

CANINE CORNER

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Choose a dog for mayor!



Rabbit Hash, KY, Mayor Boone, Blue Tick Coonhound.

In October, the polls will be open across New Zealand for local body elections. Local body politics are not for everyone, as evidenced by low voter turnouts when compared to national elections.

Perhaps one way of reversing this trend would be to follow the example of various localities in the United States where dogs take centre stage as candidates for mayor...

Canine elections may be used for fundraising purposes, for teaching local children about politics, to raise the tourism profile of a town, or to simply have some fun and gain publicity for the businesses and residents of the area.

In the small unincorporated Kentucky town of Rabbit Hash, they have been electing a dog mayor since 1998. The election is used as a fundraiser to help maintain the town's historic buildings which include a general store built in 1831. A vote can be recorded after donating. In 2024, Boone the Blue Tick Coonhound was declared the winner for a four-year term. (The previous mayor, French Bulldog Wilber, decided not to seek re-election.)

Another town with a long history of a canine mayor is Idyllwild, California, which has been electing a dog mayor since 2012. Idyllwild, another unincorporated town, is home to the Idyllwild Animal Rescue Friends, a not-for-profit rescue group. The Friends sponsored the town's first election for fundraising purposes. Any local resident was permitted to nominate their pet for the election; 14 dogs and two cats were nominated and ran for office the first

year. With a vote costing \$1 each, \$31,000 was generated to benefit the rescue.

Idyllwild's current mayor is Mayor Max III, a Golden Retriever (you guessed it: Mayor Max I and Mayor Max II were also Golden Retrievers).

In Cormorant, Minnesota, a town with a population that doesn't quite reach the 1,400 mark, residents elected Khaleesi the Great Pyrenees (Pyrenean Mountain Dog) by a landslide in August 2024. She received 76.5% of the vote, having run a strong campaign against Teddy, a Basset Hound, Ollie, a Golden Retriever and a human named Ken.

If you think that dog mayors are only for small towns, think again. New York City is currently being served by its second dog mayor, Simon, a Basset Cattle Dog cross. Why have a dog mayor in a major US city?

"The Honorary New York City Dog Mayor Election was founded to create something fun and joyful for people at a time in which many are struggling; to provide a unique opportunity for NYC community development; and to present politics and civics in a positive, educational, and compelling way (for once.)" (www.dogmayornyc.com) 🐾



New York City dog mayor, Simon, a Basset Hound/Cattle Dog cross.

(If a town is 'unincorporated' in the USA, it means it does not have a local government. Unincorporated communities exist 'by tradition.' These communities do not have elected officials and, since they are not officially municipal areas, they often are bound by the laws of the city or county in which they are situated.)