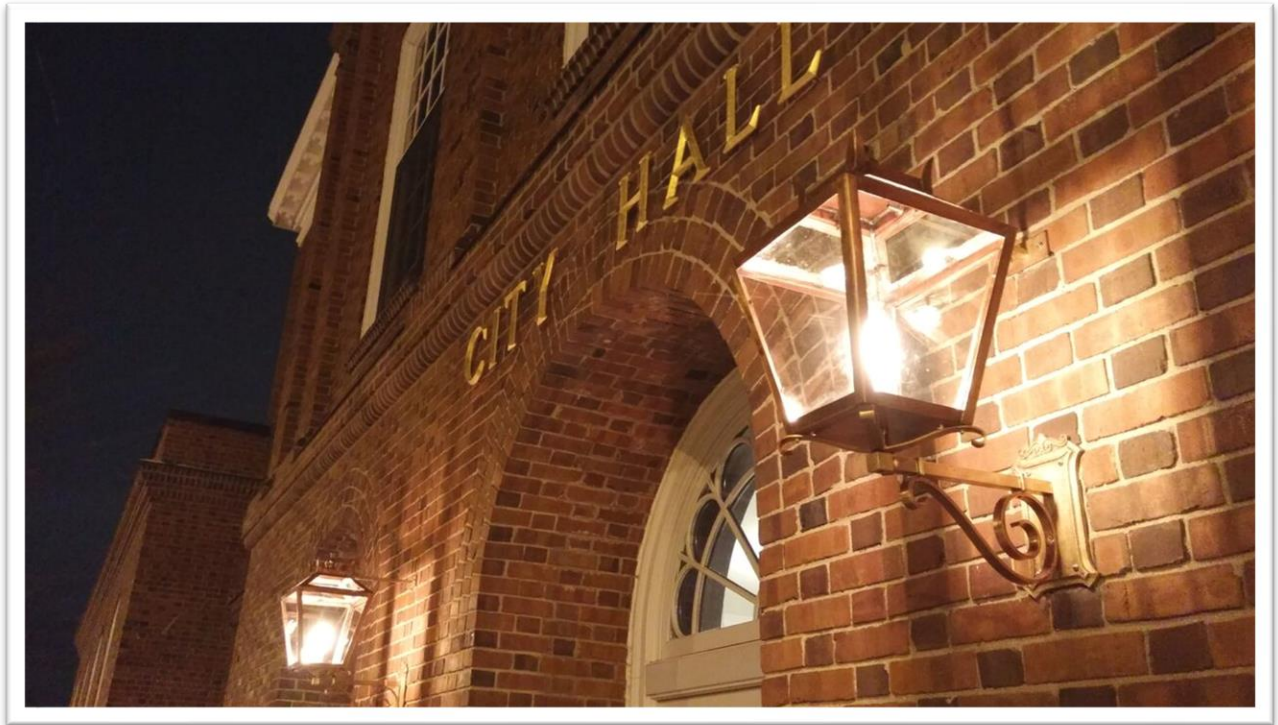




CITY OF FERGUS FALLS



MAYOR/CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACKET 2024

INTERESTED CANDIDATE:

Thank you for your interest in serving as a public official for the City of Fergus Falls. This guide will provide you with general information regarding candidate filing and the election process.

The City of Fergus Falls Charter, City Code and Minnesota State Statutes govern the conduct of elections in the city. Municipal elections are nonpartisan, and candidate names are placed on the November 5 General Election ballot without party designation. The filing period for municipal elections will open at 8:00 am on July 30, 2024, and conclude at 5:00 pm on August 13, 2024. All required and optional state forms will be distributed to prospective candidates when they come to City Hall to file for public office.

The City of Fergus Falls does not hold a primary election for mayor and council races. Candidates who are elected, will take office in January 2025.

ELECTION CONTACT INFORMATION

City of Fergus Falls Elections

Lynne Olson
Phone 218-332-5404
Email lynne.olson@fergusfallsmn.gov
Web www.fergusfallsmn.gov/elections

Otter Tail County Elections

Phone 218-998-8030
Email voter@ottertailcounty.gov
Web www.ottertailcounty.gov/department/elections

Minnesota Secretary of State Elections

Phone 612-215-1440
Email elections.dept@state.mn.us
Web www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting

LOCAL ELECTIONS CALENDAR

This 2024 calendar is for information purposes only. In all matters, Minnesota election law is the final authority.

