

West Windsor Forward Candidate Forum 2025

Candidate Agreement and Candidate Ground Rules

westwindsorforward.org

CANDIDATE AGREEMENT

As a service to the voters in West Windsor Township, West Windsor Forward, with support from the League of Women Voters of the Greater Princeton Area (hereinafter referred to as "League of Women Voters" or "League"), is sponsoring a single public candidate forum for candidates running for Mayor and Township Council. You have confirmed your participation in this joint forum covering both Mayoral and Council races, contingent on there being sufficient candidates for your office as outlined below.

Event Details:

- **Date:** Thursday, September 25th, 2025
- **Time:** 7:00 PM to 9:15 PM (candidate arrival time: 6:30 PM)
- **Location:** Kelsey Theatre at Mercer County Community College
- **Positions:** Mayor of West Windsor Township and two seats on West Windsor Township Council

West Windsor Forward will livestream this event on YouTube and post the recording of the event in its entirety on YouTube and other platforms for viewing after the event.

Forum Contest Requirements by Office:

- **Council:** The council portion of the forum will be held when there are either (a) at least three council candidates are participating in the forum (b) council candidates from at least two different campaigns are participating, and a minimum of three council candidates are running in total.
- **Mayor:** The mayoral portion of the forum will be held when there are at least 2 mayoral candidates participating in the forum.

Recording and Media Consent

West Windsor Forward is dedicated to fostering an informed electorate and promoting non-partisan civic education. This policy outlines the terms for recording and using content from the 2025 Candidate Forum.

I. Official Recording & Ownership

1. **Consent & Authorization:** You consent to the livestream and recording of the candidate forum. Only West Windsor Forward is authorized to record the event.

2. **Ownership & Posting:** West Windsor Forward owns the content of the official recording and may post it in its entirety on its official channels.

II. Use of the Full Forum Recording

The complete, unedited official recording of the West Windsor Forward 2025 Candidate Forum will be made publicly available online in its entirety for non-partisan civic education and archive purposes.

III. Use of Forum Clips

To ensure the integrity of the forum's non-partisan purpose and to provide objective, contextual information:

1. **Authorized Clip Production:** West Windsor Forward will partner with Community News (West Windsor & Plainsboro News) as its authorized media organization to produce individual, issue-focused clips for **every question asked** during the forum (both panelist and town hall questions).
 - **Community News is not authorized to record their own footage of the forum.**
2. **Clip Content & Hosting:**
 - Each clip will contain the **full response of every candidate who answered that specific question**, ensuring complete context and equal representation.
 - Each clip will begin from the start of one question to the beginning of the next question, including everything in between.
 - Clips will be hosted on West Windsor Forward's official channels on public platforms (Youtube etc.) for fair and equal public access. All clips will be publicly published at the same time.
3. **Guidelines for Community News (Clip Production):**
 - **Neutrality:** Clips must be strictly neutral, focusing solely on candidate responses to specific questions.
 - **No Editorialization:** No commentary, music, graphics, or effects that could favor or oppose any candidate or political party. Community News is permitted to include graphics that include the text of questions as well as captioning of the response.
 - **Approval:** Final clips are subject to review by West Windsor Forward, for the sole purpose of ensuring adherence to the policies above prior to public release.

West Windsor Forward cannot thoroughly review or monitor how independently created versions are used. Any recordings or clips not supplied directly by us should be understood as the own, independent work of the creator and will not carry endorsement or responsibility from West Windsor Forward. West Windsor Forward does not prohibit or promote independent use, editing or distribution of the official forum recording or the clips. Candidates and the general public will have access to the forum recording and official clips that can be promoted on their own channels.

Compliance and Liability

- You agree to comply with all Kelsey Theatre and Mercer County Community College rules, regulations, and policies.
- You agree to hold harmless West Windsor Forward, the League of Women Voters of the Greater Princeton Area, Mercer County Community College, and their respective representatives from any claims, damages, or liabilities arising from your participation in this event.

CANDIDATE GROUND RULES

These ground rules apply specifically to candidates participating in the forum

PRE-EVENT REQUIREMENTS

- **Arrive at least 30 minutes early** (6:30 PM) for briefing with panelists and event organizers
- **Mandatory briefing:** Attend technical check and ground rules review

FORUM AUTHORITY AND FORMAT

Decision-Making Authority

Our Lead Panelist (Micah Rasmussen) will have final authority on all matters during the Forum.

Format Structure

The order of which campaign goes first will be determined by a random coin toss.

