



2026

COUNCIL CANDIDATE **HANDBOOK**

Primary Election - July 21, 2026

General Election - November 3, 2026



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WELCOME MESSAGE



375 W. Sahuarita Center Way
Sahuarita, AZ 85629
townclerk@sahuaritaaz.gov
(520) 822-8801
www.sahuaritaaz.gov

Congratulations!

You've taken the first step toward becoming an official candidate in the Town of Sahuarita's 2026 Election — we're glad you're here!

This packet includes helpful information about the 2026 Town Council Election, including important requirements for candidates. It's designed to support you as you begin your journey, but please note that it's for informational purposes only. Town staff cannot provide legal or financial advice.

As a candidate, it's your responsibility to ensure you meet all legal requirements throughout your campaign. Because election and campaign finance laws can be complex, and deadlines matter, we strongly recommend consulting with an attorney or a qualified professional who understands election law early in the process.

We encourage you to carefully review the materials in this packet to help keep your campaign on track and in compliance with all applicable laws and ordinances.

Thank you for your interest in serving our community. We appreciate your involvement in the election process and wish you the best in your campaign!

Sincerely,

Lisa Cole
Sahuarita Town Clerk
lcole@sahuaritaaz.gov

COUNCIL INFORMATION



Form of Government

The Town of Sahuarita has a council–manager form of government. Voters elect a Town Council, and the Council makes the main decisions for the community. The Council creates local laws, approves the Town’s budget, sets community policies, and hires three key officials: the Town Manager, the Town Attorney, and the Town Magistrate.

The Town’s authority and duties are based on Arizona state law. When state law does not provide clear instructions, the Town Council establishes the rules through local ordinances.

Candidate Qualifications (A.R.S. §§ 9-232 and 16-101)

Arizona Revised Statutes require the Mayor and Council Members to be qualified electors of the Town. A qualified elector must meet the requirements of the Constitution and laws of the State of Arizona for state, county, and town electors.

Town Council

The Town Council is made up of seven members. From among them, the Council selects a Mayor and a Vice Mayor. Council Members also serve on the Community Facilities District Boards.

In 2026, three Council Member seats will be up for election. Each seat carries a four-year term. In most years, new Council Members are elected during the Primary Election. Newly elected officials are sworn in and begin their duties at the next regular Town Council meeting following the General Election.

Town Council Members receive a monthly salary of \$983.33.



PRIMARY & GENERAL ELECTIONS

Primary Election - July 21, 2026

At the Primary Election, any candidate who receives a majority of all votes cast (as defined by law) — up to the number of seats available — is elected to office.

If more candidates receive a majority than there are seats to fill, the candidates with the highest number of votes will be elected.

If there are still open seats because not enough candidates received a majority, those remaining seats will be decided in the General Election.

General Election - November 3, 2026

If not all Council Member seats are filled in the Primary Election, a General Election will be held.

The candidates who move on to the General Election will be:

- Those who were not elected in the Primary Election, and
- Who received the highest number of votes, up to twice the number of seats still open.

These candidates will compete in the General Election to fill the remaining seats.

How to Calculate the Majority of Votes Cast

Step 1 - add the total number of votes cast for all candidates for office.

Step 2 - divide the sum in Step 1 by the number of seats to be filled at the election.

Step 3 - divide the result of Step 2 by 2 and round the result to the highest whole number.

This number is the Majority of Votes Cast (A.R.S. § 9-821.01(D)).

RUNNING FOR TOWN COUNCIL

NOMINATION PROCESS AND FILING PERIOD

Step 1 - File Statement of Interest

- File before collecting any signatures.
- Submit to the Town Clerk.
- Any signatures collected before filing are invalid (A.R.S. § 16-311).

Step 2 - Collect Petition Signatures

Signature requirement:

- Minimum: **273 valid signatures**
- Maximum: **545 valid signatures**

Signatures must come from qualified electors (registered voters) in Sahuarita (A.R.S. §§ 16-321 and 16-322).

Step 3 - If You Raise or Spend (in any combination) \$500+

You must register a campaign committee with the Town Clerk (A.R.S. § 16-905(B)).

