



Executive Summary

City Council Business Meeting

AGENDA ITEM:	2026 Election Administration Law Changes for City Operations with In-Person Absentee Voting
PREPARED BY:	Kevin Larson, Assistant City Administrator
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Council Discussion and 1 Motion 1. Motion to approve or deny the action of opting out of in-person absentee voting

Summary

The Minnesota Secretary of State's Administration Bill (SF 4006/HF 4240) includes a provision that would allow cities to opt out of conducting in-person absentee voting at City Hall. Under the current election calendar, absentee voting begins 46 days before an election and includes both mail-in absentee voting, administered by Hennepin County, and in-person absentee voting, administered by City staff. Eighteen days before Election Day, absentee voting ends and transitions to the State's formal early voting period.

The legislation gives cities the option to discontinue in-person absentee voting during the initial absentee voting period and instead focus staff and election resources on early voting and Election Day operations.

Election participation trends show that most voters continue to vote during the early voting period or on Election Day. During the 2024 election cycle in Hennepin County, 755 voters cast ballots during early voting (188) or on Election Day (567), 139 voted by mail-in absentee ballot, 97 voted through in-person absentee voting at City Hall, and 88 voted through health care absentee voting.

Rationale for Opting Out of In-Person Absentee Voting

Opting out of in-person absentee voting would allow the City of Maple Plain to better focus limited staff time and election resources on the voting methods most used by residents, specifically early voting and Election Day operations. With only 97 voters

using in-person absentee voting at City Hall during the 2024 election cycle, demand for this service remains relatively low compared to other voting options.

Providing in-person absentee voting requires additional staffing, election judge coordination, secure ballot handling, voter assistance, technology setup, and compliance with election laws over an extended period before early voting begins. For smaller cities with limited staff, these responsibilities can place significant demands on City operations while serving a smaller portion of voters.

The proposed opt-out provision would not remove access to absentee or early voting. Residents would still be able to vote by mail during the full 46-day absentee voting period, in-person at Hennepin County offices, vote in-person during the 18-day early voting period, or vote on Election Day. This would continue to provide residents with multiple voting options while allowing the City to focus resources during the periods of highest voter participation.

Focusing staff efforts on early voting and Election Day may also improve election administration, reduce operational complexity, and strengthen staffing readiness during peak voting periods.

Discussion and Direction

Staff is requesting Council discussion regarding whether the City of Maple Plain should exercise the authority provided under the proposed legislation to opt out of conducting in-person absentee voting during the election season.