1. **5 minutes of introduction. 3 minutes are allotted between sections for transitions.**
2. **Ticket 1 - Panelist Questions - Mayor (18 minutes)**
3. **Ticket 2 - Panelist Questions - Mayor (18 minutes)**
4. **Ticket 2 - Panelist Questions - Council (18 minutes)**
5. **Ticket 1 - Panelist Questions - Council (18 minutes)**
6. **Ticket 2 - Town Hall Questions (20 minutes, audience questions screened by the panelists)**
7. **Ticket 1 - Town Hall Questions (20 minutes, audience questions screened by the panelists)**

Candidates that are not on stage will be sequestered (with no access to electronic communication devices), unable to hear or see what's occurring on stage.

The topics of the forum will focus exclusively on topics pertaining to West Windsor Township and a general list of topics will be provided to candidates as early as feasible. Questions will be developed by our panelists (David Matthau and Micah Rasmussen) with an emphasis on fairness and balance.

CONDUCT AND PARTICIPATION RULES

Time and Format Management

- **Strict time limits:** When time is called, finish your sentence and stop
- **Equal opportunity:** All campaigns will get an equal amount of time to answer as many questions as possible.
- **Sequestration:** The campaign not on the stage will not be able to hear what is going on on stage
- **Questions:** Questions will not be shared with candidates in advance

Professional Standards

- **Clothing requirement:** No political slogans or partisan messaging on clothing
- **Respectful dialogue:** No personal attacks, character assassination, or derogatory comments
- **Appropriate language:** Family-friendly language suitable for broadcast
- **Stage access:** Only candidates, panelists, and introductory speakers are permitted on stage — no candidates' staff, surrogates, or supporters

TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA RESTRICTIONS

- **Electronic devices:** All candidates must silence/off phones from the start of the forum
- **No social media:** Prohibited for candidates during the moderated forum segments
- **Communication blackout:** No contact between candidates' staff/advisors from the start of the forum until the conclusion of moderated segments.

CAMPAIGN MATERIALS AND SUPPORTERS

- **Literature:** Available at designated table in the lobby only
- **No in-theatre distribution:** Campaign materials prohibited inside the theatre
- **Supporter conduct:** Encourage all supporters to follow all attendee guidelines (below)
- **Clean-up:** Remove all campaign materials after event

ACCURACY AND FACT CHECKING

Candidates are responsible for the accuracy of their statements. West Windsor Forward and the League of Women Voters will not fact-check candidate statements during the forum, except at the sole discretion of the Lead Panelist in extraordinary circumstances. Candidates are permitted to fact-check each other during rebuttal opportunities.

VENUE SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE

- **Campus rules:** Follow all MCCC and Kelsey Theatre policies (no smoking, no alcohol, etc.)
- **Emergency procedures:** Comply with venue safety protocols
- **Security cooperation:** Follow directions from MCCC staff and event organizers

CONSEQUENCES

- **Warning system:** Minor violations receive warnings
- **Removal:** Serious violations (threats, disruption, non-compliance) may result in immediate removal
- **Disqualification:** Removal may affect eligibility for future West Windsor Forward events

RULE MODIFICATIONS

- **Subject to change:** These ground rules are subject to modification at any time at the discretion of West Windsor Forward and the League of Women Voters
- **Additional rules:** New rules may be added as needed to ensure the fair and orderly conduct of the forum
- **Notification:** Any rule changes or additions will be communicated to candidates as soon as practicable

BASIC ATTENDEE GUIDELINES

For supporters, staff, and guests invited by candidates. Comprehensive attendee guidelines will be available closer to the event date.

During the Forum

- **Audio levels:** Complete silent observation required - no cheering, booing, or audible responses. Hold applause until the very end of the forum.
- **No political displays:** No buttons, t-shirts, signs, or partisan materials inside theatre
- **Devices off/silent:** No recording, photography (other than the official West Windsor Forward recording/livestream and social media) during the event.

Questions and Participation

- **Written questions only:** During the town-hall questioning portion, submit questions on cards provided at entry
- **No floor discussion:** Questions or comments from seats are not permitted
- **Screening process:** All town-hall questions reviewed before presentation

General Conduct

- **Professional behavior:** Respectful toward all participants, staff, and attendees
 - **Follow venue rules:** Comply with MCCC campus policies
 - **Security cooperation:** Follow directions from event staff and security
 - **Emergency procedures:** Follow venue safety protocols if needed
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CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions: contact@westwindsorforward.org

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

By signing this agreement, you confirm your intent to participate and acknowledge that you have read, understood, and agree to abide by all ground rules outlined in this document. Violation of these rules may result in removal from the forum.

Thank you for your participation in this important civic event for West Windsor Township.

This agreement must be signed and returned ten days before the event (September 15th, 2025) to confirm your attendance and agreement to these terms.

For questions, please contact us at contact@westwindsorforward.org.

Candidate's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Candidate's Name (print): _____

Campaign/Ticket Name (print if applicable): _____

Candidate Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Position Seeking: ☐ Mayor of West Windsor Township ☐ West Windsor Township Council