Candidates who establish a campaign committee are subject to ongoing campaign finance reporting requirements. All reports must be filed with the Town Clerk in accordance with A.R.S. §§ 16-926, 16-927 and 16-928.

OFFICIAL FILING PERIOD

February 21, 2026 to March 23, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.

To become an official candidate and have your name printed on the 2026 Primary Election ballot, the following forms must be filed with the Town Clerk:

- **Nomination Petitions (273 to 545 signatures)**
- **Financial Disclosure Statement**
- **Nomination Paper including Declaration of Qualification**



CIRCULATING & SIGNING NOMINATION PETITIONS

Circulating Nominating Petitions

Petition Forms & Requirements

Sample petition forms are available on the Town website or at the Town Clerk's Office. Requirements are outlined in A.R.S. §§ 16-314, 16-315, 16-317, and 16-321. A Statement of Interest must be filed with the Town Clerk before collecting signatures.

Petition Circulators - Requirements

Eligibility

- Must be eligible to register to vote in Arizona.
- Non-residents of Arizona must register as circulators with the Arizona Secretary of State ([link](#))
- Candidates may circulate their own petitions.

Circulation Rules

- Each petition sheet must be circulated by only one person.
- The circulator's printed name, signature, and residential address must appear on the sheet.

Circulator Affidavit and Attestation:

Circulators must complete the affidavit on the back of each nomination petition attesting that:

- Each of the signers on the front of petition signed on the date indicated, and
- The circulator believes each signer was a qualified elector residing at the address given on the date indicated.

Nomination Petition Signatures

A qualified elector (a registered Sahuarita voter) may sign one nomination petition for each Council seat to be filled.

In 2026, three Town Council seats are available. Qualified electors may therefore sign up to three separate 4-year term nomination petitions for the Town Council.

Signatures may be withdrawn by the signer at any time before 5 PM on the date the petition is filed with the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk only checks petitions for form and signature count. If challenged, the candidate must defend the petition's validity in court. The Clerk's role is limited to confirming that petitions are substantially in regular form and contain the required number of signatures. If a petition is challenged, the candidate, not the Town, must defend its legal sufficiency.

E-Qual - Online Petition Signatures

A.R.S. § 16-317, allows local candidates to collect up to 110% of the minimum required nomination petition signatures online through E-Qual. This secure portal allows eligible voters to sign your petition electronically.

Candidates can create a profile, including website links, to share directly with voters. Start your online petition here: [E-Qual Candidate Portal](#)

WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

Requirements:

Write-in candidates are not required to file nomination petitions, but they must file all other required candidate forms.

To qualify as an official write-in candidate, the following forms must be filed with the Town Clerk:

- Statement of Interest
- Nomination Paper Declaration of Qualification
- Financial Disclosure Statement

These documents must be filed no later than 5:00 p.m. on **Friday, May 22, 2026** (60 days before the Primary Election).

Write-in candidates who do not file by this deadline will not have their votes counted.

Important: A write-in candidate cannot advance to the General or Run-off Election unless they receive at least the same number of votes as the minimum signatures required for nomination petitions for that office.

Primary Election — You cannot run as a write-in if you:

- Filed a petition but failed to provide enough signatures.
- Withdrew from the primary election after a court challenge was filed against your candidacy.
- Were removed from the primary ballot or otherwise determined by court order to be ineligible.

General Election — You cannot run as a write-in if you:

- Ran in the preceding primary and failed to be nominated.
- Filed a petition for the primary without enough valid signatures.

IMPORTANT NOTE

- A vote for a write-in candidate will only be counted if that person has filed the required paperwork. Votes for individuals who have not filed will be disregarded.
- Write-in candidates may file to run in the General Election; however, a General Election will only occur if a runoff is necessary after the Primary Election.



Advertising and Fundraising Disclosure Requirements (A.R.S. § 16-925)

Any person, other than an individual, who makes an expenditure for an advertisement or fundraising solicitation must include the following disclosures in the advertisement or solicitation:

Required Wording



1. The words “**paid for by**” followed by the name or the person making the expenditure.



2. Whether the expenditure was authorized by any candidate, followed by the identity of the authorizing candidate, if any.



