

# Santa Clara Elections – Getting Involved

*The City of Santa Clara and Santa Clara WEEKLY have partnered in a series of four articles outlining what it means to serve, how to file to run for office, the basic elements of a political campaign and other community involvement options. The City will also show a series of video vignettes on cable channel 15 and on the City's website in the next few weeks.*

## **Public Service in Santa Clara: Campaigning for Elected Office**

### **Part 3 in a series of 4**

Once you've considered the job, filed the paperwork and started running for office, the question looms ... now what do I do? Fortunately, there are a number of proven methods to campaign for public office.

It should be clear, these are examples of what many campaigns have done historically, but are not the only tactics. Certainly, some have chosen other routes and it is your job as a candidate to find which work best for you. Few have done everything, or every element perfectly, but there are some recurring themes.

The election cycle is your opportunity to share who you are and why you'll be the best City Councilmember. The first step is considering your track record, community involvement and reasons for wanting to serve. These are used as the base for collateral material (printed and electronic) to define who you are

as a candidate.

The next step is getting your message out. This is often done by walking precincts, which are geographical blocks of voters arranged by the Registrar of Voters (ROV). The "direct mailing" of campaign material is also a common practice, as is phone-banking to contact potential voters. Precinct maps can be purchased at the ROV, as well as voter information and a list of "data vendors" who can put it all in a usable format if necessary.

Candidate forums are also common opportunities to share your views with voters. More recently, campaigns have used websites, email and social networking sites to campaign as well. Additionally, the endorsement processes for newspapers, interest groups and individuals can be helpful both to spread the word as well as garner campaign donations.

To pay for these efforts, candidates often fundraise. The City has a \$36,800 voluntary

expenditure limit. Candidates who accept this can accept up to \$500 from each donor, while those who do not are limited to \$250 per donor. Likely donors can be found in friends, family, activists and community groups to name a few. When last measured, about 80 percent of the money spent in a political campaign was on direct voter outreach.

For more information about the process, your best bet is to ask someone who has run before, or volunteer for a political campaign. While nuanced, the skills to seek election are well within the bounds of any Santa Clara to learn and understand.

*This series provides a summary that pertains to most candidates, but certainly will not cover all of the complex nuances of the process. The City and Santa Clara Weekly do not provide political or legal advice, it is the obligation of the candidate to learn and adapt as required for each effort's unique needs*