



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
Stephen J. Ruger, CMC, City Clerk

Aurora Candidate Handbook

2019 Edition

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Letter of Introduction



Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in serving as an elected official for the City of Aurora. This handbook serves to answer questions and guide you through the process of running your campaign and declaring your candidacy. Municipal elections are administered through the Office of the City Clerk. The City Clerk's Office is available to answer any questions you have to help guide you through the election process.

Aurora is a home-rule municipality and is governed by a charter adopted by the voters. The City of Aurora operates under the council-manager form of government, which is described in more detail in this document. There are three classifications of elected officials including an at-large mayor, four council members elected at-large, and six ward council members elected by citizens in each respective ward. Aurora's elections are non-partisan and elected officials are elected into office without consideration of political party affiliation. Council member terms are staggered over two year periods. Aurora currently has an estimated population of 374,154 residents and approximately 190,000 registered voters.

Many questions that are not specifically covered in this handbook can be found using online resources. Please visit the city's website at, <http://www.auroragov.org> and the city's online code of ordinances located at: <https://library.municode.com/CO/Aurora>. At both, you will find many resources to assist you in learning about Aurora's government.

Please review all the pages of this handbook, paying particular attention to the requirements for declaring your candidacy, running your campaign, and the position responsibilities for the office in which you seek to serve. The Office of the City Clerk will provide you with a candidate packet containing all required forms and more detailed information.

We wish you success on your journey. Please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk's Office with any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen J. Ruger".

Stephen J. Ruger, City Clerk

Form of Government – Council-Manager

The City of Aurora operates under a council/manager form of government, combining the political leadership of elected officials with the managerial expertise of a professionally trained, local government manager appointed to the position. Council members are the city's policy makers, elected by popular vote to be responsive to citizens' needs and wishes.

They focus on:

- Aurora's short-term goals
- Major projects and long-term considerations such as capital improvement projects
- Land use development
- Capital financing
- Strategic planning

The City Manager oversees the day-to-day operations of the city and serves at the pleasure of the Mayor and Council.

The City Manager:

- Ensures that the policy direction set by the city council is carried out
- Ensures that the city's delivery of public services is of high quality and provided in an efficient and cost-effective manner
- Prepares a recommended budget for the city council
- Recruits, hires and supervises city staff
- Provides objective information and recommendations to the city council regarding issues and decisions.

Detailed information regarding the specific duties of the Mayor and Council Members can be found later in this document.



Qualifications of Candidates

Qualifications Required to Run for Municipal Office

All candidates must meet the following requirements to run for municipal office in Aurora:

- Be a resident of the City (see additional explanation below)
- Be 21 years of age or older
- Be a United States citizen
- Be a registered elector of Aurora
(You may register to vote or receive more information from the Secretary of State's website at: <https://govotecolorado.com>)

In addition, any person convicted of a felony shall not become a candidate nor hold elective office. No council member shall hold any other elective public office nor be a salaried employee of the City of Aurora.

Residency Requirements

All candidates must have resided within the municipal boundaries of the city of Aurora for at least one-year prior to the date of the election. Candidates for ward seats are also required to be one-year residents of the respective wards from which they are elected. Candidates, if elected, must maintain residency within the municipal boundaries of the city of Aurora, and if elected to represent a specific ward, maintain residency within that ward.

Candidate Packets

Candidate packets containing required forms, copies of applicable statutes, and other pertinent information for the Regular Municipal Election are available from the Office of the City Clerk. Please contact the Clerk's Office at (303) 739-7094 or by email at CityClerk@auroragov.org for more information.

Declaration of Candidacy/Getting on the Ballot

Announcement of Candidacy

You may announce your candidacy at any time. For purposes of municipal campaign and financial disclosure, you will become a candidate for election if you have publicly announced an intention to seek public office and thereafter received a contribution in support of the candidacy. A Candidate Affidavit form must be filed with the City Clerk within ten days of announcing your candidacy or receiving your first contribution.

