

Elected officials, ballot measures and political candidates and campaigns at Neighborhood Association Meetings

Neighborhood associations are intended to help strengthen and enhance the neighborhood as a community. We encourage neighborhood groups to provide opportunity for neighbors to discuss and share issues and improve their community. We discourage use of neighborhood groups as political entities.

If your neighborhood association is a 501©3 corporation or otherwise a tax-exempt entity, the association may be prohibited under IRS regulations from endorsing candidates or ballot measures. Regardless of your group's IRS tax status, Washington State public disclosure rules may apply depending on your involvement.

The City is restricted as a public agency from providing mailings or funding for political activities. Meeting notices provided by the City must meet state guidelines on use of public funds.

Although the neighborhood associations are separate entities from City government and can make their own determinations, the City / Office of Neighborhoods strongly recommends that neighborhood leaders and the association as a whole conduct their meetings in such a way as to maintain a neutral stance when discussing ballot measures, hosting candidates for office or presentation of petitions.

We encourage neighborhood leaders to maintain a neutral approach and to offer all candidates and ballot sponsors the same opportunity to attend and provide representatives with opposing viewpoints on ballot issues equal access to neighborhood meetings.

Our policy is detailed below. These are best practices to minimize risk to neighborhood groups.

Policy

Everett elected officials along with other elected officials may visit or request to be speakers at neighborhood meetings. It is proper for elected officials to keep citizens informed on issues. Elected officials should always be introduced whether they are candidates or not.

While it is at the association's discretion, we strongly recommend that you use the following policy in regards to appearances by **candidates for public office** or representatives for **campaigns supporting ballot measures**:

- Representatives of ballot measures, and candidates for elected office may attend your meeting, and as a courtesy, you may introduce them and say that they will be available after the meeting if anyone wishes to talk with them.
- Associations should encourage discussion of pros and cons of ballot measures. Opposing candidates or representatives should be invited to attend neighborhood meetings.
- Candidates and representatives of ballot measures can leave their literature, including petitions, on the table but should not to pass them out during the meeting.
- Campaign representatives and candidates may remain after the meeting to speak to neighborhood residents and respond to questions.
- We encourage neighborhood association leaders and the association as a whole to remain neutral and refrain from taking a position or endorsing candidates or ballot measures.

Mailings for Neighborhood Meetings:

The City will strive to avoid the listing of specific candidate names or the promotion of initiatives on the mailings announcing neighborhood meetings.

Candidate and/or Issue Forums

- Neighborhood associations may collaborate to host a candidates' forum or forums on ballot measures as a neutral setting for dialog.
- These forums offer the public access to those campaigning on measures or seeking public office, to hear presentations from all candidates/perspectives, and can be used to discuss concerns, questions and answers.
- The City may provide mailings to announce candidate/ballot measure forums.
- All candidates are to be invited to participate as well as all representatives for and against ballot measures.
- Forum mailings can list the office or position and indicate that candidates for those positions have been invited to the forum.
- The City will fund mailings for up to three candidate and/or ballot measure forums co-hosted by at least three neighborhood associations each.

The Office of Neighborhoods will send letters about the City's policy and guidelines to candidates and initiative sponsors outlining the City's policy regarding neighborhood meetings.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please call the Office of Neighborhoods at 425 257-8717.

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