

A roll of white 'I VOTED' stickers with a blue and red American flag design. The stickers are arranged in a circular pattern around the text.

Topic: Desirability and feasibility of changing the date of municipal elections from April to June

Council Work Session
Monday, November 21, 2023

Recent Voter Turnout (2012 – 2022)

Staff was asked to investigate the feasibility of moving the municipal election to June to increase voter turnout.

Election Year:	Mayor	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Total Voters	Reg. Voters	% Part	Comments
2023							5,080		No election - municipal election cycle (off year)
2022	1487	248	*	419	473	1488	4,541	32.8%	
2021	n/a	*	*	*	*		4,642		
2020							4,687		No election - municipal election cycle (off year)
2019	726	*	178	232	*	726	4,290	16.9%	
2018	n/a	*	*	*	*		4,090		
2017							4,086		No election - municipal election cycle (off year)
2016	*	162	229	*	223	614	2,225	27.6%	
2015	n/a	155	294	*	382	831	4,086	20.3%	
2014									No election - municipal election cycle (off year)
2013	616	109	*	*	220	616	4,019	15.3%	
2012	n/a	*	308	*	*	308			

Average 2012-2023	943	169	253	326	325	764
Average 2012-2022	671	142	253	232	275	619

22.6% * Candidate unopposed so no election held

Current Practice

Sturgis municipal elections are held the second Tuesday of April.

- Prior to 2012, municipal terms were two years, with an election held each year.
- In 2012, terms were extended to three years so now every 3rd year there is no election.
- We staff 12 election workers for the required shift (6:30am to 7:15pm).
 - They must work the entire shift.
- Recently we have also staffed a Counting Board.
 - A separate counting board comes in after the polls close and manually counts ballots.

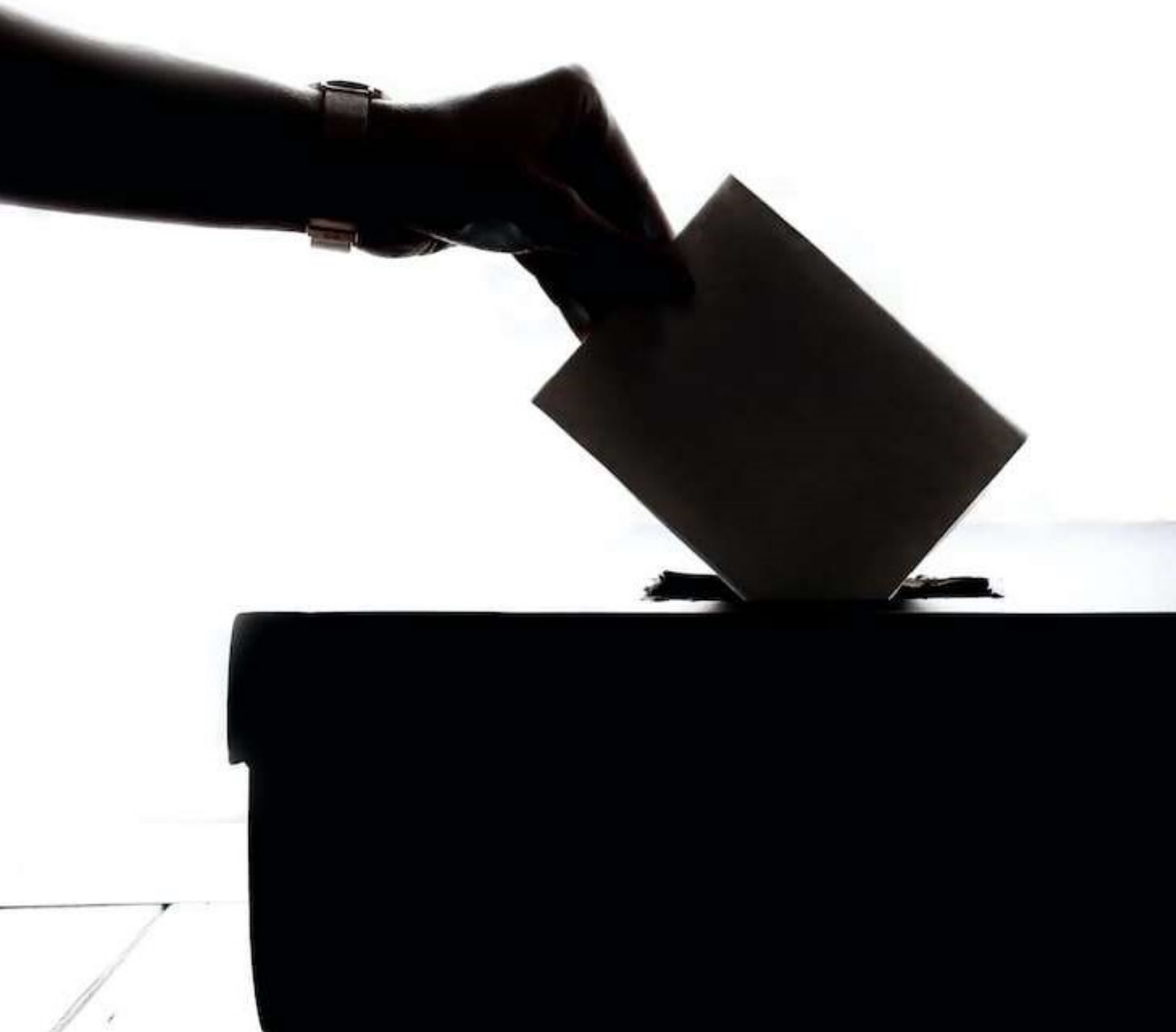
Challenges to holding elections in April