Nomination Petitions

If you are interested in running for municipal office, you may obtain a nomination petition form from the City Clerk. Once you have received the required number of signatures for the office you are seeking (see below), you will file your nomination petition with the City Clerk. For mayor and council at-large positions, the petitions must be signed by registered electors residing within the corporate limits of Aurora. For council ward positions, the petitions must be signed by registered electors residing within the corporate limits of Aurora and the ward which the person wishes to represent. The signature requirement is as follows:

- For mayor and council members at-large: **100 signatures**
- For council members from within a ward: **50 signatures**

The Clerk's Office strongly recommends that you obtain more than the required number of signatures as some signatures may not qualify as valid.

Registered electors may sign nomination petitions as follows:

- One petition for the office of council member from within a ward
- One petition for the office of mayor
- Two petitions for the office of council member at-large

You may obtain nomination petitions from the City Clerk's office and begin circulating them the 90th day prior to the election. Petitions must be filed no later than 5:00 p.m. on the 70th day prior to the election. Registered electors are encouraged to sign in blue or black ink for legibility purposes and no one may sign any nomination petition for another person. If, after review of each signature, the City Clerk determines that your nomination petition does not contain the requisite number of signatures, you will have until 64 days before the date of the election to amend your nomination petition by collecting additional signatures.

You may circulate your own petition, or others may circulate the petitions on your behalf.

Write-in Candidacy

If you wish to file as a write-in candidate, you must file an affidavit with the City Clerk no later than 64 days before the election affirming that you are qualified to run for municipal office and wish to be a write-in candidate. All write-in candidates must comply with the provisions of the municipal code by filing a candidate's affidavit and qualification statement, committee's statement of organization, and the required statements of contributions and expenditures.

Withdrawal of Candidacy

If you have been nominated as a candidate and have accepted the nomination, you may withdraw as a candidate by filing a written affidavit with the City Clerk at any time until the 63rd day before the day of the election.

Campaigning

Contributions/Expenditures and Reporting

All candidate committees, issue committees, political committees and exploratory committees must report to the City Clerk all contributions received, including the name and address of each person who has contributed **\$20.00 or more**; all expenditures made; and all obligations entered into by the committee. It is essential that you track all contributions, and expenditures pertinent to your campaign. You may receive contributions only after registering your committee with the City Clerk by filing a Candidate Committee Registration form. Please note, this form **must be filed within ten days** of receiving your first contribution. All contributions must be deposited in a financial institution in a separate account whose title includes the name of the candidate committee.

Your first campaign contribution/expenditure report will be due on the 90th day before the date of the election and will cover all activity prior to the 90th day before the election. You will file subsequent campaign contribution/expenditure reports on the 21st day and on the Friday before the election. A final report will be due 30 days after the municipal election. Please list any loans to your campaign as contributions. In turn, any payments made to refund loans should be listed as expenditures. For in-kind donations, please list the estimated dollar amount of the contribution and note that it is an in-kind donation.

You may not use any contributions for personal purposes not reasonably related to supporting your campaign. In addition to the above, the City Clerk will provide you with detailed information on remaining contributions and reporting requirements.

Other Considerations

Following are frequently asked questions regarding campaign financing:

Are there any limits on the amount of money I may receive?

There are no contribution limits; however, your committee shall not accept any cash contribution that is more than \$100.

Are there any restrictions regarding who may contribute to my campaign?

Yes. Your committee may not accept contributions from a candidate committee of another candidate, from any natural person who is not a citizen of the United States, from a foreign government, or from a foreign corporation that does not have authority to transact business in Colorado pursuant to Title 7, article 115, C.R.S.

Additionally, your committee shall not accept a total contribution in excess of \$25,000 from a prior candidate committee for the same person that was established for a different public office.

How and where do I file?

You will file your reports using Aurora's online campaign filing system called e-Filing. The City Clerk will provide you a unique password which you will use to gain access to the system. Once your filing is submitted, the City Clerk's office reviews your report and it becomes a public record. Please note that all reports are posted on the City's website after they are submitted and reviewed.

What happens if I miss the campaign filing deadline?

