

Stargate Board Candidate Forum

The following rules have been established to ensure fairness for everyone. If gaps are identified or clarification is warranted, other rules may be added to this list as needed.

Forum Objectives

- Provide candidates with an additional opportunity/platform to introduce themselves to Stargate community members
- Increase understanding – among Stargate community members – of the Stargate election process, the candidates running and opportunities for participation
- Deliver an unbiased forum that will be informative for voters, fair to each candidate and pleasant for everyone involved

Basic Guidelines

- The Forum will cover a broad range of issues.
- Candidates will have equal time to present their views.
- The moderator(s) will remain neutral and will not imply approval or disapproval of the candidates or their responses to questions.
- The Forum will leverage clear ground rules to maintain neutrality and ensure a nonpartisan environment for candidates.
- All candidates will be treated alike.
- Substitutes or stand-ins for candidate will not be allowed.

Format - Equal Time Q&A

- An impartial moderator(s) will question the candidates, who will be allowed equal response time to present their points of view.
- Prepared Debate – prior to the Forum, the candidates will be presented with several prepared questions constructed to elicit detailed responses. A selection of these questions will be asked at the Forum.
- Candidates will be asked the same questions. If, for some reason, it becomes necessary during the event to introduce a different question, the question(s) will be structured so that each candidate will be given equal time to present their point of view.
- Follow-Up Q&A - to maintain Forum brevity, moderator(s) will not be permitted time to get clarifications and more specific answers via follow-up questions.
- Audience Q&A - members of the audience will be invited to submit questions prior to the event. However, they will not be allowed to ask questions during the Forum. This approach helps event organizers avoid partisan questions and helps facilitate substantive dialogue, with questions that are broadly applicable to the concerns of the entire community and not specific to a single child/family situation.

Questions Asked at the Forum

- Questions for candidates may be submitted in advance by any Stargate community member via a Candidate Forum Question form, available on the Elections page of the Stargate website.
- To be considered for the Forum, questions must be submitted prior to the deadline communicated on the Elections page of the Stargate website.
- Questions will be reviewed by the Stargate Recruiting Committee prior to the event start time.
- As many community questions as feasible will be included during the Forum, although similar questions covering similar topics may be consolidated in order to cover a broader range of issues within the time available for the Forum.
- The Recruiting Committee will strive for a final slate of questions that includes good - and even pointed - questions but that does not signal a bias for or against any candidate.
- It will be considered okay for the moderator(s) to ask straightforward questions about issues facing the school, but questions should be balanced across lines that might be considered partisan or favorable to a specific candidate.
- Questions will not be included if they can be construed as personal attacks or if they reference specific staff, student or parent members of the community.

Timekeeping at the Forum

- Time allocated for each candidate to respond to questions will be based on a formula that includes:
 - How many candidates have been invited to attend
 - Approximately how many questions will be asked
 - Estimated time allocated for moderator comments
- Candidates may be allocated more time for responses to some questions than other questions. However, all candidates will be given the same amount of time to respond, i.e. 1-minute per candidate may be allocated for responses to question #1 and 2-minutes per candidate for question #3.
- Specific response time available for each question will be communicated by the moderator when the question is read.
- During the event, a designated timekeeper will monitor each candidate and will signal to the candidate when all of their allocated response time has expired.
- Candidates will be provided a “countdown” element, visible during their response time to help them keep track of elapsed time and manage their response time effectively. For example, the timekeeper may have signs that say "30 seconds left" and "Stop" to hold up at the appropriate times. A bell or whistle or buzzer may be used to indicate time is up.
- Time limits will be enforced consistently for all candidates.

Moderator Expectations

- Involve all candidates in the discussion, giving each equitable time for responses.

- Enforce the ground rules and designated format during the meeting, if necessary, interrupting candidates to carry this out.
- Possess knowledge of school issues, especially any touchy questions that might arise.
- Open the Forum with a few statements about the event, including format for the meeting, a description of the office for which the candidates are running (including term of office, qualifications and duties or functions of the office) and the names of the candidates.

Candidate Names / Titles Utilized During the Forum

- Candidates will be provided name tags / table cards at the event so that audience members can easily identify them. Name tags / table cards will include the candidate's first and last names.
- Candidates will be introduced in first reference by their full name and title, if any.
- On subsequent references, candidates will be referred to by their first name unless otherwise agreed to with the moderator.
- All candidates should be referred to in a consistent manner, i.e. everyone should be "Jane, Tom, Joe" or everyone should be "Mrs. Smith, Mr. Jones, Mr. Carter" vs. "Mrs. Smith, Tom and Mr. Carter". If there is disagreement among candidates, it should be resolved with the moderator by a majority vote among candidates on the night of the event prior to the start of the event.

