



2026 Absentee Balloting, Primary Election and General Election Update

City Council Work Session

April 15, 2026

Elections Update



- 2026 Key Election Dates
- Election Overview
- Candidate Filing
- State Primary Election
- State General Election
- Proposed Absentee Hours
- Early Voting
- Council Input on Proposed Absentee Hours
- Candidate and Council Preparation Timeline

May 19–June 2: Candidate Filings Open

- 1 Council Member At-Large
- 1 Council Member Ward 1
- 1 Council Member Ward 4

*June 26–August 10: Primary Election
Early Voting (2nd Floor Training Room
of City Hall)*

Primary Election Pre-Registration
Deadline: July 21

**August 11, 2026: State Primary
Election**

*September 18–November 2: General
Election Early Voting (2nd Floor Training
Room of City Hall)*

General Election Pre-Registration
Deadline: October 13

November 3: State General Election



Key Election Dates

Election Overview



- City Clerk's office in conjunction with Rice and Dakota Counties administers elections
- Includes the following:
 - Candidate Filings
 - State Primary Election
 - State General Election
 - Coordinates absentee voting, early voting and staffing
 - Ensures compliance with State and Federal laws

Candidate Filing



- May 19 – June 2, 2026
- Filing packets available online the week prior to filings opening
- Open positions:
 - Council Member At-Large
 - Council Member Ward 1
 - Council Member Ward 4

State Primary Election



- Election Day: August 11
- Absentee/Early Voting Period: June 26 – August 10
 - 2nd Floor Training Room, City Hall
- Last Day to Pre-Register: July 21

State General Election



- Election Day: November 3
- Absentee/Early Voting Period: September 18 – November 2
 - 2nd Floor Training Room, City Hall
- Last Day to Pre-Register: October 13

Early Voting (Absentee Ballot Process)



- **No-excuse absentee voting**

- Any eligible voter may participate
- Available by mail or in person
- Voting begins 46 days before Election Day
- Open to:
 - Registered Voters
 - Unregistered voters (can register with correct verification during process)
- Option to join permanent absentee list (automatic ballot delivery every election)



Absentee Ballot Process



Process and Administration

- Application required (online, mail or in person)
- Ballot issued with instructions and return materials
- Voter completes ballot and returns:
 - By Mail
 - In person/drop off
 - Ballot must be received by Election Day

Absentee Ballot Process



Process and Administration

- **Ballot reviewed by Absentee Ballot Board**
 - Verifies voter eligibility
 - Confirms required information/signatures
- **Security measures include:**
 - Ballot tracking system
 - Unique voter identification
 - Bipartisan review process
- **Absentee Ballots are processed through election machines on Election Day and also throughout the 18 days prior to Election Day (Early Voting Period)**

Early Voting Period



- **Voting begins 18 days before Election Day**
 - Any eligible voter may participate
 - Open to:
 - Registered Voters
 - Unregistered voters (can register with correct verification during process)
 - New for 2026 (Referred to as Direct Balloting in past elections)

Early Voting Period Process



Process and Administration

- Voter provides name, address and verification information
- Registration is confirmed (or completed if not registered)
- Voter Steps:
 - Signs a certification (shortened form from Absentee Application)
 - Receives a ballot
 - Marks ballot privately
 - Deposits the ballot directly into the tabulator

Early Voting Period Process



Process and Administration

- New module in Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS)
- Early Voting staffed by at least two officials (bipartisan representation)
- Required daily balancing to ensure number of ballots cast match number of voter certificates
- Ballots are sealed and securely stored

Early Voting Period Process



Process and Administration

- Results are reported as part of the absentee ballot totals
- Possible poll pad integration in future elections
- Replicates more “at the polling place” voting process

Proposed Early Voting Hours



Proposed Primary and General Election

- Monday through Thursday: 8 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- Friday: 8 a.m. – 11 a.m.

* These hours match the Rice County Government Centers Early Voting Hours. (2024 hours were the same as City Hall hours.)

Early Voting Additional Hours (Primary Election)



- State Statute requires additional Early Voting hours for both the Primary and General Election as listed below:
- Primary Election:
 - Saturday, August 8: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 - Monday, August 10: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Early Voting Additional Hours (General Election)



- State Statute requires additional Early Voting hours for both the Primary and General Election as listed below:
- General Election:
 - Saturday, October 24: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 - Tuesday, October 27: 8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
 - Saturday, October 31: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 - Sunday, November 1: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 - Monday, November 2: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Benefits of Alignment of Proposed Early Voting Hours



- Consistency for voters
- Reduces confusion on hours
- Improves staff workflow
- Ensures reporting is complete by City Hall closing time
- Supports accuracy and compliance
- May reduce staffing costs

Alternative Option



- **Extend hours beyond proposed schedule**
 - Extend hours on Tuesdays; or
 - Align with City hall business hours
 - Extending hours may result in additional overtime hours for hourly employees

Council Input



- Does the Council agree with aligning Northfield Absentee/Early Voting Hours with Rice County Absentee/Early Voting Hours?
- If not, which of the following would the Council like to see for hours?
 - Extend hours on Tuesdays; or
 - Align with City hall business hours

Candidate Onboarding Informational Meetings



- **Candidate Information Meeting (NEW)**
 - Held after the filing period closes and before the Primary Election
 - Meeting date established and provided to candidates at time of filing
 - Additional meeting held after the Primary for candidates advancing to the General Election
 - Provide candidates with targeted information to prepare for effective service if elected

Candidate Onboarding Informational Meetings



- **Candidate Resources**

- The following information was provided in a binder for candidates in 2024:

- City Council Calendar
 - Board/Commission Schedule
 - Organizational Charts
 - Strategic Plan
 - Training and Conference Opportunities
 - Board & Commission and City Council Member Guide
 - Robert's Rules of Order
 - City Council Rules of Business
 - Board/Commission Rules of business
 - Board and Commission Appointment Process
 - Board and Commission Overview

Candidate Onboarding Informational Meetings



- Council Onboarding informational meeting was held in 2024 between the Primary and General Elections
- Council Onboarding
 - Conducted following the General Election (late November/early December)

Council Input



- **Council Onboarding Informational Meetings**
 - Were the materials provided in the candidate onboarding binder helpful during your campaign?
 - What additional resources (e.g. documents, websites) would help candidates better understand the role of a Northfield City Council Member?