

October

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City of Hastings
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Hastings Highlights

For those of you who don't know, I am the Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director of the City of Hastings. Part of my job is run the elections in the City (not the County or Townships). I have been doing this for almost **three** years and I love what I do. I am going to share with you things I have learned over the past few years. Sit back, relax and enjoy the read.

1. There is a difference between mail-in voting and absentee voting. Before November 2018, Michigan voters could vote absentee but needed to provide a reason (age, disability, out-of-town, etc.) to obtain an absentee ballot. Proposal 18-3, which passed, allowed voters to obtain an absentee ballot WITHOUT providing a reason. Agree with it or not, it was passed by the voters. Not by the Secretary of State or the Governor...it was passed by the VOTERS. There are five states that have mail-in voting and Michigan is NOT one of them...neither is Florida in case you were wondering.
2. In Michigan you MUST complete a ballot application in order to receive a ballot for EACH election. NO ONE in the State of Michigan was automatically sent a ballot without requesting one. We would be in a lot of trouble and probably in jail if that happened.
3. Every jurisdiction in Michigan has the ability to maintain a permanent absentee voter (AV) list. This list is made up of those voters who have indicated that they want to automatically receive a ballot application for every election. My office sent ballot applications to those voters. Secretary of State Benson (and other organizations) also sent ballot applications (NOT BALLOTS!) to all registered voters that were not on our permanent AV list. This was done to encourage voters to vote absentee instead of in-person to help stop the spread of COVID-19. This worked. In the City, our number of absentee ballots issued doubled because of Secretary Benson's initiative. This has satisfied those who are hesitant to vote in-person due to COVID-19, and also satisfied those who want to vote in person. Please don't criticize or force your beliefs if one method is better than the other because both methods are allowed under the law and voters have the right to choose. Don't forget that voters are the ones who voted for no-reason absentee voting.
4. Is it safe to still mail your absentee ballot? EXTREMELY!! We have recently been in contact with the Hastings Postmaster. He said that processing and delivering of ballots will be a priority and will continue to happen on a timely basis. The folks at the post office work hard to ensure that all ballots are delivered and are committed to all votes being counted on election day. I encourage you to support the post office more by sending payments, letters, etc. or else it may be a thing of the past and we certainly don't want that to happen. If you still don't feel comfortable, we have the drop box in our drive-thru and as always ballots can be brought inside. You can even request, vote and turn in your ballot in our office. This way your ballot never leaves City Hall.
5. Voters cannot receive more than one ballot. **Not possible.** If you received double of something, it was a ballot application, not a ballot. If we don't receive a completed ballot application back, you don't get a ballot. Also, if your signature doesn't match the signature on file in our Qualified Voter File, you don't get a ballot. The Michigan Bureau of Election has created a system that prevents the issuance of more than one ballot.
6. If the signature on the ballot application or ballot, does not match, it will be rejected. You will be contacted (provided you gave us this information) and will be asked to stop by City Hall to provide a signature sample. **This is to prevent fraud.**
7. If you are being forced by someone in your household to vote a certain way on your absentee ballot, then vote at the polls.
8. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO VOTE FOR EVERY SINGLE RACE ON A BALLOT! Many voters do not know this. You can vote for whatever you choose. You can actually even submit a blank ballot. Not sure why anyone would, but it is allowed. Do your homework before you vote. An educated vote is the best vote.



9. Now let me talk about absentee ballot counting. An Absentee Voter Counting Board (AVCB) CANNOT count ballots prior to the open of polls at 7 am under the current law. Also, they stay until the job is complete. The AVCB is sequestered in a room with the ballots that we have received, verified, bundled and sealed in a ballot transport container. Once they arrive, they cannot leave until after the close of polls at 8 pm. In smaller elections, they arrive later in the day so that they don't have to be there all day. If they finish early, they cannot leave until after 8 pm. They cannot have cellphones. This is so that they cannot communicate any results to the outside. They can step out to use the restroom, in case you were wondering. They cannot leave for lunch. They verify that there is a signature on the envelope (keep in mind that we already verified it against what is in the system). They open the envelope and pull out the ballot which is contained in the secrecy sleeve. They verify that the ballot number matches to what is on the envelope. Sometimes members of the same household put them in the wrong envelopes by mistake. Once verification is complete, the ballots are then put into the tabulator. If there is an over vote, under vote or a cross vote, they cast the ballot as it is. There is nothing that can be done at this point. If there are stray marks on the ballot and the tabulator will not read it, the ballot will have to be duplicated. Two workers of differing political parties must work together to duplicate the ballot. One worker reads the ballot, while the other fills in the circles. Both workers then verify that the ballot is done correctly according to the voter's original ballot.

10. An eligible person can register to vote all the way up to 8 pm on election day. However, only newly registered voters or emergency ballots can be issued from our office on election day. A voter can only obtain an absentee ballot up until 4 pm on the day before the election.

11. Photo ID is not required to vote. This is allowed under current election law. Voters not in possession of ID at the polls sign the back of the application to vote which is the affidavit stating that they are not in possession. We report these to the state after every election.

12. Before every election and before we even distribute ballots, we are required to perform testing on the tabulators and run sample ballots through. I am also required to perform a public accuracy test. This is a public meeting anyone can attend to view the process.

13. In order for any write-in votes to count, that candidate must be a registered write-in candidate for that election. If you write Mickey Mouse on your ballot, that doesn't count. Sorry, Mickey. You must try to write in as closely as possible the candidates correct name as to how they filed.

14. Do not fill in a bubble on the ballot if there isn't anything written next to it!

I apologize for the lengthy article, but if you read it all and still have questions please send me an email at elections@hastingsmi.org or call our office at 269-945-2468. I am happy to answer any questions you may have and I want all Michigan voters to be ensured that our elections are safe, secure and that the Bureau of Elections, Secretary of State and all clerks have put in a lot of work to uphold the integrity of elections. Every vote counts and we live and practice that to the core.



Jane Saurman

For Information and Scheduling for the **YMCA**
contact:

For all dates, times, fees, locations, or to register,
please visit our website ymcaofbarrycounty.org
or call our office at
269-945-4574 weekdays between 9am-4pm.



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