

1. State your name, residential address, business address, telephone number(s), and e-mail address.

Tom Stohlman

Residential Address: 19 Channing Street Cambridge, MA 02138

Business Address: Same

Telephone: 617-547-5246

Email: tom@tomstohlman.org

2. Personal. Give a brief biographical summary, including your occupation and past activity in the Democratic Party, community, Cambridge politics, and voter registration. Attach a resume or CV. Please include your experience, if any, with elections laws, proportional representation, and Cambridge election procedures. Is there, or do you anticipate, anything (time, other commitments) that would present a conflict of interest or otherwise make it difficult to fulfill your duties as Election Commissioner for the full four-year term?

I was born and raised in Washington, DC. Despite the fact that its residents have no representation in Congress, DC is home to many politicians. In DC I discovered that politicians are human. For instance, George McGovern lived across the street and was the same thoughtful, dignified, and friendly person, whether he was walking his dog or running for President.

I came to Massachusetts to attend MIT, where I received three degrees (2 in Architecture, 1 in Chemical Engineering). I married one of my best friends from college and settled in Massachusetts to raise three children and practice architecture. We started in Cambridge, moved around eastern Massachusetts when Kate's job demanded it, and finally moved back to Cambridge 12 years ago.

In Massachusetts I discovered the power of speaking up, civic volunteerism, citizen government, and the power of the vote: I am a proud, lifelong Democrat. I've participated in town meetings, served as an elected Planning Board and School Committee member, and been a delegate to multiple Democratic State Conventions(1992-Present). I've run successful campaigns for Cambridge School Committee and run personally for MA State Representative (20th Middlesex District) against a Republican incumbent and recently for Cambridge City Council. I have served on numerous volunteer boards in every place I've lived. I am currently a member of the Mount Auburn Neighborhood Association (2004-Present) and a Corporator at The Cambridge Homes (2009-Present). In addition to being on the Cambridge Democratic City Committee, I have been a member of the Cambridge School Superintendent Budget Advisory Committee (2000-2003) and the Morse School Council (2000-2003), have donated design services to the Cambridge Public Library (the Collins Branch Circulation desk), and tutor Cambridge High School students in math and science every week during the School Year.

I am an enthusiastic proponent of proportional representation and have participated in the two hand recounts of the past decade as an advisor (official and unofficial) to multiple candidates.

I do not anticipate any commitment which would make it difficult for me to fulfill my duties as Election Commissioner for the full four-year term.

I have attached a one page resume and suggest any interested party should visit my City Council campaign website www.tomstohlman.org to find out more about me.

3. Reason for Seeking Office. Please explain why you are seeking the office of Election Commissioner.

I believe the right to vote is the most important right we have. I want it to be easy and convenient to practice that right. I want the results to be an accurate reflection of the will of the voters.

To those ends I have these goals for my four year term:

1. To increase voter registration with more tabling, high school voting seminars, and coordination with other City departments (parking permits, tax bills, school registration) to increase the opportunities to register.
2. To improve voter participation through better voter education, using new social media (Twitter and Facebook announcements, instructional YouTube videos, and push notifications for interested citizens), no-excuse absentee balloting (voting at the Voter's convenience), and easier voting methods (poll facilitators/greeters, touch screen voting with physical printouts, and ballot templates to make marking complex ballots easier).
3. To hire, train, and evaluate the best election workers. This is an essential and important duty of Election Commissioners and I want to build upon the excellent work of Democratic Commissioners in keeping training manuals current and training methods effective. Every election should be followed by a meeting of the Commission, Precinct Captains, Election Workers, and the public for the purpose of evaluating and improving the conduct of the vote.
4. To advocate at the state and federal level for better voting laws and methods of protecting the right to vote and be counted. Election Day registration, no-excuse absentee ballots, 18 year old pre-registration, online registration, and other initiatives require approval from the Legislature before we can implement them.

4. Voter Participation (registration and turnout).

a. Increasing participation. Given the dynamic nature of the City of Cambridge, with a highly transient population, how do you propose to increase the number of people who register and vote across elections for different offices? Do you have any specific suggestions for increasing participation?

79% of eligible voters register to vote in Massachusetts. In Cambridge, only 70% of eligible voters are registered. I think some increases in the number of registered voters can be made with more tabling and voter marketing, Election Day voter registration and online registration.

It would be even better to focus on voter turnout. More vigorous outreach, education, and advertising will always help voter participation. The Election Commission should participate more aggressively in new forms of social communication (social networking sites and online education) as well as more traditional methods (cable TV, newspapers, mailings, door-to-door outreach, and neighborhood gatherings).

