

Overview

What is the City Election?

The city election is held in odd-numbered years on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November to elect city officers and vote on public measures. All cities will hold a regular city election. It is held in conjunction with the regular school election, so the election is known as the city–school election.

As part of the election process, a city may hold a city runoff after the regular city election if set by city ordinance.

[§39.3(3)]

Candidate Qualifications

A candidate must be an eligible elector in the city and city ward (if any) when filing nomination papers and at the time of the election.

[§376.4(1)]

An eligible elector meets all requirements to register to vote but does not have to be registered. An eligible elector must be:

- A citizen of the United States
- A resident of Iowa
- At least 18 years old

An eligible elector may not:

- Be a convicted felon (unless voting rights have been restored by the president or governor, including via Executive Order)
- Be currently judged incompetent to vote by a court
- Claim the right to vote in any other place

[§39.3(6)]

Controlling County Auditor

When a city, school district, or merged area (community college) crosses county lines, the auditor whose county has the largest taxable base is the “controlling auditor”. The controlling auditor is responsible for receiving candidate nomination papers and public measures, developing summaries, and certifying names and the text of public measures and summaries to all auditors for that political subdivision.

Each auditor is responsible for administering elections for cities, school districts, or portions thereof, for all voters within the auditor’s county. When a city or school district lies in multiple

counties, each auditor will print ballots and service voters for the portion within the auditor's county.

For city primary and runoff elections or special elections for cities, schools, or merged areas, the non-control county auditor may designate the control county auditor to conduct the election if fewer than 125 registered voters of the shared jurisdiction reside in the non-control county.

[§47.2(2), 260C.15]

Nomination Papers

Candidates for the regular city election in cities without primary election provisions may be nominated one of two ways:

1. Circulating nomination petitions (Chapter 45 nominations or runoff provisions)
2. Holding a non-party political organization (NPPO) nomination convention (Chapter 44 nominations)

A NPPO is a political organization that is not a political party as defined by Iowa law.

[§44.1, 376.3]

Check with the city clerk or controlling auditor to determine which nomination method is allowed and whether the city has a runoff provision.

Each candidate must file nomination papers with the county auditor or the city clerk if designated by the controlling auditor. Check with the controlling auditor to determine the proper office to file nomination paperwork. The affidavit of candidacy and nomination petitions or convention certificate must be filed together, or they will be rejected.

[§376.4(1)(a)]

Copies of nomination papers are available at the city clerk's office, county auditor's office, or on the Secretary of State's website: <http://sos.iowa.gov/city-elections>.

Filing Period

Nomination papers must be filed with the county auditor during the filing period. They cannot be filed before or after the filing period. The filing period is:

First day: Monday, August 25, 2025

Last day: Thursday, September 18, 2025 – 5:00 p.m.

There are no filing fees in Iowa.

[§376.4(1)(a)]