

City of Salisbury  
Election Board Minutes  
Tuesday, January 13, 2026  
Salisbury Fire Department Station 16

Members Present: Chair Susan Carey, Secretary Stephen Feliciano, Lou Rimbach.

Others Present: City Clerk Julie English, City Attorney Ashley Bosche, Director of Wicomico County Board of Elections Dionne Church

**Call Meeting to Order**

Ms. Carey called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

**Agenda Presentation**

Ms. Carey reviewed the agenda items for the meeting.

**Campaign Finance and Candidate Filing**

Ms. Church provided a brief summary on the state's candidate filing and disclosure process as a potential model for the city. She noted that for the 2026 election cycle, the filing period opened February 25, 2025, and candidates could file until the deadline on February 26, 2026. Financial disclosures were always submitted for the prior calendar year, and early filers may need to submit two disclosures to remain compliant during the election cycle. Ms. Church also explained that under Maryland law, individuals may begin campaigning and accepting contributions once a Statement of Organization was filed to establish a campaign account, even if a certificate of candidacy had not yet been submitted. Candidates who began campaigning in 2025, must file disclosures and reports by scheduled deadlines so they would not be at risk of being fined. All contributions must be recorded in accordance to the schedule. In addition, Ms. Church referred to state law in which those running for candidacy on the state level must be registered voters in the state. Some offices require different lengths of residence, often at least a year or two.

**General and Special Election Logistics and Costs**

The board reviewed the feasibility of holding special elections to fill council vacancies. They noted that a full citywide election costs approximately \$87,751.21, with a single-district special election costing roughly one-fifth of a five-district election; while less expensive overall, fixed overhead costs such as equipment testing and judicial training remained significant. The board also noted that a special election cannot be conducted within 30–60 days, as state-mandated equipment testing, ballot printing, and voter registration requirements need a minimum timeframe of approximately 120 days to six months.

**Candidate Eligibility and Domicile Determinations**

Board members explained their decision to disqualify an applicant for a recent council vacancy. Mr. Feliciano stated that the applicant failed to provide documentation demonstrating a one-year domicile within the district immediately preceding the application. He emphasized that

although a deadline extension was granted, the required proof was not submitted and that is what he based his decision on. He also stated that the Board's review was conducted without prejudice and in strict accordance with the standards outlined in the Charter. Mr. Rimbach echoed Mr. Feliciano stating that he went through the same process for his decision. Ms. Carey also agreed. She stated that the Board did not receive the two items of documentation that was requested and therefore the applicant did not meet the requirements.

**The following topics were discussed during public comment:**

- Special election procedures, including cost, timeline, and potential cost-saving methods
- Processes for filling Council vacancies, including appointments and special elections
- Public communication and candidate filing procedures
- Campaign finance considerations and differences between state and local election laws
- Need for greater transparency, standardized processes, and possible Charter updates

Board members clarified that the discussion focused on general special elections rather than a specific appointment. Questions were raised about the cost and timeline of a special election. A special election for one district estimated at approximately \$17,500. Possible ways to reduce costs included the use of private firms or paper ballots. Concerns were also expressed about the length of time a council seat could remain vacant.

The discussion also addressed improving transparency and public communication. Other discussions centered around the possibility of a Council appointment followed by a later election, and confusion between state and local election laws. Several speakers emphasized the need for a more standardized and transparent process, to include the use of evaluation rubrics. It was noted that the Board could make recommendations, but the Council had final authority over any changes. The meeting concluded with encouragement for residents to contact Council members regarding potential Charter updates.

**Adjournment**

Ms. Carey called for a motion and a second to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Rimbach motioned, Mr. Feliciano seconded and the meeting adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Stephen Feliciano, Secretary

Approved: 4/6/26