3. If a disclosure contains an acronym or nickname not commonly known, spell it out or provide the full name.

Use of the Town Seal and Town Logo

The Town Seal and Town Logo are **not** allowed to be used on campaign materials.

The Town Seal identifies the organization of the Town of Sahuarita, its employees, and property. The Town Logo is restricted to Town-initiated publications, communications, and promotional materials.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS DISCLOSURES & EXEMPTIONS

I. DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

A. Written Materials

- Disclosure must be clearly readable.
- Includes electronic transmission of materials.

B. Radio Broadcast

- Disclosure must be clearly spoken at the beginning or the end.

C. Sign or Billboard

- Disclosure height must be at least 4% of the sign's vertical height.

D. TV or Video

- Disclosure must be written or spoken at the beginning or the end.
- If written disclosure appears for more than 1/6 broadcast time or 4 seconds, spoken disclosure is not required.
- Written disclosure must be at least 4% of the vertical picture.

II. DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS EXEMPTIONS

A. Digital & Online

- Social media messages, text messages, or short message service (SMS) posts.
- Paid web links (under 200 characters) that direct to a site compliant with disclosure requirements.
- Graphic or picture ads too small for printed disclosures may link to a site that meets disclosure requirements.

B. Print & Merchandise

- Published book, documentary film, or video.
- Bumper stickers, pins, buttons, pens, and similar items too small for disclosure.

C. Special Communications

- Solicitation of contributors by a separate segregated fund.
- Communication from a tax-exempt organization solely to its members.

Special Note: Political Action Committees require additional disclosures (A.R.S. § 16-925(B) and (D)).

POLITICAL SIGN PLACEMENT

Political signs may be placed along the roadsides as allowed by state law (A.R.S. § 16-1019) and Sahuarita Town Code (18.79.040(A)).

Right-of-Way Display Period

Political signs may be placed in the public right-of-way beginning 71 days before the 2026 Primary Election — May 11, 2026 — and must be removed within 15 days after the election.

Removal Deadlines

- If the candidate does not advance beyond the primary election — signs must be removed by 15 days after the 2026 Primary Election: August 5, 2026.
- If the candidate advances to the general/run-off election — signs may remain until 15 days after the 2026 General Election: November 18, 2026.

All political signs must comply with A.R.S. § 16-1019(C) and may be removed from the public right-of-way if found in violation.

If the Town determines that a campaign sign creates an emergency situation (for example, obstructing traffic visibility or posing a safety hazard), the Town may immediately move the sign in accordance with A.R.S. § 16-1019(D).

If a campaign sign is placed in violation of A.R.S. § 16-1019(C) or is otherwise prohibited but does not create an emergency, the Town may notify the candidate or campaign committee of the violation. If the sign is not corrected or removed within 24 hours of receiving notice, the Town may remove the sign.

Underground Utilities — Call Before You Dig

Under Title 40, Chapter 2, Article 6.3 of the Arizona Revised Statutes, all underground utilities must be located and marked before any excavation activity — including installing campaign signs on public or private property.

Candidates must contact **Arizona 811** at least two working days before installing signs to request utility locating services.

For more information about the Town of Sahuarita's Sign Code regulations or to review permissible sign locations to ensure compliance, please contact the Community Development Department:

☎ Phone: (520) 822-8855

✉ Email: planning@sahuaritaaz.gov

🕒 Hours: Monday–Thursday, 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

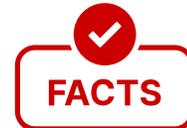
🌐 Website: sahuaritaaz.gov/communitydevelopment (for additional resources)



CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Candidate Responsibility

- You are solely responsible for complying with all state and local campaign finance laws.
- The Town of Sahuarita does not provide legal guidance, answer questions, or verify the accuracy of campaign finance reports.
- Failure to comply can result in complaints, investigations, and enforcement actions.
- Visit azleg.gov for complete law. (A.R.S. Title 16, Chapter 6).



Strict compliance.



Penalties for violations.



Require periodic filing.



