



# Candidate Qualification Requirements

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# Candidate Qualifications Overview

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    - Coral Gables, Florida
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    - Tallahassee, Florida
    - St. Petersburg, Florida
  - Qualifying Fee and Petition Collection
    - Clearwater, Florida
    - Tarpon Springs, Florida

# Current Gainesville System

- Those running for municipal office in Gainesville must pay a **qualifying fee equal to 1% of the salary of the office they are running for.**
  - The 2020 City Commissioner qualifying fee was \$343.24
- In order to qualify, candidates must also meet certain residency requirements, must be a qualified voter who has been a resident of the District in which they seek to be elected for a period of not less than 6 months, and they must appoint a campaign treasurer, designate a campaign depository, and file a statement of candidacy.

# Current Alachua County System

## Qualifying Fees

- Major party candidates pay a fee of 6% of the salary of the office sought. This includes the 2% party assessment. Minor party candidates pay a fee of 4% of the salary of the office sought plus any applicable party assessment. NPA and Nonpartisan candidates pay a fee of 4% of the salary of the office sought. The salary is set after July 1.

## Petition Method Information

- To qualify by petition method, candidates shall obtain the signatures of a number of qualified voters equal to 1% of the number of registered voters at the last general election. **In 2020, candidates needed to submit 1,905 valid signatures to qualify by the petition method.** Candidates must pay also pay **\$190.50 (10 cents for each signature checked).**

# Current Alachua County System, Continued

<b>District</b>	<b>Incumbent</b>	<b>Petition Signature s Required to Qualify</b>	<b>Major Party Qualifying Fee</b>	<b>No Party Affiliation (NPA) Qualifying Fee</b>
District 2	Marihelen Wheeler	1,905	\$4,699.98 (2020)	\$3,133.32 (2020)
District 4	Ken Cornell	1,905	\$4,699.98 (2020)	\$3,133.32 (2020)

# Systems Allowed in the State of Florida

- Qualifying Fee Alone
  - Generally, qualification fees to run for local office range from **1%-6% of the annual salary of the office sought**. For offices with political affiliation, there may be an additional 2% party assessment fee, and these fees may also be accompanied by an election assessment fee.
- Petitions in Lieu of Qualifying Fee
  - Some cities allow individuals running for office to pay a qualifying fee or collect petitions. Generally, candidates **must collect signatures from 1% of the registered voter population, and pay an additional \$.10 verification fee** per signature.
- Petitions and Qualifying Fee
  - Some cities require candidates to both collect signatures and pay a qualifying fee, although the fees and signatures are generally of lower numbers.

# Case Studies

- Qualifying Fee Only
  - Hialeah, Florida
  - Coral Gables, Florida
- Petitions in Lieu of Qualifying Fee
  - Miami Beach, Florida
  - Tallahassee, Florida
  - St. Petersburg, Florida
- Petitions and Qualifying Fee
  - Clearwater, Florida
  - Tarpon Springs, Florida

# Qualifying Fee Only

- Hialeah, Florida
  - Qualifying fee of \$100 and an Election Assessment fee of \$440.
- Coral Gables, Florida
  - Qualifying fee of \$200, in addition to an assessment fee of 1% of the salary of the office sought.
  - For those running for Mayor, this assessment fee is equal to \$388, and for City Commission the fee is equal to \$315.



# Petitions in Lieu of Qualifying Fees

- Miami Beach, Florida
  - Individuals are able to either pay a qualifying fee of \$100 + an assessment fee equal to 1% of the salary of the office being sought **OR** collect signatures from 1% of the voters in the geographical area of the office being sought.
  - Majority of candidates chose to pay the qualifying fee, and many who choose petitions do not obtain petitions necessary to qualify
- Tallahassee, Florida
  - Candidates can either pay the qualifying fee of 1% of the salary being sought, or collect petitions from 1% of the voters in the district sought plus a verification fee. In 2016-2020, all candidates qualified through the fee.
- St. Petersburg, Florida
  - Individuals must either pay a qualifying fee of \$150-\$250 or collect petitions of 500-1000 electors in the district.

# Petitions and Qualifying Fees

- Clearwater, Florida
  - Candidates must submit at least 250 petition cards, in addition to paying a qualifying fee of \$100 and an election assessment fee equal to 1% of the salary of the office being sought. Candidates have 14 days to collect petitions.
- Tarpon Springs, Florida
  - Individuals must pay a filing fee, equal to \$25 plus a 1% assessment fee, in addition to collecting a minimum of 25 petition cards from qualified electors.

# Pros and Cons to Petitions

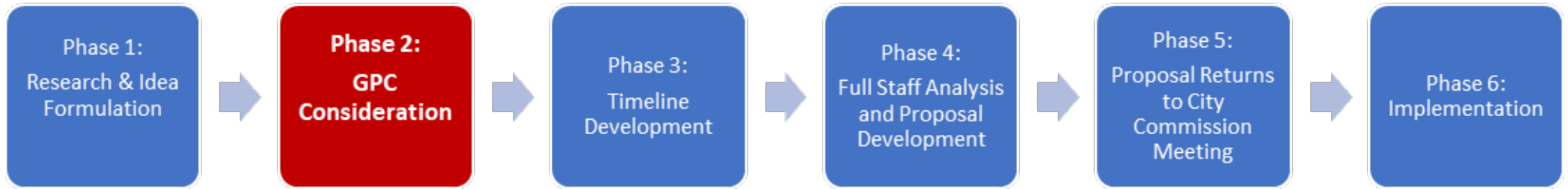
## Advantages

- Can allow campaigns a way to show community support beyond monetary contributions
- Can save campaigns money if done effectively
- Helps give supporters and volunteers opportunities to get a candidate's name out

## Disadvantages

- Petitions are not necessarily a statement of support
- Process can create financial and bureaucratic barriers
- Many petitions are thrown out due to administrative barriers, and petition counts can be challenged by opponents in courts
- May require more work from city and county officials

# Recommended Next Steps



**We are here!**

**If the General Policy Committee wishes to proceed, the next step is to move this project to Phase 3 of the Policy Process.**

**Discussion?**