

Holliston Governance Committee

Select Board Update #4

How Competitive Are Holliston Select Board Elections?

The Holliston Governance Committee is in the process of studying whether Holliston should continue with its current Select Board of three elected members or change to a Select Board of five elected members.

To evaluate the competitiveness of the Select Board elections in Holliston, the Governance Committee analyzed the election results for Select Board over the 37 years from 1985 to 2021. However, over the 37 years, there were 38 contested seats since there were two separate Select Board seats on the ballot in 2011 due to a resignation.

A Select Board of three members serving three-year terms results in one seat being up for election each year. With a Select Board of five members for three-year terms, two seats are up for election in the first year, followed by two seats in the second year and one seat in the third year. A Select Board seat can only be filled by a public election. In each of the 37 years, a candidate ran for the open Select Board seat. In 60.5% of those races, only one candidate ran.

From 1985 to 2021 or 37 years and 38 races:

- Of the 38 Select Board seats on the ballot, 15 or 39.5% were contested.
 - In five of those contested races or 33%, the incumbents ran for reelection
 - The incumbent won in three competitive races and lost in two races
 - In 10 of those contested races or 67%, the incumbent did not run
- Only one candidate ran for the Select Board seat in 23 of the 38 races or 60.5%
 - The incumbent was the only candidate in 15 races or 39.5%
 - One candidate, not the incumbent, ran in eight races or 21%
- Over the 37 years, the voter turnout averaged 20.9%, with a high of 45.5% in 1993 and a low of 3.8% in 2000

Over the past 10 years from 2012 to 2021:

- There were only two competitive races for Select Board from 2012 to 2021
- In eight of the 10 years, only one candidate ran for the office
 - In five or 50% of those races, the incumbent was the only candidate
 - The incumbent did not run for reelection in three of the 10 races
 - In the two competitive races, the incumbent lost in 2019 but won in 2021
- Over the past 10 years, the voter turnout averaged 12.0%, with a high of 17.7% in 2016 and a low of 5.3% in 2014