



2026 City of Fargo Mayoral Debate Rules

As agreed upon by candidates and co-hosts

DEBATE STRUCTURE

Order

At 5 p.m. on April 21 at the Fargo Theatre, the order of candidates will be determined by placing the names of all participating candidates into a container and drawing them at random. Candidates will be arranged from left to right on stage based on the order drawn. Opening remarks will follow this order. Closing remarks will be conducted in reverse order.

Opening remarks

Each candidate will be given 2 minutes for opening remarks.

Questions

Questions will be pre-written in coordination with co-host staff and media partners. Candidates will be provided with an overview of general topics that may be discussed during the debate but will not be provided with the specific questions in advance. Attendees are encouraged to submit questions prior to the event for possible inclusion upon registration.

Answers

Each candidate will be given 1 minute to respond to each question. Candidates may not ask questions of other candidates.

Rebuttal

Following each question, a candidate may be provided the opportunity for a 30-second rebuttal, but only if they are specifically mentioned by name in another candidate's response.

Rapid response

During the rapid response section of the debate, candidates must answer questions in a succinct manner (a word or phrase) within 15 seconds. No rebuttal will be permitted during this section.

Closing remarks

Each candidate will be given 60 seconds for closing remarks.

Time limits

A timing system will be used. Candidates will be notified when time has expired, and microphones may be muted if necessary to maintain the schedule.

Moderators

Moderators reserve the right to enforce time limits and maintain the flow and decorum of the debate. Moderators' decisions regarding format, timing and enforcement of rules are final.

CANDIDATES

Event participation

All candidates who have qualified for the ballot for Mayor of Fargo are invited to participate.

Interactions

Candidates may not directly question or engage one another, or the audience, during the structured format.

Visuals

Candidates are not permitted to use, display or wear campaign materials, notes or visual aids during the debate. Lapel pins, such as an American flag pin, are permitted.

Notes

Candidates are not permitted to bring pre-written notes to the debate stage. However, they are permitted to take notes during the debate.

AUDIENCE

Behaviors and Disruptions

Applause is permitted at the beginning and conclusion of the event. Audience members are asked to refrain from cheering, booing, clapping or otherwise reacting during candidate responses to ensure all candidates have an equal opportunity to speak.

Arrival and start time

The debate will begin promptly at 6:30 p.m. to accommodate live broadcast scheduling. Attendees are encouraged to arrive early to allow time for seating before the program begins. Any attendees arriving after 6:30 p.m. may be directed to seating in the balcony to minimize disruption to the event.

Bags and personal items

For the comfort and safety of all guests, large bags and backpacks are not permitted inside the venue. Please plan accordingly.

Campaign materials

Attendees are permitted to wear campaign materials, such as buttons, pins, shirts or hats, but they are not permitted to display campaign materials, such as signs, banners or collateral, that would disrupt the event, impair the view of another attendee or hinder the visibility of media equipment.

Removal

Disruptive attendees may be removed.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS**Live broadcasting**

Media are welcome to attend and cover the event from a news perspective. Audio output will be provided for use during coverage; however, live streaming from within the venue will not be permitted.

Broadcast-quality video will be available via WDAY's livestream and may be used with proper attribution. A public photo album will also be available on The Chamber's website following the event.

Photography

Staged photos may be taken before or after the event. Attendees are permitted to capture still photographs during the event, provided doing so does not interfere with the event, audience members or media operations.