You will pay a late fee of \$50 per day for each day any statement or other information that is required to be filed is not filed by the close of business on the date due.

If I have funds left in my candidate committee account, what can I do with it?

Unexpended campaign funds must be disposed of in specific ways pursuant to Chapter 54-102 of the Aurora municipal code. The City Clerk will provide you with more detailed information regarding excess funds.

Signs

Signs on public and private property within the city limits are regulated by ordinance. Your signs cannot be larger than six square feet in size and cannot be placed more than four feet from the ground. **They can only be placed on developed property in all zoning districts and cannot be placed on public property and in the public rights-of-way.** You must remove all signs within seven days following the date of the election.

Election

Voting

Regular municipal elections take place on the first Tuesday of November in odd numbered years. Aurora follows the Uniform Election Code of 1992, articles 1-13 of Title 1 of the Colorado Revised Statutes, which provides that elections held in November of odd-numbered years are to be considered coordinated elections, ones in which several jurisdictions with overlapping boundaries and the same voters hold elections on the same day. It further provides that these elections are to be conducted by the county clerk and recorder. Since the adoption of the act, the City of Aurora has participated in coordinated elections. These elections are conducted as mail ballot elections. In a mail ballot election, ballots are automatically mailed to all active registered electors.

Position Responsibilities/Meetings

Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem

The Mayor's, and Mayor Pro Tem's, duties and obligations are specified in Aurora's charter and municipal code. Section 3-2 of the charter states:

The mayor will be the presiding officer at all meetings of the city council. The mayor shall be considered a full-time officer of the city. However, the mayor shall not be entitled to cast a vote upon any resolution or ordinance unless it is to create or break a tie vote. The mayor shall be recognized as head of the city government for all ceremonial and legal purposes, and shall execute and authenticate legal instruments requiring a signature as such official. A mayor pro tem shall be elected by the councilmembers who shall act as mayor during the absence of the mayor with all power herein granted to the mayor. The mayor pro tem shall not be subject to the tie vote restriction relating to the mayor.

Section 2-31 of the Aurora municipal code states the following:

(a) The mayor shall preside at meetings of the council and shall exercise such other powers and perform such other duties as are or may be conferred and imposed upon him or her by the state constitution, statutes, the Charter or this Code. He or she shall be recognized as the head of the city government for all ceremonial purposes, by the courts for serving civil processes and by the government for the purposes of military law.

(b) Notwithstanding any provision of state law to the contrary and upon authorization by a majority vote of the members of council voting thereon, the mayor shall execute:

- (1) All leases and conveyances of public utilities, public buildings, or any interest in real property by the city; provided, however, that the city shall not sell or convey any lands granted to, or purchased for use and used by the city for park purposes, without a majority vote of the city's registered electors at a special or regular municipal election;
- (2) All intergovernmental agreements to which the city is a party; and
- (3) All bonds or other obligations evidencing an indebtedness of, or a borrowing of money by the city.

(c) The mayor is authorized to execute releases of easements upon the recommendation of the city engineer that such easements are no longer needed.

(d) At the first meeting of the council following every regular municipal election, the council shall choose by a majority vote for a term of one year one of its members as mayor pro tem. The mayor pro tem shall perform the duties and responsibilities of mayor in the absence of the mayor and such other powers and duties as shall be conferred and imposed upon him or her by ordinance.

City Council Member

Section 3-9 of Aurora's charter and code delegates the power of the city council. Specifically, it states:

The council shall have all legislative powers of the city and all other powers of a home rule city not specifically limited by the Constitution of the State of Colorado and not specifically limited or conferred upon others by this Charter. It shall have the power to enact and provide for the enforcement of all ordinances necessary to protect life, health and property; to declare, prevent and summarily abate and remove nuisances; to preserve and enforce good government, general welfare, order and security of the city and the inhabitants thereof; to enact by ordinance provisions for fines and/or imprisonment, or other punishment, for each and every violation of ordinances or regulations duly passed by council; to provide for the granting of probation and the conditional suspension of sentences by the municipal court; and to delegate to boards and commissions, within limitations of the Constitution and this Charter, such functions, powers and authority of the city as it deems proper and advisable.