Important: *Even if the Town does not raise any objections to your report, this does not shield you from potential penalties for noncompliance.*

State Law Requirements

Campaign finance laws (A.R.S., Title 16, Chapter 6) outline:

- When a committee must be formed.
- How a committee must be organized.
- Contributions limits.
- What campaign finance reports must contain.
- Filing deadlines.

Strict compliance is essential to avoid monetary fines.

Statement of Organization - Key Deadlines

\$500 Threshold

- If you receive contributions or make expenditures totaling \$500+ (in any combination), you must register as a candidate committee (A.R.S. § 16-905(B)).
- File a Statement of Organization with the Town Clerk within 10 days of reaching this threshold (A.R.S. § 16-906(A)).

Ongoing Requirements

- File periodic campaign finance reports once registered.
- You may only have one committee.

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS & REPORTING

Election Cycle: January 1, 2025 — December 31, 2026



Spending & Contributions

- A candidate may contribute unlimited personal funds to their own campaign committee.
- Contribution limits apply to all donors (individuals, PACs, etc.) as set by Arizona law.
- Refer to the [Arizona Secretary of State's Contribution Limits](#) for current limits and reporting requirements.



Filing Campaign Finance Reports



- If not filed within 30 days (A.R.S. § 16-937(C)):
 - \$10/day (first 15 days late)
 - \$25/day (each day after)
- Penalties continue until filed.
- If not resolved within 5 days, the Clerk issues written notice.
- If unresolved within 30 business days, referred to Town Attorney (A.R.S. § 16-938(C)).

Fines accrue from first day late until the late report is filed (A.R.S. § 16-937(B)).

Producing Records

- ✓ Maintain and produce records at the request of the Town Clerk or the Town Attorney.
- ✓ Report all contributions, expenditures, and disbursements, including those made before qualifying.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORT DUE DATES

Candidates and their committees are responsible for filing all required campaign finance reports with the Town Clerk during the election period. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that every report is complete and submitted by the required deadlines.

- Reports must be legible. Electronic filing by email is permitted.
- All campaign finance statements and reports are public records and are posted online for public access (A.R.S. § 16-928).

FILING DEADLINES:

Campaign finance reports must be received by the Town Clerk on the following dates:



REPORTING PERIOD	TYPE OF REPORT	REPORT DUE DATE
January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025	2025 Cumulative Report	January 15, 2026
January 1, 2026 to March 31, 2026	2026 Quarter 1	April 15, 2026
April 1, 2026 to June 30, 2026	2026 Quarter 2	July 15, 2026
July 1, 2026 to August 4, 2026	2026 August Post-Primary Election	August 5, 2026
August 5, 2026 to September 30, 2026	2026 Quarter 3	October 15, 2026
October 1, 2026 - November 3, 2026	2026 November Post-General Election	November 18, 2026
November 4, 2026 – December 31, 2026	2026 Quarter 4	January 15, 2027



You are still required to file a report even if you did not have any financial activity since your last reporting. If you no longer wish to keep your committee, please remember to complete a termination statement along with your most recent campaign finance report reflecting a zero balance.

CANDIDATE COMMITTEE TERMINATION

Requirements for Termination (A.R.S. § 16-934)

A committee may terminate only when the committee treasurer files a Termination Statement certifying under penalty of perjury that:

- The committee will no longer receive any contributions or make any disbursements.
- The committee either has no outstanding debts or obligations; or for any debts older than five years, creditors have agreed to discharge the debts and obligations.
- Any surplus monies have been disposed of and that the committee has no cash on hand.
- All contributions and expenditures have been reported by filing a final campaign finance report, including disposal of surplus monies.

AFTER FILING:

Once a Termination Statement is filed, the committee is not required to file any subsequent campaign finance reports, and shall have no further receipts or disbursements without filing a new statement of organization.