January 19-March 4 Absentee voting period for the Presidential Nominating Primary Election

March 5 Presidential Nominating Primary Election
Polls open 7 am-8 pm

June 28-August 12 Absentee voting period for the Primary Election

July 30 Candidate filing period opens at 8:00 am at City Hall

August 13 Primary Election Day
Polls open 7 am-8 pm

August 13 Candidate filing period closes at 5:00 pm

August 15 Last day to withdraw from ballot (in writing by 5 pm)

September 20-November 4 Absentee voting period for the General Election

November 5 General Election
Polls open 7 am-8 pm

January 6, 2025 Terms begin for elected officials for those who have met all qualifications

CITY GOVERNMENT 101

Home Rule City, Charter, and City Code

Fergus Falls is a home rule city, as authorized by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 410. Home rule charter cities define the powers of their elected and appointed staff through their City Charter. The Charter is the constitution of the city and is approved by the local citizens. The authority of the council to act on behalf of the citizens is derived from the Charter.

The City Code is a collection of ordinances which establishes the laws and regulations of the City of Fergus Falls. On an annual basis the City Code is updated with ordinances that have been adopted in the prior year. The City Code and Charter are available online at www.fergusfallsmn.gov/government/city-code-and-charter

Mayor and Council

The Fergus Falls City Council is comprised of the mayor and eight council members. The City of Fergus Falls is districted by address and divided into four wards to provide equal representation. The mayor is elected at-large, and two council members are elected from the ward in which they reside (two per ward). Each ward is divided into two precincts to aid in the elections process. The boundaries are affirmed after each census and the newest boundary lines were adopted by ordinance in 2022.

Council members must live within the ward they represent. If they move out of the city limits while in office, a vacancy is declared. If a council member changes their residency out of the ward in which they were elected, but still within the city, during the middle of their term, they must publicly announce their new address. They are allowed to continue serving as the representative of the ward to which they were elected until the end of their term. If they choose to run for re-election, they must be elected in the ward in which they currently reside.

Terms

Each member of the council and the mayor shall serve for a term of four years until a successor is elected and qualifies. Council member terms are staggered so four positions are on the ballot of a regular city election at any one time, representing one from each ward. Each ward votes for only their council representative. The mayor shall be elected at a regular city election. In the years the mayor's office is on the ballot, all eligible voters of the city can vote for the mayor.

City elections are held in even numbered years at the November General Election. Candidates file for election or re-election in the even numbered years.

Mayor

The mayor is the presiding officer of the council. The mayor is recognized as the head of city government for ceremonial purposes (i.e. open houses, ribbon cuttings), by the courts for the purpose of serving civil processes and by the governor for the purpose of martial law. He or she shall exercise all powers and perform all duties conferred and imposed upon him or her by the Charter, the ordinances of the city and the laws of the state. The mayor shall have a vote as only in the case of a tie. If the mayor cannot participate in a meeting or is otherwise unavailable, the acting mayor assumes all the mayor's duties.

City Council

The council is the legislative body of the organization. The council approves the tax rate, budget and determines the vision of the city. The council provides leadership for the community by identifying issues and implementing goals and strategies to address the issues. The council's focus should be on the city policy, vision, the enforcement of ordinances and management of the city's financial affairs. Land use development, comprehensive planning, capital improvement projects, capital financing and strategic planning are some of the ways to accomplish these goals. Council members are authorized to issue debt, audit financial records, and adopt the city budget. The city council approves appointments to city boards and commissions as recommended by the mayor and they adopt and enforce the codes that protect the public's health, safety, and welfare. Each council member has one vote.

City Council and Committee of the Whole Meetings

The Fergus Falls City Council holds their meetings on the first and the third Monday of each month at 5:30 PM in the Council Chambers of City Hall. If a legal holiday should occur on one of these Mondays, the meeting will be held on the next business day.

Committee of the Whole meetings are scheduled for the Wednesday morning prior to the city council meetings. These 7:00 am meetings are used as a time to discuss items that will be placed on future council agendas. The mayor, council members and staff attend these meetings which are open to the public and the media. All meetings are held in compliance with the Minnesota Open Meeting Law. Please see pages 11-12 for a schedule of the 2025 meeting dates.

City Council Compensation

Council salaries are set by ordinance. The 2024 annual rates are:

Mayor	\$12,900 (\$1,075 per month)
Council	\$ 7,800 (\$650 per month)

Council members are paid monthly, the first payroll of each month through direct deposit.

Elected officials can be members of the Defined Contribution Plan (DCP) with the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA). They are also eligible to enroll in dental insurance and vision insurance, enroll in the Flexible Spending Account (medical and dependent care) as well as Deferred Compensation Plans.

Stay Informed and Involved

A good way for any citizen, and prospective council members, to gain insight and information about the city is to attend council and committee meetings or watch them on public access television or the city's YouTube channel. Candidates are highly encouraged to schedule time to learn more about the city by speaking with the city administrator and department heads. Please contact the city administrator's office at 218-332-5404 to assist in scheduling these meetings.