In order to increase the convenience of voting, I support changing current Massachusetts absentee voting law to a "no excuse" system, which would permit Cambridge to have multiple voting opportunities prior to Election Tuesday, including voting by mail and voting on weekends.

b. Information. Do you have any proposals for improving the existing voter education program? Do you support or oppose proposals requiring the posting of the MA Voters Bill of Rights in every polling place? Do you support or oppose proposals that would allow Cambridge voters to check their registration status online, as Boston voters may?

I have answered the first part of this question in 4a. Specifically, the Election Commission should embrace more modern forms of communication (online videos, social networking, and emails) in addition to the more traditional methods.

We need to increase our efforts to educate voters on Proportional Representation and look for easier ways to fill out a municipal ballot.

Yes, we should post the MA Voters Bill of Rights , but I don't think voters will be reading unless it is placed in every voting booth.

Yes, we should have an online, searchable voter list, similar to the property database, with limited, statutorily required information available to the public.

5. Accuracy of Voter Lists. Do you think that the existing system is adequate to minimize voter list inaccuracies (e.g., erroneously dropping voters, or carrying nonresidents on the voter lists)? Do you have an opinion on the current policy regarding inactive voters? Do you have any improvements to propose? Would you propose any changes to the yearly city census?

The current voter list is accurate as evidenced by the small number of provisional ballots requested in most elections. That said, I think all precinct workers should err on the side of a potential voter by providing provisional ballots without hassle or delay.

I support a policy of removing registered voters from the voters list if they have not voted and have not filled out the census form in four consecutive years. The yearly census is fine, easy to complete, and helps to keep the voters' list accurate.

In addition, it should be as easy to unregister as it is to register, and the list should quickly reflect such changes.

6. Election Commission Staff. What is the proper balance between the commissioners and the staff? How will you hire and evaluate the Commission's executive director? How will you work with the Commission's staff? Do you have any basic principles you follow when hiring and managing staff?

While the City Manager appoints the Executive Director and the office staff with input from the Commission, the law gives the Commissioners pretty broad discretion in hiring election workers. I would hire them based on proven competency and experience, not politics. We should let them do their job without micro-managing. We should provide them proper training, clear expectations and fair and timely evaluations based on those expectations. This applies to all staff from the Director to the newest poll worker.

7. Election Commission Budget. What comments or changes, if any, would you suggest for the Election Commission's budget, in order to make the commission more cost-effective? What experience do you have administering and managing budgets?

The City of Cambridge budgets \$1 million dollars to the Election Commission. For some sense of perspective, we also budget \$800 thousand for the Arts, \$2 Million for the City Manager's Office, and \$1.6 million for the City Council and Staff.

Each election costs around \$125,000. The cost is, for the most part, the same regardless of the turnout. Cost effectiveness would increase if the turnout increases. We only spend \$12,000 on Voter Registration. We should put more emphasis on both Voter Registration and Education.

I have reviewed public budgets in my capacity as an involved citizen for over 30 years (Town Meeting, School Committee, School Advisory Boards). I will be a strong advocate for the Election Commission before the City Manager and City Council.

8. Operation of the Election Commission. Do you have any comments on, or changes to propose, in the day-to-day administration of the Commission? Has the commission been appropriately responsive to candidates, political parties, and interest groups that request or require its services? If not, what changes do you propose? How would you evaluate the 2011 reprecincting process? Do you favor having evening meeting and hearings of the election commission? How would you evaluate the Commission's training of election workers? How important is it to you that election day workers live in the communities where they serve?

The Commission's responses in the 2009 Municipal Election regarding the hypothetical disposition of write-in ballots left many candidates (and commissioners) unhappy. It was fortunate that most write-in voters correctly filled out ballots and the hypothetical did not occur in meaningful numbers. I think there are some lessons to be learned from this episode: Do not convene meetings to answer questions which cannot be answered. It leaves all participants frustrated and mistrustful, not a good combination prior to an election. Other than that, I have ultimately found the Commission (and staff), to be helpful as a candidate, campaign manager, and voter.

The 2011 reprecincting process is over. Change is inevitable to the process and, although the change was kept to a minimum, it is most jarring to voters when old familiar polling places and groupings change. The Election Commission and its staff should be particularly sensitive to those voters who have experienced this change and make sure that they are reminded before voting and treated with understanding on Election Day.

Evening hearings and meetings are better than daytime meetings if you expect public participation.

Every election should be followed by meetings of the Commission with various election participants: Precinct Captains, Election Workers, Candidates, and the Public for the purpose of evaluating and improving the conduct of the vote.

Staff should be hired based only on competency and experience. All things being equal, I would prefer competent, experienced staff who come from the precincts they serve.

9. Election Day Procedures. How can the Commission avoid problems at polling places on Election Day? What role should the Commissioners play in insuring a trouble-free Election Day? Do you favor the continued use of optical scan voting devices in Cambridge elections? How would you evaluate the way in which the proportional representation "count" was done in November 2011?

