



# **Election Officials Manual**

## **Chapter 16: Election Dates and School Election Coordination**

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# I. Introduction

This chapter explains the options for counties, cities, townships, and other units of local government when conducting elections, as well as the process for holding school district elections. Questions about the content of this chapter should be directed to Elections@Michigan.gov.

## II. General election dates

Michigan provides counties, cities, townships, and other units of local government considerable flexibility in setting and holding elections. Aside from school board elections, all units of local government may hold elections on any of three dates in any year:

- The first Tuesday after the first Monday in May.
- The first Tuesday after the first Monday in August.
- The first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

In addition to the above dates, a unit of local government may hold elections on the following dates:

- In a presidential election year, the fourth Tuesday in February (to coincide with the presidential primary).
- The date of any special election called by the state Legislature or the Governor.

School districts, intermediate school districts, and community college districts that wish to bring a millage proposal, a bond proposal, or a proposal to borrow funds to an election may hold that election on a date other than the above dates. These elections are known as “special school district elections.”

School board positions are the only unit of local government which must be elected on a mandatory schedule: school board elections must be held in the November of even years.



# **III. School district election coordinators and school district election coordinating committees**

## **Designation of the school district election coordinator and membership of the school district election coordinating committee**

School district elections in Michigan are administered by school district election coordinators and school district election coordinating committees. The identity of the school district election coordinator and the membership of the school district election coordinating committee is determined by geographic scope of the school district.

If the school district is entirely contained within a single city or township, the clerk of that city or township is the school district's election coordinator and the members of the school district election coordinating committee are the clerk, the other members of the city or township's election commission, and the secretary of the school board or the secretary's designee. If the school district crosses city or township lines, the county clerk is the school district's election coordinator and the school district's election coordinating committee members are the county clerk, the clerk of each city or township in which part of the school district lies, and the secretary of the school board or the secretary's designee.

If the school district crosses county lines, the county clerk of the county in which the plurality of the school district's voters reside is the school district's election coordinator and the school district's election coordinating committee members are the county clerk, the clerk of each city or township in which part of the school district lies, and the secretary of the school board or the secretary's designee.

Because a county may contain multiple school districts that cross city or township lines, the county clerk may serve as the election coordinator for multiple school districts.



## **Meeting requirements for school district election coordinating committees**

Each school district's election coordinating committee must meet every four years to review the school's election report. After the committee completes its review, this report must be submitted to the Bureau of Elections (BOE). The most recent year in which election coordinating committees were required to meet and submit a report was 2021. The meeting and report submission requirement applies to all local school districts, intermediate school districts, and community college districts.

Before each meeting of the school district's election coordinating committee, the school district's election coordinator should do all of the following:

- Obtain a current map of the school district clearly showing the school district's boundaries. The coordinator may consult with the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget's Office of Shared Solutions for assistance in obtaining this map.
- Obtain or generate a list of special school district election-related duties and responsibilities and the clerk or clerks performing those duties.
- Obtain a list of the number of registered voters residing in the school district categorized by jurisdiction and precinct.

If the school district election coordinator is a county clerk and the school district spans county lines, the coordinator should also notify the clerk or clerks of the other counties in which the school district lies of the upcoming meeting. The clerks of all cities and townships which contain part of the school district must be invited to participate in the school election coordinating meeting, regardless of which county contains the city or township.

All school district election coordinating committee meetings must be held in full compliance with Michigan's Open Meetings Act.

## **Holding special school district elections**

If a school district is fully contained within a city or township, the city or township clerk is responsible for implementing the school district's special election plan set out in the report submitted to the BOE. If a school district crosses city or township lines, the clerk of any of the cities or townships



which contain a portion of the school district may volunteer to implement the school district's special election plan set out in the report submitted to the BOE by holding any special school district elections at polling places entirely contained within the clerk's city or townships. A clerk who opts to hold special school district elections must enter into an agreement with the school district's election coordinating committee after consulting with the members of the city or township's legislative body. This agreement is binding on the local clerk until the school district's election coordinating committee again convenes the meeting required every four years to review the school's election report.

If no city or township clerk volunteers to administer a school district's special school district elections, the county clerk may direct the clerk of any city or township which contains a portion of the school district to participate in the special school district election by:

- providing voting equipment for use in conducting the election,
- providing the county clerk with a list of election inspectors who served in the city or township during the last election held by the city or township,
- and by requiring that the clerk of the city or township notify voters within their city or township of the voter's special school district election precinct and special school district election polling place.

County clerks may also delegate any of the clerk's duties associated with their role as school district election coordinator to the clerk of a city or township in which part of the school district lies with the consent of that clerk. No election-related duty may be delegated to the school district, a member of the school board, or any person other than a municipal clerk.

