This fall, two township positions will be on the ballot - fiscal officer and one trustee. The Ohio Revised Code is filled with different requirements for those seeking election to a public office. The Secretary of State is responsible for all election procedures and has several guidance documents available through his website to offer guidance to those seeking election. Specifically, the Secretary of State has published a 2015 Ohio Candidate Requirement Guide, which you can download at www.sos.state.oh.us. The information below has been taken from that Guide.

Who will be on the ballot in November?
In November 2015, the fiscal officer and one trustee will be elected to four-year terms in each township. The fiscal officer term will begin April 1, 2016 and the trustee term will begin Jan. 1, 2016. 

Fiscal officer - four years, commencing April 1, 2016
Trustee - four years, commencing Jan. 1, 2016

Additionally, one or two of the remaining trustees may be on the ballot in November if a vacancy occurs prior to the 40th day before the Nov. 3, 2015 general election (R.C. §503.24). A person running for this position would, if elected, fill a two-year unexpired term that ends Dec. 31, 2017.

Eligibility for running for township office
There are several qualifications that must be met to run for township office:
1. Person must be a resident of the township (R.C. §3.15)
2. Person must be at least 18 years of age as of the date of the general election (OH Const. Art.V§1, Art.XV§4)
3. Person must be a registered elector of the township (OH Const. Art.V§1, Art.XV§4)

Petition requirements
Boards of elections will generally provide candidates with petition forms. For township office, i.e., fiscal officer or trustee, the petition form number is #3-R, which is for one candidate. The petition contains three separate sections: statement of candidacy; nominating petition; and circulator’s statement. Candidates are permitted to make copies of the forms in the manner they were provided.

As a side note, Ohio law does permit the use of a “group petition” (Form #3-S) to be used by candidates nominated only by nominating petition for the office of township trustees but only in years when two trustees are to be elected (e.g., November 2017). Since this is a one trustee election year, a “group petition” is not an option.

Ohio law requires candidates filing a declaration of candidacy or a nominating petition as a candidate for an unexpired term to designate the date on which that unexpired term will end (R.C. §3513.08, §3513.28). Failure to provide the correct term-ending date on the petition may result in the petition being invalidated.

The original petition with the candidate’s original signature must be filed at the same time as all part petitions are filed and shall be filed with the appropriate county board of elections office (R.C. §3501.38(K), 3513.253). The filing deadline is 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2015, and the filing fee is $30.00 (R.C. §3513.10, §3513.261).

Rules governing petitions
Each petition must contain 25 valid signatures of qualified electors of the state of Ohio and the township (R.C. §3513.253). “Signature” is defined in statute as a person’s written, cursive-style legal mark written in his or her own hand unless the elector does not use cursive-style mark during the course of his or her regular business or legal affairs (R.C. §3501.38(B), 3501.011). No petition may contain more than three times the minimum number of required signatures (R.C. §3513.05, 3513.257, 3513.259). For township candidates, no more than 75 signatures may be submitted.

Each signature must be in ink and must be an original signature of an elector or the elector’s duly appointed attorney-in-fact. Each signer must include his or her address and the date of signing must be placed on the petition; and circulator’s statement. Each circulator must be at least 18 years of age and must complete and sign the circulator’s statement portion of the petition.

The statement of candidacy portion of each petition must be completely filled in and signed by the candidate before being circulated. A candidate may circulate his or her own petition, although the candidate may not sign his or her own petition as an elector.

Should a candidate have someone else circulate his or her petition, the circulator must be at least 18 years of age and must complete and sign the circulator’s statement portion of the petition.

Write-in candidate requirements
Any person wishing to be a write-in candidate must file a “Declaration of Intent to be a Write-in Candidate” form (Form #13). Only write-in candidates that have filed a valid declaration of intent will have votes counted in the election. A write-in candidate must meet all eligibility requirements for the office for which they declared.

A write-in candidate must file the declaration of intent by 4:00 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 24. A $30.00 filing fee is required (R.C. §3513.10).

*Did You Know is for informational purposes only and not intended as legal advice.