Problems can be avoided with up-to-date lists, well-trained and experienced workers, and well-maintained equipment.

Modern communications allow Commissioners to be out and visible at polling places, while remaining available for consultation and resolution of problems. The optical scan devices have proven reliable and fairly trouble-free.

The Municipal Election Count at the Senior Center can be improved by making the observing public more comfortable. It was too crowded and this was a direct result of the architectural layout of the rooms. I also think a greater effort should be made to inform the observers frequently and make them feel welcome during the Count.

10. Recount Procedures. What is your evaluation of the recount procedures of the Commission? How did the commission handle the 2009 School Committee recount? What changes, if any, would you suggest? What standards would you use in deciphering disputed ballots?

Because the recount resulted in affirmation of the original count, it was a successful process.

Again, the public could have been more comfortable with a better layout of the room, more frequent updates, and a welcoming attitude. Having participated in both of the recounts this past decade, I found the decision to place the Commissioner's table close to the public in the 2001 recount to be more open and welcoming than the placement of the table in 2009. Small courtesies mean a lot to the candidates and the public.

I have seen, literally, dozens and dozens of creatively marked ballots in the 2001 and 2009 recounts. I will err on the side of human intent when it disagrees with the machine's reading. I think it is important to be consistent in deciphering ballots.

11. Voting Rights. Do you favor voting rights for legal immigrants in municipal elections? Do you favor lowering the voting age in municipal elections? Do you favor same-day voter registration? Do you favor requiring all (or any) voters to show a photo ID before they vote? What special problems or opportunities would each such change cause for the Election Commission?

I also think that any community should have the right to determine who can vote in elections within that community. That said, I support a citizen's right to vote and do not favor granting that right to legal residents who are not citizens. I support lowering the voting age to 16. I favor Election Day registration. I favor requiring proof-of-identity, such as a Photo ID for registration, but not for voting.

Extending non-citizen legal immigrants and 16/17 year olds the right to vote in Cambridge only will result in the creation of multiple voter lists. There will be more voter confusion if such a right is not granted statewide and nationally. I don't think Election Day registration will be any more complicated than current voting procedures. It will require some additional training for poll workers, but I feel they can handle it.

12. Miscellaneous. Do you have any other suggestions for carrying out the powers and duties of an Election Commissioner? Is there anything else you would like the Cambridge Democratic City Committee to consider in evaluating your candidacy for the office of Election Commissioner?

Voters are royalty in America and deserve to be treated that way. Their vote is precious and should always be counted. Public service is essential to a healthy society. I know voters, I have voted in every election since moving to Cambridge. I know candidates, I have been one many times and also managed campaigns. I know PR, I have attended every day of every hand recount in the past decade. I think Proportional Representation is the best way to elect single and multiple member bodies yet devised.

I would love to be an Election Commissioner and help make every citizen feel as enthusiastic about exercising their right to vote and serving their community as I am.

January 26, 2012

Thomas J. Stohlman Jr.

19 Channing Street Cambridge, MA 02138 617-547-5246 tstohlman@alum.mit.edu

Mr. Stohlman's 36 years of architectural experience is in program synthesis, site planning, building design, construction documents, and construction supervision for projects of diverse size and scope. These include hospital renovations, re-use of historic structures, civic buildings, single family homes, multi-family housing, and solar architecture.

In six years at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1972-1978), Mr. Stohlman received three degrees, a B.S. in Arts and Design, a B.S. in Chemical Engineering, and a Master's degree in Architecture. His Master's thesis was titled: "Hospitals to Celebrate Living: A Therapeutic Environment for Long Term Care".

Mr. Stohlman has been a registered architect for 26 years and started his own firm in 1986. He has since concentrated on the design of private residences and small-scale public and private buildings. He is experienced in energy-conscious design, computer aided design and modeling, and barrier-free design. He is experienced in CAD and computer use. He belongs to the Boston Society of Architects and the American Institute of Architects. He is registered in Massachusetts and has an NCARB certificate.

Mr. Stohlman is active in civic affairs. He has spoken about architecture and planning before civic, school, and church groups. In Reading, MA he was a member of the Reading Planning Board, elected member of the Reading School Committee and Town Meeting, and a member and past president of the Friends of Reading Public Library. He has helped procure state grants for building projects in the Town of Reading and has acted as a reviewer for the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners' Public Library Construction Program.

In Cambridge, MA he was an appointed member of the School Superintendent's Budget Advisory Committee and an elected member of the Morse School Council and the Mount Auburn Neighborhood Association. and an elected member of the Morse School Council.

In Reading and Cambridge he has donated architectural services for several small building projects at the public libraries.

Mr. Stohlman is married and a father of three. He is a photographer, hiker and civic volunteer. He was born and raised in Washington, DC.