Any decision made by the county clerk regarding the administration of a special school district election should be reviewed and approved by the school district election coordinating committee.

Special school district elections must give voters all of the opportunities to participate in the election that the voter would have in any other election held in the jurisdiction. Voters must be allowed to apply for and receive an absent voter ballot for the special school district election, the clerk's office must be open for at least eight hours on the weekend prior to the election to accommodate voters who wish to register to vote or who wish to request and complete an absent voter ballot, and the clerk must register voters and provide those voters with an absent voter ballot until 8 p.m. on Election Day.



The clerk must also fulfill all requirements for UOCAVA voters, including providing a ballot 45 days prior to a special school district election to any UOCAVA voter who has submitted a request to receive an absent voter ballot for every election occurring in the jurisdiction during the calendar year or who is on the permanent mail ballot list.

## **IV. Intermediate school districts**

For intermediate school district boards elected by meeting rather than a public election, the board must meet on the first Monday in June of every odd-numbered year.

The clerk of the county in which an intermediate school district position lies is required to accept filings submitted by candidates who wish to serve on the board of the intermediate school district and is required to prepare the ballots for the election at which the board members will seek office.

For more information about the duties which county clerks owe to intermediate school districts, the county clerk should contact the Bureau of Elections at [Elections@Michigan.gov](mailto:Elections@Michigan.gov).

## **V. Additional election date options for school districts**

A school district, intermediate school district, or community college district may call a special school district election to submit a ballot question to borrow money, increase a millage or establish a bond by filing an initiative petition with the county clerk. The special school district election may be conducted on one of the three fixed election dates explained at the beginning of this chapter or on any Tuesday that falls more than 30 days before or 35 days after one of those three fixed election dates. A district may schedule no more than one special school district election under the petitioning process each calendar year.

The initiative petition must be filed with the county clerk no later than 4:00 p.m. on the twelfth Tuesday prior to the proposed date of the special election.

The initiative petitions must bear the signatures of at least 3,000 voters who reside within the district or 10% of the number of the district's voters who



voted in the last gubernatorial election, whichever number is smaller. Any signatures appearing on the petition which are dated more than 60 days prior to the date the petition is filed with the county clerk are invalid.

## **VI. Reimbursement of costs associated with school elections**

School districts, intermediate school districts, and community college districts are required to reimburse any expenses incurred by a county, city, or township when conducting a regular or special school district election on behalf of the district.

If a regular or special school district election is held in conjunction with another election conducted by the county or local jurisdictions involved, the school district, intermediate school district, or community college district is responsible for any added costs attributable to the conduct of the district's regular or special election. If a regular or special school election is not held in conjunction with another election conducted by the county or local jurisdictions involved, the district is responsible for all of the costs associated with the conduct of the district's regular or special election.

To initiate the reimbursement process, the county and local jurisdictions are required to provide the school board with a verified account of actual costs associated with the conduct of the district's regular or special election no more than 84 days after the date of the election. Within 84 days of receipt of a reimbursement request, the school board must pay or dispute all or a portion of the verified account

Upon the request of a county, city, or township, the school board is required to review any disputed costs with the county, city, or township. If an agreement on the disputed costs cannot be reached, the Secretary of State is responsible for assigning the disputed costs to the school district or the county and local jurisdictions.

County and local jurisdictions must use the cost factors and standards established by the Bureau of Elections for the administration of the presidential primary reimbursement program when preparing reimbursement requests for school elections.





## **VII. Reimbursement of costs associated with village elections**

Villages are required to reimburse any expenses incurred by a township when conducting a special election on behalf of the village. If a regular village election is held in conjunction with another election conducted by the township, the village is responsible for paying the township a proportionate share of the expenses involved.

If a village requires a special election on a date other than the November General Election, the village must reimburse the township or townships in which the village is located a proportionate share of the election-related expenses incurred by the township or townships, including labor costs, rental charges, custodial fees, and similar expenses. BOE recommends using the following standards to determine the share of the costs the village must bear:

- In any precinct where 100% of the registered voters reside in the village, the village is responsible for 50% of the precinct management costs.
- In any precinct where less than 100% of the registered voters reside in the village, the village is responsible for 50% of the precinct management costs attributable to the village voters. For example, under this standard if 10% of the registered voters in the precinct reside in the village, the village would be responsible for 5% of the management costs for that precinct.

## **VIII. Reimbursement of costs for other elections**

The state of Michigan reimburses cities and townships for the cost of the United States Presidential Primary and special statewide elections only, although additional one-time grants are sometimes made available. Costs for all other elections are the responsibility of the cities and townships conducting the elections, with limited expenses shared by the counties.

