

“MEET THE CANDIDATES” NIGHT

PLYMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 16, 2003

In this exchange of ideas, the structure and conduct of the meeting will be key to the evening's success. Without much imagination, one can picture this well-intentioned forum deteriorating into some level of chaos. That must not and will not happen.

A predetermined set of guidelines will be provided and strictly followed on Tuesday evening. Cooperation on the part of all parties will offer an ideal opportunity for success – providing the Plympton citizenry with the most relevant input about the four people who hope to assume one of the highest leadership roles in town government. The purpose of this forum is strictly informational. “Debate” is not the intention or desired outcome. All questions/responses/statements will be conducted in an orderly fashion.

The forum will be separated into three segments, as follows:

1. Four predetermined sets of questions will be asked of the candidates. These questions will hopefully embody some of the concerns and interests that all Plympton residents have about the Town's future. Each candidate will, in turn, be given a maximum of three (3) minutes to provide their views on the subject. This segment should complete in approximately one hour. A short break will then be taken, giving the audience a chance to absorb what has been said, and decide on any follow-up questions they may have, or new areas they wish to see addressed.
2. The second segment will be an open forum. Any adult Plympton resident in attendance may, upon recognition from the chair, identify themselves (name and street address) and ask one question. The question may be directed to one candidate or all candidates. The candidate(s) will then be given three (3) minutes maximum to respond to the question. One hour will be dedicated to this segment.
3. The third segment provides each candidate the opportunity for final comments not to exceed five (5) minutes. The candidate may cover any subject he/she wishes, provided their comments are germane to the subject at hand (conducting the Town's business by assuming the vacant elected position).

A primary goal of the agenda is completing the evening's business in approximately 2 ½ hours. Beyond that point, all parties become fatigued and focus is difficult to maintain.

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—— Guidelines ——

- 1. For the first segment, the order of answer is simple. The first question will be answered according to the alphabetical listing of the candidates' last name. The sequence on the second question will then move up by one, meaning the candidate who answered second on the initial question will now answer first on the next question, and so forth. In this way, each person will answer first on a question, second on a question, etc. If the candidate approaches the three minute mark on any response, he/she will be asked to “complete their thought”. The moderator will then interrupt (for want of a better term), and move the proceedings along.**
- 2. For the second segment, the order of answer is the same as the first, i.e., alphabetically, moving one “notch” with each question. Naturally, if a question is directed specifically to one candidate, this guideline is temporarily suspended.**
- 3. For the third segment, the order of candidates for final comments will be determined by a blind draw, conducted before the forum begins.**
- 4. Obviously, each candidate has the discretion of participating or not participating in the evening's forum. Should he/she decide to participate, responses must be relevant to the question posed, whether from the moderator or the floor. The moderator will stop any attempt to ignore the question and freelance a response. He will then simply move to the next candidate or question.**
- 5. Personal attacks on any candidate or person in attendance by anyone will not be tolerated. In such an event, the speaker will be stopped and the forum will proceed to the next item of business. During the second segment, personal questions will not be allowed. All questions must be phrased and relevant to the conduct of town business in the successful candidate's role as Plympton Selectmen.**
- 6. Unlike other gatherings such as Town Meeting, the audience's views are not the subject of the evening's events. They will be heard on election day. The purpose of the night is strictly to learn the positions of the candidates on various issues. During the second segment, “speeches” on the part of the audience will be discouraged. The speaker will be motivated to state a clearly phrased, short question for the candidate(s).**
- 7. Each candidate retains the right to refuse to comment on any particular question, either for personal preference or because he/she disagrees with the moderator's ruling that a question is relevant.**

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—— Questions ——

- 1. Whether at Town Hall or in the coffee shop, discussion frequently moves to the topic of the diversity (or lack of) in the Town’s tax base. The industrial park has languished, and commercial development is sparse. Invariably, the completion of new Route 44 enters the picture.**

Question: As Selectmen, would you support more diversity in the tax base, and, if so, how would you encourage it? As a follow-up, should the tax rates for all zones (agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial) continue to be the same?

- 2. Most have termed the current financial situation in Massachusetts at both the State and town level as a fiscal crisis. Budget cuts are the norm and a corresponding drop in services is being felt by the populace.**

Question: As Selectmen, what steps would you encourage to stabilize the financial situation in Plympton? Are cuts in services inevitable, and if so, where do you see the most prudent cuts coming? What is your position on annual Prop 2 ½ override requests, and will these become the norm for the foreseeable future?

- 3. Most residents are familiar with the Town services provided by Plympton, including Town Hall, police, fire, trash disposal, road maintenance, educational services including schools, recreational facilities, assistance for senior citizens, etc. Most also have an opinion as to how adequately these services, taken in total, represent what local residents want and need.**

Question: Do you feel the level of services provided is too much, adequate or lacking? Which services, if any, need to be bolstered, and which, if any, need to be curtailed? In light of your comments on questions 1 and 2, how would you hope to accomplish these changes?

- 4. Plympton remains a small town where forums such as the one tonight are infrequent, press coverage is relatively sparse, and word of mouth is often the most common, if not effective, means of communication on Town issues. As the issues become more complex and arise more frequently, the public’s need and right to know more, in a timely fashion, is also growing.**

Question: How effective do Town officials communicate with the citizenry of Plympton? Do they need to communicate more or less? What would you support as the best ways (new or otherwise) to keep all of us up to date on Town business and issues?