- Unpredictable weather
- Only local election results in lower voter turn-out (especially in years without a Mayor election)
- Finding willing election workers



SDCL 9-13-1

- Municipal elections are set to occur on the second Tuesday of April
 - Most Black Hills communities hold elections in April
- The Council has the discretion to select the alternative date of the first Tuesday following the first Monday in June.
 - Rapid City, Hill City and Hot Springs
 - Statewide, Aberdeen, Murdo, North Sioux City, Salem and Vermillion



Consideration: Utilize Electronic Ballot Tabulation?

- The City has staffed a Counting Board to manually count ballots.
 - There is a wage cost associated with this.
- The City could upgrade its ballots, contract with the county to use the equipment for electronic tabulation of ballots.
 - There is a cost associated with upgrading the ballots and using the County equipment.
 - This would allow the City to release unofficial election results within a much shorter time after the polls close.
 - It reduces the chance of errors and recounts to ensure accurate unofficial results.
 - Could be done with April elections.

Consideration: Run Municipal Election Concurrent with County/School Election in June



The municipal election would be at the same polling place, but would be independent of the County election.



Voters would vote in a separate place for municipal ballots and would have to cast a second ballot for the county-run election.

Advantages:

- Potential to increase voter turnout
- Allows City to hold election in June
- Could be done without County support
- No additional expense (unless use electronic tabulation)

Disadvantages:

- Requires the City to employ 12 election workers (3 per ward).
 - Many of the City's election workers work the County and we already struggle to find election workers.
- Potentially confusing to voters

Consideration: Run Municipal Election Combined with County/School Election in June

The City would contract with the County to manage our election.

- The municipal election would be a part of the elections managed by the Auditor.
- Unified ballot
- In off years, the City could do its own (separate) election or have the County manage the election.

Advantages:

- Potential to increase voter turnout
- Allows City to hold election in June.
- Voters only vote one ballot. (Not confusing)
- City would not need to employ 12 additional election workers.
- The City would not manage the election.

Disadvantages:

- Requires agreement by the County.
- Additional expense (approximately \$3k)

Election Calendar (2024 – 2032)

Election Year	Municipal	School District	County-State-Federal
2024	X	X	X **
2025	X *	X	
2026		X	X
2027	X	X	
2028	X *	X	X **
2029		X	
2030	X	X	X
2031	X *	X	
2032		X	X **
* Mayor Race		** Presidential Race	

Note: In years where there is no county-state-federal election, the City would partner with the school district only.

Comparing Election Timelines

	April 9th Election	June 4th Election
Establish Election Date	No later than January 14 th	No later than January 14 th
Petition Circulation Begins	Friday, January 26 th	Friday, March 1 st
Petition Circulation Ends	Friday, February 23 rd at 5:00pm	Tuesday, March 26 th by 5:00pm
Absentee Voting Begins	Monday, March 25 th	Friday, April 19 th
Voter Registration Deadline	Monday, March 25 th by 5:00pm	Monday, May 20 th by 5:00pm
Absentee Voting Deadline	Monday, April 8 th by 5:00pm	Monday, June 3 rd by 5:00pm
Election Day	Tuesday, April 9 th	Tuesday, June 4 th
Deadline to Canvas	Tuesday, April 16 th	Tuesday, June 11 th
Oath of Office	1 st meeting in May	1 st meeting in July

Note: If the elections are combined (single ballot), then there are additional steps done in coordination with the County Auditor.