



# Absentee Balloting and Election Services 2026 Planning Discussion

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# Absentee Ballot Process



Postsecondary institutes with at least 100 student housing spaces can request a temporary location for General Election (must request by May 31)

Staff continues administrating Absentee Ballot Process (Envelopes) until 18 Days Prior to Election

Early Voting Process Continues (including Weekend Hours) until Election Day

Absentee Balloting Process Starts 46 Days Prior to an Election

18 Days Prior to Election Staff Switches to Early Voting Process (Election Machines)

# History



- Counties must provide absentee voting site but would not require it be in Northfield.
- Northfield has provided absentee voting in Northfield historically.
- Northfield has served as a remote absentee voting site for Rice County at City Hall since 2016.
- The City contracts with Rice County to provide absentee voting services (\$10,000 in 2022; \$20,000 in 2024).
- Temporary election staff are hired by the City to administer absentee voting at City Hall.

# 2024 Absentee Voting Statistics



- For the 2024 General Election, Northfield City Hall processed the following absentee and direct balloting applications:
  - 1,656 absentee applications (envelope process)
    - 76.45% were from Northfield residents
  - 3,154 direct balloting applications (ballots inserted into machines)
    - 75.11% were from Northfield residents
- In total, 5,320 Northfield resident applications were processed across both Rice County and Northfield City Hall locations:
  - 4,810 (90.41%) were processed at City Hall
  - 510 (9.59%) were processed in Faribault at the Rice County location

# 2026 Election Changes



- **Direct Balloting Transitioning to Early Voting in 2026**
  - Early voting period will begin 18 days prior to Election Day (previously 10 days)
  - New law requires a minimum of 3 temporary election staff on site during voting hours
    - In 2024, staffing included 2 election workers plus support from the City Clerk/Deputy Clerk
- **Temporary Campus Voting Locations**
  - Postsecondary institutions with 100 or more student housing spaces may request a one-day temporary voting location for the General Election
  - The City or County must provide the location if requested
  - If the City discontinues absentee voting services, this responsibility would shift to Rice County

# Expenses – Additional with New Law Changes



- **Additional Expenses Associated with New Law Changes**
  - Increased staffing required at the absentee voting site for the full 18-day early voting period, including weekends and extended hours
  - Potential additional costs if both colleges request temporary on-campus voting locations

# Expenses – Absentee Balloting Location in City Hall



- **Total Estimated Expenses for Absentee Ballot Location at Northfield City Hall:**
  - \$30,000 for temporary election staff salaries at City Hall absentee site
  - \$5,000 for temporary campus staffing if requested by colleges
  - \$1,000 for mileage/staff time related to ballot delivery to Faribault

# Expenses – Total with City Hall Absentee Ballot Location



- Estimated expenses for the 2026 election, assuming continuation of the absentee balloting location at City Hall, are shown in the following table:

Summary	Cost
Primary & General Judge Salaries	\$54,000
Staff for AB City Hall Location Salaries	\$30,000
Remote Voting Requests from Colleges	\$5,000
Election Judge Training	\$5,700
Mileage for Delivering AB ballots to Faribault	\$1,000
Mileage for Election Judges to attend training in Faribault	\$2,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$97,700*</b>

\* Current contract with Rice County reimburses the City \$20,000 for AB location at Northfield City Hall.

# Expenses – Total without City Hall Absentee Ballot Location



- The following table presents estimated expenses for the 2026 election without an absentee balloting location at City Hall:

Summary	Cost
Primary & General Judge Salaries	\$54,000
Election Judge Training	\$5,700
Mileage for Election Judges to attend training in Faribault	\$2,000
TOTAL	\$61,700*

\*At this time, the cost to Northfield for Rice County to process all absentee ballots if we discontinue the remote absentee ballot location at City Hall is unknown. Rice County staff will provide more information if we decide to end our location. For reference, the City of Faribault currently does not have an absentee ballot location and is not currently charged by Rice County for this service.

# Council Discussion/ Questions for August Worksession



- 1. Does the Council support continuing absentee balloting at City Hall, or would it prefer to discontinue the service for a potential net budget reduction of \$16,000?**  
(Note: Future cost arrangements with Rice County are unknown. Currently, Rice County does not charge the City of Faribault for similar services.)
- 2. If absentee balloting continues, does the Council support negotiating with Rice County for additional reimbursement beyond the current \$20,000?**

# Council Discussion/ Questions for August Worksession



3. **Election Judge Training:** In 2024, Rice County held one training session in Northfield. For 2026, they plan to hold all training sessions in Faribault. Should the City request that Rice County offer a training session in Northfield, given that approximately 100 Northfield election judges need training?

(If County staff provides a training session in Northfield, the City could save approximately \$2,000 in mileage costs. Without a local session, the City would need to reimburse all judges for mileage to attend training in Faribault.)

# Any Additional Questions?



- Are there any additional election-related areas you would like staff to investigate for potential cost savings?
  - Most election requirements are set by State Statute, but staff is willing to investigate other opportunities for cost savings.