

News from Avon Township

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In less than a month – on Tuesday, August 14 – voters head to the polls to vote in the Minnesota Primary Election. The purpose of this election is to narrow down the pool of candidates to determine who will be on the ballot in the November General Election (Tuesday, November 6).

Until I became clerk, I never realized and appreciated the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes to run an election.

The Stearns County Auditor-Treasurer, Randy Schreifels, and his elections staff – Dave, Laurie, Roxanne, and Nikki – do a herculean task of training judges, preparing ballots, handling absentee ballots, reporting election results, and everything else related to elections. We are lucky to have such great and competent people working for us in Stearns County. They have helped me countless times with a smile and good humor.

Prior to each election, we must test the machines in a public accuracy test (PAT). Avon Township will hold our PAT on August 7, 2018 at 10 AM in the Town Hall. Everyone is invited. Prior to the test, we even do a preliminary test just to be absolutely certain everything is in working order. Imagine not testing the machines and arriving early on Election Day to find a broken ballot counter.

The good news is that the County has purchased new ballot counters. These should serve well for at least a decade. They were purchased with funds the County obtained from the State. The Township then essentially rents the machines on an annual basis so that by the time they are due for replacement, they will be paid for. We, like many other precincts, will also be using the electronic pollbooks, which we also rent from the County. These save a considerable amount of time when registering new voters and speed things up at sign-in.

Many people worry about individuals voting who shouldn't. There are an incredible number of safeguards in place to prevent this from happening. And, with our paper ballot backups, there's little real concern about Russian hacking, either.

If you can't make it to the polls for the Primary or General Election to vote, you can obtain an absentee ballot from Stearns County. Note that this is different than for our March Township elections. For that election, absentee ballots are obtained from me (Clerk).

Our election system works incredibly well thanks to the outstanding work done by the Secretary of State and Stearns County Auditor-Treasurer offices. We owe these folks much gratitude. For more information about voting, visit mnvotes.org.

See you at the polls. But if you can't make it, don't forget to apply early for an absentee ballot.