

## GUIDE FOR HOSTING A PRE-ELECTION POTLUCK



Pre-Election Potlucks are a great way to crowdsource the ballot – spreading the task of researching candidates and proposals among a group of friends, neighbors or co-workers. The point is to illuminate more than advocate!

Each potluck will be different, depending on the whims and wishes of the host. Here's a 10-point guide – with tips! – for hosting your own. Enjoy!

**1. Choose a date, time and location.** (Too obvious? Point taken.)

**2 . Decide what kind of potluck you'd like to hold.** Options include dinner, of course, but also a desserts-only potluck, a Sunday brunch or a cookout. People with allergies should bring what they know they can eat.

**3. Put together your guest list.** Friends & neighbors? Family? How about hosting a potluck with your co-workers over lunch, and make it a brown bag? A relatively small gathering – no more than a dozen people – is optimal.

***REMEMBER:** If you invite people from different parts of the city or county, their ballots won't be identical. You can search for sample ballots online at [Michigan.gov/vote](http://Michigan.gov/vote).*

**4. Send out invitations at least 2 weeks in advance** – via email, snail mail, Facebook, hot air balloon or however you like. Be sure to include the date, time, location and a general description of what you'll be asking guests to bring: A dish to pass and information about a candidate or ballot issue.

**5. When you get a list of confirmed guests, assign each one to research a local candidate or ballot proposal.** Depending on how many people attend, you might give each person more than one candidate or proposal to research. Or you might give two people the same candidate or proposal to discuss. And, of course, your guests can go nuts and research the entire ballot if they want – but they'll only be responsible for sharing information about the candidate or proposal that you assign.

**6. Provide resources.** Some people won't know where to look for information. AnnArborVotes.org is a great place to start. Other resources include the League of Women Voters Vote411.org site.

**7. Set expectations.** At the potluck, each person will get 5-10 minutes to share what they've learned. The idea is to provide factual information and background. Any discussion that follows should be respectful. No fisticuffs, please.

**8. Designate a notetaker to capture information during the potluck.** Also ask guests to send whatever written information they have to you or the notetaker via email, so that you can collect and redistribute it to all guests.

**9. Decide what to do with the kids.** Some people might want to bring their kids – or have their children participate in the discussion. That’s great! However, it’s worth thinking about who’ll take care of toddlers or infants while their parents are occupied.

**10. Most of all – enjoy!** And embrace the bliss of being the most informed voter on this planet, with a little help from your friends.

## **Tips for Facilitating the Conversation**

Your Pre-Election Potluck is all about coming together and learning about the candidates and/or proposals on the ballot. It’s much more about information than advocacy.

Here are 3 tips to help keep your get-together on track.

1. At the outset, before anyone shares their report, restate the purpose of the event: Learning about candidates and proposals on the ballot so that we can all become more informed voters.
2. Give a general overview of how you expect the conversation to head. Make it clear that the reports on individual candidates and ballot proposals should take no more than 5-10 minutes without interruptions.
3. Note that respectful questions, concerns or additional information can be offered from anyone – with an emphasis on respectful.

**Questions or feedback? Contact CivCity’s Mary Morgan at [marymorgan@civcity.org](mailto:marymorgan@civcity.org)!**