Methods for Disposing of Surplus Monies

A committee shall dispose of surplus monies only as follows:

- Return surplus monies to the contributor.
- Contribute surplus monies pursuant to and within the limits prescribed in A.R.S. § 16-911 through § 16-918.
- A.R.S. § 16-913(A) generally prohibits a candidate committee from contributing to another candidate committee, **except** under the following conditions:
 - The candidate committee makes the contribution after the time period for filing a nomination paper pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-311(A).
 - The candidate associated with the candidate committee that makes the contribution did not file a nomination paper to run for election in the current election cycle.
 - In the case of a candidate committee for a legislative office, the candidate committee makes the contribution when the legislature is not in regular session.
 - The candidate committee makes the contribution within the limits prescribed for individuals in A.R.S. § 16-912.
- Donate surplus monies to a nonprofit organization that has tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



Surplus monies
can not be used
for or converted
to personal use.



FORMS AND VOTER INFORMATION

Election forms are available at: sahuaritaaz.gov/elections.

Candidate Forms — This section contains all the documents you need to officially file your candidacy.

- [Candidate Statement of Interest](#) — Must be filed before collecting signatures.
- [Nomination Petition](#) | [Spanish](#) — Gather required voter signatures.
- [E-QUAL Candidate Guide](#) — Collect signatures electronically online.
- [Nomination Paper Declaration of Qualification](#) | [Spanish](#) — Official filing to place name on ballot.
- [Nomination Paper for Write-In Candidate](#) | [Spanish](#) — For candidates choosing the write-in option.
- [Financial Disclosure Statement](#) — Required financial disclosure filing.
- [Financial Disclosure Handbook](#) — Guidance on completing disclosure requirements.
- [Candidate Checklist](#) — Helps track filing deadlines and requirements.

Campaign Finance Forms — This section contains the documents to help you manage contributions and expenses.

- [Candidate Finance Report Form](#) — Disclose campaign contributions and expenditures.
- [Campaign Contribution Limits](#) — Outline maximum contributions allowed by law.
- [Candidate Campaign Finance Guide](#) — Guide to campaign finance rules and compliance.

Political Action Committee Forms — If your campaign will be working with or receiving support from a PAC, these forms outline the necessary reporting and organization requirements. A PAC cannot make independent expenditures in the candidates race.

- [Statement of Organization](#) — Registering a committee.
- [Termination Statement](#) — Officially closing a committee.
- [Arizona Revised Statutes](#) — Title 16 Election Law reference.

Voter Registration and Ballot By Mail

For voter registration and ballot by mail questions, contact the **Pima County Recorder's Office:**



www.recorder.pima.gov



(520) 724-4330

PRIMARY ELECTION:

Last day to Register to Vote
June 22, 2026

Early Voting Begins
June 24, 2026

Last Day to Request a Ballot by Mail
July 10, 2026

Last Day to Vote Early in Person
July 17, 2026

Last Day to Return Ballot
July 21, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Primary Election
Tuesday, July 21, 2026

GENERAL ELECTION:

Last day to Register to Vote
October 5, 2026

Early Voting Begins
October 7, 2026

Last Day to Request a Ballot by Mail
October 23, 2026

Last Day to Vote Early in Person
October 30, 2026

Last Day to Return Ballots
November 3, 2026 at 7:00 PM

General Election
Tuesday, November 3, 2026

CANDIDATE CHECKLIST

Candidate Statement of Interest

File **before** collecting any nominating petition signatures.

Statement of Organization

File within 10 days of receiving contributions or making expenditures totaling \$500+ (in any combination), in connection with your candidacy.

Nomination Petition Filing Period

File between Saturday, February 21, 2026 and Monday, March 23, 2026 at 5:00 PM.

Official Filing Requirement

Schedule an appointment with the Town Clerk.

During the nomination petition filing period, candidates must file the following required documents:

-  Nomination Paper/Declaration of Qualification Form
-  Financial Disclosure Statement
-  Nomination Petitions - containing at least 273 but not more than 545 valid signatures

Once the required documents are filed, a receipt will be issued noting the number of signatures submitted. All documents become part of the public record.

Have Questions? We're Here to Help. Town Clerk's Office



sahuaritaaz.gov



520-822-8804



townclerk@sahuaritaaz.gov



375 W Sahuarita Center Way
Sahuarita, AZ 85629

Access Candidate Forms Online

Scan the QR Code or visit:
sahuaritaaz.gov/candidate.



Information you provide to the Town Clerk — including your **name, address, phone number, and email address** — is **public record** and may be viewed by the public.