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For immediate release

No longer needed, county drop box is removed

One of two drop boxes that helped county staff and residents keep the government running during COVID-induced closures of 2020 has been removed.

The Board of Commissioners Tuesday voted unanimously to remove the box on the south side of the Government Services Building following concerns from residents that the box could be used by someone looking to stuff the box with ballots and disrupt the coming elections.

The box was installed so residents could get needed paperwork and payments to county staff during the months county offices were closed. Shortly after its installation, County Administrator Sara Folsted and Property Tax and Elections Director Denise Anderson realized the box would also be used by those voting absentee.

Despite residents' concerns, Anderson on Tuesday said that at most 25 ballots were in the box when it was checked each weekday by county elections officials. That's a fraction of the number of residents who voted absentee in 2020.

Commissioner Galen Malecha said he saw no reason to maintain the box now that the offices have reopened.

"I don't think we're hurting anybody or suppressing anybody's vote," he said of requiring voters dropping off ballots to come into the building to do so.

Absentee ballots come with return envelopes so voters can mail completed ballots

A second drop box on the north side of the building will remain. That box has been in place for about 17 years, said Parks & Facilities Director Matt Verdick, and has been used by the clients of the Public Health, Social Services and Housing departments.



A drop box that stood outside the south entrance to the Rice County Government Services Building was removed Tuesday morning. (Rice County file photo)

Contact:
Denise Anderson, Property Tax & Elections Director
danderson@co.rice.mn.us
507-332-6104

Suzu Rook, Communications Coordinator
srook@co.rice.mn.us
507-384-6509