Serving on the city council is not a full-time job, but it does involve a significant time commitment. Upon election, be prepared to spend time reading about current and past issues, legislation, and other information to assist you in your new position. Council members receive an extraordinary amount of information from a variety of sources. It is important for council members to know what the city does and how it performs its duties. The City Council Handbook (Appendix C) provides an overview of expectations, requirements, and guidelines.

Staff

The City of Fergus Falls is a nonpartisan local government. Professional staff formulate recommendations in compliance with council policy for the good of the organization. The council delegates general supervisory control over all departments and employees with managerial and operational authority and responsibility to the city administrator. The administrator is responsible for the day-to-day operations and management of the city. The council establishes policy and programs, and staff execute the actions of the council. Staff takes pride in providing a high level of services to the community, most of which affect quality of life such as a safe and reliable water supply and sewer

system, safe and well-maintained streets, responsive police and fire protection and clean, safe and engaging parks and trails.

Department Heads

Names and direct contact information for key staff members. Please feel free to contact them with any questions or concerns you might have.

City Administrator*

Andrew Bremseth
218-332-5403
andrew.bremseth@fergusfallsmn.gov

Assistant to the City Administrator*

Lynne Olson
218-332-5404
lynne.olson@fergusfallsmn.gov

City Engineer *

Brian Yavarow
218-332-5413
brian.yavarow@fergusfallsmn.gov

Finance Director*

Bill Sonmor
218-332-5407
bill.sonmor@fergusfallsmn.gov

Public Works Director*

Len “Guy” Taylor
218-332-5418
len.taylor@fergusfallsmn.gov

Human Resources Director*

Mike Hartwell
218-332-5440
mike.hartwell@fergusfallsmn.gov

Chief of Public Safety

Kile Bergren
218-332-5500
kbergren@fergusfallsmn.gov

Fire Chief

Ryan Muchow
218-332-5552
ryan.muchow@fergusfallsmn.gov

Library Director

Gail Hedstrom
218-332-5776
ghedstrom@ffpubliclibrary.org

Community Development Director*

Klara Beck
218-332-5428
klara.beck@fergusfallsmn.gov

Communications Director*

Jean Bowman
218-332-5425
jean.bowman@fergusfallsmn.gov

** office located at City Hall*

FILING FOR OFFICE

What you need to know

Please refer to Appendix A for all required filing forms.

Council offices on the November 5, 2024 General Election ballot

- Mayor
- City Council Ward One
- City Council Ward Two
- City Council Ward Three
- City Council Ward Four

All offices are nonpartisan. Candidates are placed on the ballot without party designation on the General Election ballot in November. The City of Fergus Falls does not hold a primary election for mayor and council races. Candidates who are elected will take office in January 2025.

Eligibility to Hold Public Office

Article VII, Section 6 of the Constitution of the State of Minnesota says candidates for public office must:

- Be an eligible voter in Minnesota
- Be at least 21 years of age upon assuming office
- The mayor must have resided in the city within 30 days prior to the General Election
- Council members must have resided in the ward to which they have been elected within 30 days prior to the General Election

Important Filing Dates

- Filing Deadline: Candidate filing opens on July 30, 2024 at 8:00 am and closes at 5 pm on August 13, 2024
- Withdrawal Deadline: To remove your name from the ballot, you must withdraw **in writing** within 2 days of the end of the filing period (5 pm on August 15)

Filing Location

Candidates for mayor or city council must file with the city administrator's office in person which is located with City Hall at 112 W Washington Avenue.

Filing Fee

The filing fee is \$5. Candidates may present a petition with the signatures of eligible voters in lieu of the filing fee (Minnesota Statutes, Section 204B.07-204B.11).

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTING

Candidates and their committees are responsible to follow the provisions of Minnesota Statutes, Chapters 211A and 211B, regarding campaign financial reporting and fair campaign practices. The following information is intended to help you understand these requirements; however, please keep in mind that the city cannot interpret laws or provide campaign or financial advice to candidates.

The following reports are **required**. The Campaign Financial Report form is included in Appendix A of this packet. Not filing all required reports in accordance with the prescribed timeframe would result in a candidate being ineligible to assume office.

1. Initial Report

A candidate or committee must submit an initial report to the City Clerk within 14 days after receiving or making disbursements of more than \$750 in a calendar year.

2. Subsequent Reports.

After filing an initial report, candidates and committees must submit the following reports using the Campaign Financial Report in Appendix A.

