

City of Northfield

*City Hall
801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057
northfieldmn.gov*



Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

6:00 PM

Work Session

Council Chambers

City Council

6:00 PM - CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION AGENDA**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor: Zweifel

Councilmembers: Beumer, Dahlen, Holmes, Ness, Peterson White, Sokup

REGULAR AGENDA

1. [26-187](#) 2026 Absentee/Early Voting, Primary Election and General Election Update

Attachments: [1 - Elections Update 2026](#)
[2 - Proposed Absentee Balloting Hours](#)

2. [26-188](#) Review Updated 2027-2028 Budget Calendar, Points of Emphasis and Budget Updates including Progress on 5-Year Financial Planning.

ADJOURN

Note: The City Council may take a five minute break during the meeting. All regular City Council meetings end at 9:00 pm unless a simple (4/7) majority of the City Council vote to extend the time.

SPECIAL NEEDS: If you require special services to attend or participate in a public meeting, please call the City's Administration Office at (507) 645-3001 or e-mail Lynette Peterson, City Clerk, at lynette.peterson@northfieldmn.gov. TDD users can call (507) 645-3030. Please call at least 24 hours before the meeting, if possible.



Legislation Text

File #: 26-187, Version: 1

City Council Work Session Date: April 14, 2026

To: Mayor and City Council
City Administrator

From: Lynette Peterson, City Clerk

2026 Absentee/Early Voting, Primary Election and General Election Update

Action Requested:

The Northfield City Council will receive an update from the City Clerk regarding the 2026 Elections including absentee/early voting and Primary Election and General Election information. Staff is seeking City Council input on aligning absentee/early voting hours with Rice County.

Summary Report:

This report provides an overview of key dates and logistics for the 2026 election cycle, including candidate filing, primary and general election absentee/early voting periods, and proposed absentee/early voting hours (attachment #1). Staff is seeking City Council input on aligning absentee/early voting hours with Rice County.

The City Clerk's Office will administer the 2026 election cycle, which includes candidate filing, the state primary election, and the state general election. The City Clerk's Office is responsible for coordinating election activities, including absentee/early voting, staffing, and compliance with state and federal requirements.

Candidate filing will occur from May 19 through June 2, 2026, at the City Clerk's Office. Filing packets will be posted online the week prior to filings being open. The following elected positions will be open for filing:

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

The state primary election will be held on August 11, 2026. Absentee/early voting will be open from June 26 through August 10, 2026 in the 2nd Floor Training Room. The pre-registration deadline for the state primary election is July 21, 2026. If residents do not register before this date, they are able to register at the polling place on election day.

Staff proposes the following absentee/early voting hours for both the State Primary and State General Elections (attachment #2):

- Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

These hours are consistent with Rice County’s absentee/early voting schedule. In 2024, absentee/early voting hours were the same as City Hall hours.

State Statute requires absentee/early voting locations to be open the following additional hours for the State Primary Election:

- Saturday, August 8: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Monday, August 10: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

The state general election will be held on November 3, 2026. Absentee/early voting will be open from September 18 through November 2, 2026 in the 2nd Floor Training Room. The pre-registration deadline for the state general election is October 13, 2026. If residents do not register before this date, they are able to register at the polling place on election day.

State Statute requires absentee/early voting locations to be open the following additional hours for the State General Election:

- Saturday, October 24: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 27: 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, October 31: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Sunday, November 1: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Monday, November 2: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Early voting (EV) is a new in-person voting process required during the 18 days preceding state, federal, county, and certain municipal elections, beginning with the 2026 Primary Election. Under this process, voters sign a certification, cast their ballot, and deposit it directly into a tabulator. Early voting replaces the former direct balloting process and is administered with procedures similar to absentee voting. The process requires a minimum of two election officials, includes daily reconciliation to ensure the number of ballots cast matches voter certifications, and requires secure sealing and storage of ballots. Early voting activity is reported as part of absentee ballot totals and will be supported by updates to the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS), with additional training and public communication provided prior to implementation.

Staff is requesting Council input on mirroring Rice County’s absentee/early voting hours. Aligning with the County would promote consistency for voters, reduce confusion about availability, and provide operational efficiencies for City staff. It would allow adequate time at the end of each day to complete required closing procedures, including secure ballot handling, reconciliation, and reporting, while also supporting accuracy and compliance with election requirements. This approach would improve workflow, reduce time constraints on staff, and is expected to decrease the total hours worked by temporary election staff, resulting in more efficient staffing and potential cost savings.

Staff requests that the City Council review the proposed 2026 proposed absentee/early balloting hours (Attachment 1) and provide direction regarding aligning hours with Rice County.

Staff is planning Candidate Information Meetings to occur after the filing period closes and prior to the Primary Election. At these meetings, staff will provide an overview of the election process and City Council procedures.

The meeting date will be established before candidate filing opens so it can be shared with candidates at the time of filing. An additional meeting will be held following the Primary Election for candidates advancing to the General Election.

In 2024, the binder prepared for the candidate meetings included the following materials:

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

Staff welcomes Council input on the usefulness of these materials for individuals running for City Council. Council Members are also encouraged to provide feedback on any additional documents or resources that should be included in future candidate materials.

City Council onboarding is anticipated to occur following the General Election in late November or early December.

Alternative Options:

The City Council could consider extending absentee/early voting hours beyond those of Rice County to align with the regular business hours of City Hall or extend Tuesday hours as that is the day City Hall is open later.

Financial Impacts:

The City has an agreement with Rice County to receive \$22,000 for administering absentee balloting services at Northfield City Hall, which also includes mileage reimbursement for election judges traveling to Faribault for required training. Reducing temporary election staff hours may result in additional cost savings, and improved operational efficiency may further minimize the need for extended hours or overtime for full-time staff.

Tentative Timelines:

May 19: June 2: Candidate Filings

August 11: State Primary Election

November 3: State General Election



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**

- 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
 - Organizations 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 was
- 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?

2026 Proposed Absentee Balloting Hours

Primary Election (August 11, 2026)

Absentee Voting Hours:

Monday – Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Additional Hours:

Saturday, August 8: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Monday, August 10: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

General Election (November 3, 2026)

Absentee Voting Hours:

Monday – Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Additional Hours:

Saturday, October 24: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday, October 27: 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 31: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 1: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Monday, November 2: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

These hours will mirror the hours Rice County will be open for absentee balloting.



Legislation Text

File #: 26-188, Version: 1

City Council Meeting Date: April 14, 2026

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Ben Martig, City Administrator
Brenda Angelstad, Finance Director
Jordan Hanson, Budget Analyst

Review Updated 2027-2028 Budget Calendar, Points of Emphasis and Budget Updates including Progress on 5-Year Financial Planning.

Action Requested:

None.

Summary Report:

Staff will provide a brief presentation to the City Council to initiate the 2027-2028 budget development process. Adjustments are being drafted based on prior council feedback. This update will include progress on the budget development and 5-year financial planning.

No formal budgets or financial analysis to review will be provided.

Supplemental information will be forthcoming.

City Plans & Policies Relevance:

Not applicable.

Alternative Options:

Not applicable.

This is intended to be informational but welcome ideas to explore related to priorities and the schedule.

Financial Impacts:

Not applicable.

Tentative Timelines:

Not applicable.