The council, or a committee thereof duly authorized by it, shall have power to investigate the official acts and conduct of any officer of the city, and may compel the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of books and documents.

In addition Section 2-32 of the municipal code states:

The corporate authority and all legislative authority of the city shall be vested in the council, as the governing body (city council) of the city. The council shall have and shall exercise the powers, privileges and duties granted and conferred by the state constitution, statute or city Charter. The council shall have power to make and publish from time to time ordinances not inconsistent with the laws of the state for carrying into effect or discharging the powers and duties conferred by the state constitution, statute or city Charter and such as it shall deem necessary and proper to provide for the safety; preserve the health; promote the prosperity; and improve the morals, order, comfort and convenience of the city and the inhabitants thereof. The council shall determine its own rules and procedures and order of business and shall keep a journal of its proceedings. It may compel attendance of members and may punish members for misconduct.

There are no specific job responsibilities for individual city council member. In general, council members are required to attend all city council meetings, vote on each item appearing on the agenda (unless there is a conflict of interest), and are expected to represent the residents of their district. This includes serving as a liaison between citizens and city staff. In addition, the city council annually reviews and adopts a budget, which serves as the organization's key policy document. As a member of the city council, individual councilmembers do not provide direction. All authority and power is exercised through action of the city council collectively.

Meetings

The City Council meets regularly at least twice a month on Mondays. The regular meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. and is generally preceded by a study session and, if necessary, an executive session. These meetings typically begin in the late afternoon. Special meetings of the council may also be called. Except for executive sessions, all meetings where the transaction of business occurs are considered public meetings and are open to the public. Six members of the Council constitute a quorum and, as such, may only meet in the context of an open meeting noticed to the public.

In addition to attendance at Council meetings, council members' attendance is required at meetings of one or more of the City's policy committees to which they have been appointed. The City Council also serves as the Aurora Urban Renewal Authority as a separate entity. Council members may also be selected to serve on boards or committees of regional, state, and national organizations. Council members regularly conduct ward meetings and also attend community and ward events and activities.

Three workshops are held each year, a winter workshop, a spring workshop, and one in the fall (budget workshop). These workshops are typically held as day sessions on Saturdays.

Ordinances and Resolutions

The City Charter delegates express authority to make legislative enactments to the City Council. Specifically, Section 5-1 of the Aurora City Charter states, "Council shall act only by ordinance, resolution or motion. All legislative enactments must be in the form of ordinances; all other actions, except as herein provided, may be in the form of resolutions or motions."

Ordinances

An ordinance is the most formal type of action City Council can take. Ordinances specifically are required when "making an appropriation, creating an indebtedness, authorizing borrowing of money, levying a tax, establishing any rule or regulation for the violation of which a penalty is imposed, or placing any burden upon or limiting the use of private property, shall be by ordinance." Charter Sec. 5-3

Resolutions

Resolutions are legislative acts that lack the formal requirements that the City Charter mandates for ordinances. As a general rule, "ordinances are used to enact laws of a general and permanent nature...Resolutions may suffice for administrative or executive matters...or for statements of general policy." COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE, COLORADO MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT: AN INTRODUCTION 14 (2013).

Compensation

Compensation

Section 3-6 of Aurora's charter specifies the salaries for elected officials.

The annual base salaries of the council of the City of Aurora for 2018 were as follows:

Mayor	\$80,000
Mayor Pro Tem	\$20,550
Members of the Council	\$18,550

Salaries are modified annually in an amount equal to that cost of living increase or decrease occurring during the previous calendar year as determined by the United States Department of Labor Consumer Price Index for the region which includes the Denver metropolitan area or the average increase or decrease given to all city employees, whichever is less. Such salaries shall be in addition to any other emoluments of office and said cost of living increase or decrease shall not be deemed or construed to be an increase or decrease of those salaries set forth herein and paid during the term of any council member. Certain benefits are also offered to the mayor and council members.