Event Logistics

- The 2019 Board Candidate Forum is scheduled to begin at 6:30 pm on May 2. Candidates are expected to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the event to test microphones, review ground rules with the moderator and attend to any last minute event details.
- No signs may be posted in the room; nor attached to any walls, curtains, doors, etc.
- The Forum will start on time, even if all candidates are not present. The length of the Forum will vary with the number of candidates, but two hours is the expected maximum. Candidates who arrive late will not be allocated extra time and will only be seated between speakers in order to keep disruptions to a minimum.
- Candidates will be seated at a speaker's table facing the audience, either in alphabetical order or based on a number drawn by lot immediately prior to the Forum.
- In the moderator's opening remarks, candidates will be introduced in the order in which they are seated.
- Each candidate will be provided a microphone and a name tag/table card.
- Each candidate will be asked to give an opening statement about why they are running for office, what they hope to accomplish and anything in their biography that qualifies them for the office they are seeking. A time limit will be set for these statements.
- The candidate seated furthest left will speak first among candidates at the event. The same question will be answered by all candidates (moving left to right) until all candidates have had a chance to respond. The next question will be answered first by the candidate seated to the right of the person who answered first in round 1 and so on until all candidates have had a chance to respond first to a question, second to a question, last to a question, etc. At that time, the candidate furthest left can start the cycle again.

- The chair will rule out of order any responses deemed inappropriate, offensive and derogatory or, that would seem to attack the integrity of another candidate.
- Answers to questions will be limited to the maximum stated by the moderator. Time-keeping is required in order to ensure fairness and to maximize the number of questions that can be fielded in the time allotted for the Forum.
- The moderator will have final jurisdiction in all matters during the Q&A period.
- At the end of the Forum, the moderator will provide final wrap up remarks advising the audience of where to go for additional information and whether or not candidates will be available after the event for informal conversation.
- If an informal “meet and greet” has been agreed on, candidates will have a final 15-30 minutes to mingle with the audience and answer additional questions in an informal, 1:1 basis. The duration will be confirmed prior to the start of the event.
- Informal “after-event” conversations will not be included in any live stream associated with the event.

Live Streaming

- If possible, the event will be streamed for community members who cannot attend in person. A recording will be posted after the event. Only candidates will be filmed. Audience reaction will not be included. Additional detail about streaming will be conveyed to all candidates at the same time, via email, as soon as details are known.

Time to Meet Informally with Voters

- Event organizers may opt to allow up to 30 minutes after the Forum for the candidates to speak one-on-one with voters and shake hands.
- If “meet-and-greet” time is planned, all candidates will be advised about this opportunity in advance and at the same time.

Literature

- Event organizers may provide nonpartisan voter education and get-out-the-vote materials at the event, as well as information about how to volunteer to support Stargate Elections and Recruiting efforts.
- Event organizers may opt to have a separate table outside the room of the Forum for candidates to place their campaign literature. If such space is going to be made available, it will be communicated in advance to all candidates at the same time.

Audience Behavior/Attire at the Forum

- Audience members may be asked to check partisan materials (including buttons and signs) at the door in order to create a sense of nonpartisanship within the Forum hall.
- Audience members will be asked to respectfully refrain from excessive exuberance for or against a particular candidate.

Audience Size

- Since there won't be ticket sales or reservations, event organizers will not be able to predict audience size for candidates.

Site Selection

- The Candidate Forum will be held on the Stargate campus.
- Event location, date and time will be communicated in advance to community members and candidates.
- Event will be scheduled, if possible, to avoid overlap with other community activities.

Invitations

- All confirmed candidates for office will be invited to the Forum.
- Invitations will be sent via email to all candidates at the same time.
- Invitations will include ground rules for the event, as well as details about format.
- Event organizers will make an equal effort to encourage each candidate to attend.

Publicity

- The Candidate Forum will be communicated to community members via the Stargate Community website front page, the Stargate Governance website Elections page, StarNews/principal newsletters, and infinite campus emails to parents.
- Additional publicity may be generated via unofficial social media vehicles like committee distribution lists, Facebook group pages, etc.
- Candidates are welcome to communicate event details and to encourage attendance.

Event Cancellation & No-Show Candidates

- At least two candidates must attend to conduct a Forum.
- If the race ends up with only two candidates and just one of those two agrees to attend, the Forum may be cancelled.
- If it is a two-candidate race and one cancels with very little notice or doesn't show up, event organizers may cancel or go forward with the candidate event as planned. If organizers go forward, they will announce that this in no way signifies the endorsement of the attending candidate.