

How to vote between now and Election Day
written by Newspark Team | September 14, 2020



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Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, many votes are expected to be cast through mail-in ballots this year, but in-person voting is still an option. Be it by mail or in-person, officials are urging people to vote as early as they can this year.

Voting options:

1. Early in-person voting from Sep. 18 to Oct. 31
2. Mail-in/absentee voting
3. Nov. 3 in-person voting at local precincts
4. Requesting a ballot by mail and dropping it off at your local voter registrar

Voting early in-person

Starting Sept. 18, city of Charlottesville and Albemarle County residents can begin voting in-person at their local registrar offices.

Early in-person voting is scheduled to take place from Sept. 18 through Oct. 31.

In Charlottesville, early voting will take place in the registrar's office, located in City Hall's annex building at 120 Seventh St. NE. No more than two people will be allowed into the office at a time to ensure social distancing. Voting is available on a walk-in basis during normal office hours and also from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the final two Saturdays in October.

Albemarle's in-person early voting will happen in Conference Room A of the County Office Building located at 1600 Fifth St. Extended. Early in-person voting will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. On Tuesdays, it will last from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. On Saturday, Oct. 24 and 31, voting will take place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Residents who are at least 65 years old or those with disabilities will have an option for curbside voting, as well. In the county, election officers will monitor for their arrival to handle check-in and ballot delivery to the conference room, where it will be scanned. In the city, there will be designated spaces to pull into where residents may call the registrar's office for assistance in voting.

As on Nov. 3, Election Day, the requirement of masks and other personal protective equipment — along with social distancing — will be in place for all in-person voting. Election volunteers and workers will frequently sanitize surfaces.

Voting by mail



File photo.

Officials encourage making use of this option sooner rather than later to allow time for ballots to be processed. In order for a ballot to count, a locality's electoral board must be received by 7 p.m. Nov. 3. If a ballot is postmarked on Nov. 3, it must be received by noon Nov. 6.

The final day to register to vote or adjust an existing registration is Oct. 13. The final day to request an absentee ballot for mail-in voting is Oct. 23. Applications can be filed through the Virginia Department of Elections' citizen portal, where voters can also view their absentee ballot status.

Due to COVID-19, the requirement for a witness signature on an absentee ballot has been waived, but registrars still encourage a witness signature if able to provide one.

Voting on Election Day

An Aug. 28 memorandum from the Albemarle registrar to the county's incident management team outlines safety protocols and procedures that will be implemented. Volunteers and workers will wear masks and will provide masks for any voters who need one. Voting stations, common surfaces and pens will be cleaned frequently by "health officers," a new position created that will focus on cleaning so that other volunteers can focus on interactions with voters.

Voting booths will be spaced apart by at least 6 feet and "I voted" stickers will be available to be picked up rather than handed out.

With hand sanitizer use, poll volunteers and workers are encouraged to ensure their hands are dry

before handling ballots or thermal paper “as moisture and chemicals may degrade legibility or cause ballots to jam.”

According to Charlottesville Assistant Registrar Josh Jenkins, the city is expected to implement similar measures.

Using ballot drop boxes



A ballot drop box at Albemarle County’s office building on 5th Street.

For anyone leery of voting entirely by mail or in person, they can drop ballots off at ballot drop boxes beginning on Sept. 18, when early in-person voting starts.

After the General Assembly approved legislation allowing for the establishment of the drop boxes, Gov. Ralph Northam has recently signed the legislation into law.

According to the Charlottesville registrar’s office, ballot drop boxes are planned to be available at its office in the City Hall Annex.

Albemarle’s ballot drop box will be located adjacent to the parking circle at its Fifth Street County Office Building.

Additional Resources:

Visit the Virginia Department of Elections to apply for a mail-in/absentee ballot as well as to view your polling place and election district. Additional questions can be answered by contacting your local Albemarle County and city of Charlottesville registrars. You can also reach out to reporter Charlotte Rene Woods at cwoods@.

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