by the Town Clerk. Once the signatures are gathered the petition papers are submitted to the Town Clerk for certification. The Town Clerk will certify the signature of any registered Phillipston voter. (If the paper is for the nomination of a candidate for a party primary the signatures of voters enrolled in another political party or political designation will not be counted.) If the required number of signatures is certified, the candidate or question will appear on the ballot.

Campaign and Political Finance Filings

State law requires an accounting of all money received or spent in the course of a political campaign. In Phillipston, the Town Clerk serves as the Town's Campaign and Political Finance Director for all local campaigns. As a result, the financial disclosure statements of candidate and ballot question committees must be filed with the Town Clerk and maintained for public inspection.

The financial disclosure statements must be on forms prescribed by the Town Clerk and include the name of the candidate or ballot question committee; the address of the committee; the committee's chairman and treasurer; an accounting of all contributions received; and a listing of all individuals who contributed over a presented amount. The statements also must include an accounting of all campaign expenditure.

The statements, which are filed periodically throughout the year, are reviewed and audited by the Town Clerk. The filing deadlines for Town candidates or questions are: the eighth day before a Town preliminary election, general election or special election; the thirtieth day following a Town preliminary election, general election or special election; and the twentieth day of January the following year, with an accounting of all required information through December 31 of the preceding year.

Poll Location(s):

The Annual Town Election on the 1st Monday in May is held in the **Phillipston Town Hall, 50 The Common, Phillipston, MA 0131**

Voting in Phillipston

The polls are open in Phillipston on election day from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. for state and national elections. For Town elections the hours are 12 noon to 8:00 p.m.

When you approach the check-in table, first tell the poll worker your last name, your first name and the name of the street where you live, as the voters list is arranged alphabetically by name, this is the quickest way to receive your ballot and keep any lines moving.

In a primary election, voters who are registered in a political party only may obtain a ballot for that party. If you are an "unenrolled voter" (commonly referred to as an "independent voter"), you may request the ballot of any party participating in the primary election.

If your name does not appear on the list of voters, the poll worker should contact the Town Clerk.

If you are not on any list in the Town, but believe you registered, you have two options: the first option is to go to the office of the Town Clerk for a search of records and the second option is to simply vote on a provisional ballot.

The individual must sign both a provisional ballot affirmation and a provisional ballot precinct signature roster. The precinct election officer shall mark the number of the provisional ballot envelope on the provisional ballot affirmation and the roster. The precinct election officer shall check the appropriate box on the roster and on the Provisional Ballot Affirmation next to the circumstance for issuing the provisional ballot.

Official ballots are used, however, the precinct election officer writes the word "Provisional" on a ballot before handing it to the individual with a provisional ballot envelope.

After voting a provisional ballot, the individual places it in the provisional ballot envelope, seals it and then returns the sealed provisional ballot envelope to the precinct officer.

Provisional ballots cast by an individual whose voter information is verified before 5 pm on the third day after the state primary are removed from the provisional ballot envelope, grouped with other ballots in a manner that allows for the secrecy of the ballot to the greatest extent possible, and counted as any other ballot.

Once you receive a ballot, you cast your votes in the privacy of the voting booth. You may vote for the choices available on the ballot or, if you prefer, write-in the name of a candidate in space provided on the ballot. If you mismark your ballot, you must return it to the poll worker to have it marked as "spoiled" so that you may receive a new ballot. If you are disabled and need assistance, you may be accompanied by someone who can provide the needed assistance or request a poll worker to provide you with confidential, nonpartisan help. When you have finished voting you must proceed to the check-out table and again state your name and the street where you live. (The check-in/check-out procedure allows for a full accounting of all ballots to reduce the chance of fraud.) After you have checked-out, you deposit your ballot in the ballot box.

Prohibited Activities

State law prohibits the display of political paraphernalia within 150 feet of the entrance to the polling location. Signs, stickers and even lapel buttons are not permitted within this restricted zone. Political conversation, including a candidate greeting the voters and soliciting votes, is allowed within the restricted zone so long as there is no active interference or badgering, and no prohibited paraphernalia is displayed.

Absentee Voting in Phillipston

Voters who are unable to vote on election day because of physical disability, religious beliefs or travel may vote by absentee ballot. State law limits the availability of absentee ballots to the three listed circumstances only. Absentee ballots are not available for mere inconvenience, or because of ordinary commuting-related difficulties. If you will be absent from Phillipston for an extended period of time, you may submit a single application for all elections occurring within the year the application is accepted.

Applications for absentee ballots may be obtained from the Town Clerk or the Office of the Secretary of State. Applications may be submitted in person or by mail. The voter, or a "family member" (father, mother, sister, brother, son, daughter, grandparent, grandchild, a spouse or person residing in the same household, in-laws, adoptive parent or adopted child, stepparent or stepchild, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew), may submit an application. All applications must be signed under the pains and penalties of perjury by the voter, or a family member, before a ballot will be made available.

In a primary election, a voter who is not registered in a political party must specify the ballot of the party of choice in the application. You will not become registered in a party because of your participation in a state primary.

Applications for absentee ballots must be received by the Town Clerk before 12:00 noon the day before an election. (A voter who is admitted to a health care facility after noon of the fifth day before an election may apply for a ballot up until the close of the polls and may request to have the ballot delivered.) Absentee ballots generally are available three weeks before an election.

In the event that the Town Clerk cannot find the name of a voter requesting an absentee ballot, the voter must be sent a provisional ballot with a letter explaining the reason.

If the voter submits the application in person, he may obtain the ballot (call first to see if it is available) and vote over-the-counter. If the ballot is not available, it will be sent to the voter when available. When the application is submitted in person by a family member, the ballot only will be sent by mail to the voter. In all other cases, the ballot is sent by mail. Ballots may be returned by mail or in person by the voter or a family member. All ballot envelopes must be signed by the voter, or if the voter is unable to sign, an assisting person.

Permanently Disabled Voters

A voter who is permanently disabled need not submit a request for an absentee ballot every election. If such a voter submits a note from a registered physician indicating that he is disabled permanently, the Town Clerk will send an application for an absentee ballot twenty-eight days before every election. The application will be as complete as the Town Clerk can make it and the voter in most cases only will have to sign the application and return it. Upon the Town Clerk's receipt of the signed application, the voter will be sent an absentee ballot.

Specially Qualified Voters

In addition to registered voters, certain "specially qualified voters" may vote by absentee ballot. A "specially qualified voter" is a person who is a Massachusetts citizen, living outside of the United States, who is at least eighteen years old and whose last residence in the United States was Massachusetts. You also may be a "specially qualified voter" if you are otherwise eligible to be a registered voter and your present domicile (a place where you live and plan to remain) is Massachusetts and you are: out of the Town because you are in the active service of the armed forces or merchant marine of the United States, or a spouse or dependent of such person absent from the Commonwealth; or confined in a correctional facility or jail.

Return of Ballots

In general, absentee ballots must be received before the polls close to be counted. However, absentee ballots for the state general election completed outside the United States will be counted if received by

5:00 p.m. on the tenth day following the election. This exception does not apply to Bolton Town elections or state primaries.

A listing of all voters who obtained absentee ballots is sent to the poll locations to prevent such a voter from voting a second time.

If the Town Clerk learns that an absentee voter has died before the election, his votes will not be counted.