- Pre-General Report. Due by October 25 (10 days before the General Election)
- Post-General Report. Due by December 5 (30 days after the General Election)

3. Final Report

A candidate or committee must file a final report after settling all debts and disposing of all assets in excess of \$100. The final report may be filed at any time and must include the kinds of information contained in the financial statements required by Minnesota Statutes, Section 211A.02, for the period from the last report to the date of the final report.

4. Campaign Final Report Certification of Filing

Candidates and committees must file a Certification of Filing by November 12, 2024 (no later than seven days after the General Election). This form certifies to the city clerk that the candidate or committee has filed all required reports or that the candidate or committee has not received contributions or made disbursements exceeding \$750 in the calendar year.

Additional resources that provide information regarding campaign finance and financial reporting requirements can be found in Appendix A.

CAMPAIGN SIGNS

Campaign signs must follow state statutes. Minnesota State Statute, Section 211B.045:

All noncommercial signs of any size may be posted in any number **beginning 46 days (June 29, 2024) before the state primary in a state general election year until ten days following the state general election (November 15, 2024)**. Municipal ordinances may regulate the size or number of noncommercial signs at other times.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation reminds the public:

- ✓ Placing signs, including campaign signs, along trunk highways is prohibited. State law (Minnesota Statutes, section 160.2715) prohibits the placement, painting, printing or affixing of advertisements on any object within the limits of a trunk highway. This restriction includes driving lanes, inside and outside shoulders, ditches and sight corners at intersections. The trunk highway system includes state, US and interstate highways in Minnesota.
- ✓ The Minnesota Outdoor Advertising Control Act (Minnesota Statutes, Section 173.15), which applies to land next to truck highway right of way, prohibits placing advertising devices on private land without consent of the owner or occupant; on trees, shrubs, or public utility poles; or by painting on rocks or other natural features.
- ✓ These laws protect the safety of the traveling public and those who might place signs. They ensure Minnesota complies with federal highway beautification laws. Right-of-way is used for a variety of purposes, including providing a safe place for vehicles that leave travel lanes, snow storage, location for public utilities, draining excess water away from roads, vegetation growth for aesthetics and erosion control, and even pollinator habitat. Unauthorized signs and people stopping to place signs within the limits of the highway can compromise these functions.
- ✓ County, city, and township employees administer these laws under their jurisdiction. MnDOT is responsible for the trunk highway system. Please contact local MnDOT offices for assistance when placing signs where trunk highway right of way cannot be clearly identified. Illegally placed signs will be removed by MnDOT employees and temporarily stored; please contact the local MnDOT offices promptly to retrieve signs that have been removed.

Make sure those who place signs on your behalf know the law.

WARDS, PRECINCTS AND POLLING PLACES

The City of Fergus Falls has four polling places for their elections. The polling places are open from 7:00 am-8:00 pm on election day. All absentee voting is handled by the Otter Tail County Auditor's Office.

WARD ONE

PRECINCTS 1 AND 2

Fergus Falls Public Library
205 E Hampden Avenue

WARD TWO

PRECINCTS 1 AND 2

Fergus Falls YMCA
1164 N Friberg Avenue

WARD THREE

PRECINCTS 1 AND 2

Minnesota State Community and Technical College
1414 College Way – Legacy Hall

WARD FOUR

PRECINCTS 1 AND 2

Bigwood Event Center
925 Western Avenue

2025 Meeting Dates and Holidays

January

- 1 Closed for Holiday (New Year's Day observation)
- 6 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 15 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 20 Closed for Holiday (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
- 21 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 29 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am

February

- 3 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 12 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00am
- 17 Closed for Holiday (Presidents Day)
- 28 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 26 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am

March

- 3 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 12 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 17 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm

April

- 2 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 7 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 9 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 21 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 18 Closed for Holiday (Good Friday)
- 30 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am

May

- 5 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 14 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 19 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 26 Closed for Holiday (Memorial Day)
- 28 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am

June

- 2 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 11 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 16 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 19 Closed for Holiday (Juneteenth)

July

- 2 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 4 Closed for Holiday (Independence Day)
- 7 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 16 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 21 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 30 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am

August

- 4 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 13 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 18 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 27 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am

September

- 1 Closed for Holiday (Labor Day)
- 2 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 10 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 15 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm

October

- 1 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 6 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 15 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 20 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 29 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am

November

- 3 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 11 Closed for Holiday (Veterans Day)
- 12 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 17 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 26 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 27 Closed for Holiday (Thanksgiving)
- 28 Closed for Holiday (Thanksgiving)

December

- 1 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 10 Committee of the Whole Meeting 7:00 am
- 15 City Council Meeting 5:30 pm
- 25 Closed for Holiday (Christmas)