



# TOWN OF RIVER FALLS 2020 AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

## Special Election and Covid-19 Updates

Website: [riverfallstown.com](http://riverfallstown.com)

### 2020 ELECTIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted our lives in many ways and this year's elections have been no exception. If you've been to the polls this year you've seen many changes: protective screens, masks, sanitizing solutions, Q-tips (to operate the touch screen machine), take home pens, etc. There have been three elections so far this year – February, April and August. Voter participation in these elections has been nearly double from previous years. There were 218 voters in February, 700 in April and 572 in the August election. Interest in the elections has greatly increased the workload of the Town Clerk's office to manage the demand for absentee ballots. In addition to responding to absentee requests, election inspector training is currently taking place. Routine equipment maintenance and/or new equipment is also expected to be in place by Election Day on November 3rd.

### ROUTES TO RECOVERY (R2R) FUNDING

The State of Wisconsin received funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) federal funding act. Each municipality in Wisconsin received a portion of the fund that can be used to cover expenses associated with COVID-19 prevention, including public health and safety measures, emergency services, cleaning and sanitizing supplies and services, mailings for public communication, additional absentee drop boxes and acquisition of additional equipment. The Town of River Falls received \$37,685 as its portion of the R2R fund. Several Town Board actions have initiated safety measures for public meetings and for elections. Besides adopting safe distance protocols, other safety measures include the purchase of sanitizing supplies, wipes, hand sanitizer,

masks for the Town Hall and the Town Shop, the purchase of three plexiglass screens used at the August 3rd primary election to provide protection for voters and poll workers, and approval of expenses associated with the increase in absentee ballots.

The Town Board has approved spending R2R funding on improved air quality and circulation in the Town Hall. Comfort by Design has installed a second air return and both HEPA and UV filters to improve air circulation and quality. The installation of additional ceiling fans and an air conditioning unit at the Town Hall will also assist in better air handling for all who attend meetings and vote at the Town Hall.

The Town Board also voted to upgrade voting equipment with the purchase of two new touchscreen voting machines and a new vote counting machine. These purchases will replace older equipment that has been in operation for several years. The Town is working with Jamie Feuerhelm, Pierce County Clerk, to order the new equipment.

### THE NOVEMBER 3rd PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

A presidential election normally brings around 1400-1500 Town of River Falls voters to the polls on Election Day. This includes around 150 absentee ballots in a typical year. This year that number is projected to be well over 800 absentees. The Town asks for everyone's patience and cooperation in the next two months and on Election Day to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to vote and that everyone's vote counts!

### FREQUENTLY ASKED ELECTION QUESTIONS

#### How do I register to vote in the Town of River Falls?

If you have not registered to vote yet, there is a 28-day residency requirement in the State of Wisconsin. Voter registration

forms can be obtained on the [myvote.wi.gov](http://myvote.wi.gov) website or from Town Clerk, Susan Freiermuth, (715-425-1117 or [clerk@riverfallstown.com](mailto:clerk@riverfallstown.com)).

#### When are the polls open?

7:00 AM to 8:00 PM on November 3, 2020.

#### Where do I vote?

If you are a new resident of the Town of River Falls the voting location is the Town Hall (former Randall Schoolhouse) located at W9015 770<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Hwy. 65. Please note that City of River Falls residents vote in other city locations and not at the Town Hall.

#### What information do I need to bring to vote in person?

Registered voters must bring a valid photo ID. Examples of acceptable photo ID documents can be found on the [bringit.wi.gov](http://bringit.wi.gov) website.

### ABSENTEE BALLOT

#### When will absentee ballots be available?

The Town will make them available as soon as we receive them from the County. As you are hearing in the national media, absentee ballot requests should be made as soon as possible to avoid any issues with mailing backlogs.

#### How do I request an absentee ballot?

Absentee ballots can be requested on the [myvote.wi.gov](http://myvote.wi.gov) website or from the Town Clerk, Susan Freiermuth. The Town Hall will also be staffed on Wednesday evenings during the month of October (5:00-7:00 PM) and Saturday mornings (10:00 AM-12:00 PM ) for issuing and collecting absentee ballots (this includes those that have been sent out through the mail.) Please note that no ballots can be issued on Saturday, October 31<sup>st</sup> due to state deadline requirements.

**What information do I need to provide to get an absentee ballot?**

You must be a registered voter in the Town of River Falls and have a current photo ID on file with the Town Clerk.

**Do I need to have a witness sign my absentee ballot prior to returning it?**

Yes, it is very important to include both the voter’s and witness signatures and addresses on the ballot return envelope. Your ballot cannot be counted unless the envelope is complete.

**Can a witness or a poll worker other than the person who was present when the absentee ballot was voted on sign as witness on the absentee ballot envelope?**

**No**, the original witness who was present when the ballot was voted on must sign the absentee ballot envelope.

**Where do I send or deposit my completed absentee ballot?**

You can mail your completed ballot to the Town Clerk at N7998 State Hwy. 65, River Falls, 54022 or drop off at that location (by appointment), or drop it off at the Town Hall at the days/hours listed earlier in this article. Your ballot can also be dropped off at the Town Hall by 8:00 PM on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**How do I know if my absentee ballot was returned?**

If you requested your ballot on the myvote.wi.gov website you can check the website to make

sure your returned ballot has been received. If you requested your ballot directly from the Town Clerk, please contact the Town Clerk.

**What’s the latest date that I can request an absentee ballot?**

Absentee ballots can be requested to be mailed out through 5:00 PM on Thursday, October 29<sup>th</sup> for regular and overseas voters (indefinitely confined and military voters have until 5:00 PM on Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup> to request to have their ballots mailed to them). In-person absentee requests can be made to the Town Clerk through 5:00 PM on Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. Ballots need to be returned to the polls by 8:00 PM on Tuesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> in order to be counted.

**If a voter requests an absentee ballot, but does NOT return it, can he come and vote in person at the polls on Election Day?**

The poll books will have a notation that an absentee ballot was issued to the voter but has not been returned yet. The voter will be asked to confirm that they have not returned their absentee ballot. If the voter confirms that they have not returned the ballot, they are allowed to vote in-person at the polls.

**Can a person other than the voter return a voted absentee ballot on behalf of the voter?**

Yes. A ballot hand-delivered to the Town Clerk’s office or the polling place is considered returned by mail.

**Can an elector that has returned their absentee ballot ask to spoil the ballot and be issued a new ballot at the polling place?**

No, an elector that has returned their absentee ballot cannot spoil their ballot, nor be issued a new ballot at the polling place.

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**TOWN OF RIVER FALLS  
- Additional Information**

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**ATV / UTV UPDATE**

It is currently illegal to drive ATV/UTV’s on Town of River Falls roads unless they are posted otherwise. At the request of many Town residents, the Town Board passed a motion on August 17, 2020, to update our ATV/UTV Ordinance to allow ATV/UTV use on all town roads, unless otherwise marked. This takes effect as soon as the Pierce County ATV Association has installed all the necessary signage.

**BURN PERMITS**

It is illegal to burn permitted items in the Town of River Falls without a Burning Permit. Failure to have a permit could result in an \$800.00 fire call charge. Trash must be disposed of either through a private hauler or brought to the Town Recycling Center located at N7750 Hwy 65. The Recycling Center is open year-round on Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Annual Burning Permits are available at the Town Recycling Center during these hours or from any Town Board member or employee.

TOWN OF RIVER FALLS  
Susan Freiermuth, Town Clerk  
N7998 State Hwy. 65  
River Falls, WI 54022

