



Michele Carew
ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATOR

HOOD COUNTY ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT CENTRAL COUNTING STATION PLAN JULY 27, 2021

A. PURPOSE:

Section 127.007 of the Texas Election Code requires the *Manager* of the central counting station (“CCS”) to “establish and implement a written plan for the orderly operation of the central counting station.” this plan be made available to the public on request not later than 5 p.m. on the fifth day before the date of the election.

Section 127.007(b) provides that a CCS plan “must address the process for comparing the number of voters who signed the electronic pollbook with the number of votes cast for an entire election.”

B. LOCATION:

The Hood County Central Counting Station will be located at Hood County Annex 1, 1410 W. Pearl Street (Tabulation Room), Granbury, TX 76048.

C. CENTRAL COUNTING STATION PERSONNEL:

The following are the roles and responsibilities inside the Central Counting Station, as contained in Sections 127.002-127.006 of the Texas Election Code:

Central Count Presiding Judge: David Fischer
Central County Alternate Presiding Judge: Adrienne Martin
Central Station Manager: Michele Carew
Tabulation Supervisor: Leticia Salazar
Assistants to Tabulation Supervisor: Madison Carney, Drew Wiederkehr, and other qualified employees of Hood County (as needed).

- The Elections Administrator, Michele Carew, will serve as the *Central Counting Station Manager* to manage the overall administration of the station and supervision of personnel. (Section 127.002)
- Hart Intercivic Representative, Leticia Salazar, will serve as the *Tabulation Supervisor* to operate automatic tabulating equipment. (Section 127.003)
- The Assistants to Tabulation Supervisors will assist the Tabulation Supervisor in the operation of the automatic tabulation equipment as directed by the Tabulation Supervisor. (Section 127.004)

- The *Presiding Judge* will serve to maintain order at the Central Counting Station, administer oaths, and receive ballots to be counted. The *Alternate Presiding Judge* will be present, as well.

Note: The *Presiding Judge* is entitled to compensation at the same rate as a precinct *Presiding Judge*, except that the counting station judge is entitled to a minimum compensation of five hours' pay regardless of the amount of time worked. (127.005 (d)).

- *Central Counting Station Clerks* may be appointed as needed by the Central Counting Station *Manager* and the *Presiding Judge* as outlined Section 127.006 of the Election Code.

Note: To be eligible to serve as a clerk a person must be a qualified voter of the county in which the central counting station is located. The general custodian of election records, an employee of the custodian, or any other employee of a political subdivision is not ineligible to serve as a clerk under this section because the person is a qualified voter of a county other than the county in which the central counting station is located or because of the custodian's status as a candidate or officeholder. (127.006 (b))

A clerk appointed by the *Manager* serves under the *Manager* and shall perform the functions directed by the *Manager*. A clerk appointed by the *Presiding Judge* serves under the *Presiding Judge* and shall perform the functions directed by the *Presiding Judge*. (127.006 (c))

A clerk is entitled to compensation at the same rate as a precinct election clerk, except that a clerk who serves for the entire time a counting station is in operation is entitled to a minimum compensation of three hours' pay regardless of the amount of time worked. (127.006 (d))

D. PROCEDURES FOR CONVENING THE CENTRAL COUNTING STATION:

Section 87.0241 (b)(2) of the Texas Election Code dictates when an entity is permitted to count ballots.

The Central Counting Station will convene based on the size and type of election as determined by the *Central Counting Station Manager* and the *Presiding Judge*.

The Central Counting Station will begin the process to count early voting ballots by mail and early voting in-person on Tuesday, July 27, 2021 at 9:00 am. In accordance with Section 127.093 of the Texas Election Code, the second test of tabulation equipment will be conducted prior to beginning the process to count early voting ballots.

The Central Counting Station will begin the process to count Election Day ballots on Saturday, May 1, 2021 starting at 7:00 pm or when the Election Judge arrives with the Hart Verity Scan Unit.

E. ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS:

Section 127.0015 of the Texas Election Code prescribes a required oath for all CCS personnel. The administration of oaths must take place prior to those individuals commencing any of their duties at the central counting station.

This oath should be administered verbally to all members of the early voting ballot board and all personnel at the central counting station prior to the performance of any duties by the board or the central counting station.

For use in July 27, 2021 election:

“I swear (or affirm) that I will objectively work to be sure every eligible voter’s vote is accepted and counted, and that only the ballots of those voters who violated the Texas Election Code will be rejected. I will make every effort to correctly reflect the voter’s intent when it can be clearly determined. I will not work alone when ballots are present and will work only in the presence of a member of a political party different from my own. I will faithfully perform my duty as an officer of the election and guard the purity of the election.”

F. INTAKE OF BALLOTS, ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND SUPPLIES:

Sections 129.051 and 129.052 of the Texas Election Code require the general custodian of election records to develop certain procedures related to inventory control and chain of custody of voting system equipment and electronic media associated with this equipment, providing for verification of equipment identifiers, verification of seals, and verification of chain of custody.

1. Election Judge, or their designee, brings Verity Scan and sealed ballot bag to the Hood County Elections Department Office/Tabulation Room for intake located at Annex 1, 1410 W Pearl St, Granbury, Texas 76048.
2. Intake personnel will locate tags and verify the numbered seal on the Verity Scan before breaking seal and removing V-drive.
3. Intake personnel will deliver the V-Drive to the Tabulation Room where the *Presiding Judge* will verify the seal numbers with the Ballot and Seal Certificate.

G. DUPLICATION OF BALLOTS:

Certain ballots that are counted with automatic tabulating equipment may have to be duplicated if the ballot is damaged or cannot be read with the equipment.

1. The *Presiding Judge*, with any assistants they deemed necessary, will duplicate any damaged ballots in accordance with Section 127.126 of the Texas Election Code.

H. RESOLVING VOTER INTENT:

At the direction of the *CCS Presiding Judge*, CCS clerks will resolve any voter intent questions on the ballots as they are duplicated or manually counted, as applicable

1. The *Presiding Judge* and other members will make a determination of voter intent prior to duplication of a ballot.
2. The duplicate ballot will then be created under the supervision of the *Presiding Judge* in the manner in which the voter intent was deciphered.

I. TABULATION PROCEDURES:

Election Day – July 27, 2021

- *Presiding Judge* of Ballot Board will confirm seals match the Seal Log for Early Voting Verity Scan and Provisional bags.
- Verity Scan will be placed in the Tabulation Room to be opened by the *Tabulation Supervisor*. Once seals have been verified, Provisional bags will be given to Elections staff for processing.
- After Ballot Board completes their review of the Early Voting ballots by mail, approved ballots will be scanned at the VERITY CENTRAL, any ballots needing to be reviewed will be resolved by the resolution board under the direction of the *CCS Presiding Judge*.
- *Presiding Judge* of Central Count, and one clerk will review the seals of ballot boxes containing ballots review by the EVBB.
- After seals have been checked, the ballot boxes will be opened and the *Tabulation Supervisor* and Clerks will scan any approved ballots at the VERITY CENTRAL. Any ballots needing to be reviewed will be resolved by the resolution board under the direction of the *Presiding Judge*.

- After Early Voting ballots by mail have been scanned, results will be saved to a V-Drive, and stored in the Tabulation Room to be read into the Verity Count Reporting System on Election Day.
- Ballots by mail will be placed in a ballot box which will be sealed by the CCS *Presiding Judge* and stored in the Tabulation Room.
- The *Tabulation Supervisor* will break the seals on Verity Scan, and Serial numbers will be checked against the Seal Log with the *tabulation assistants*.
- In Verity Count Reporting System, before any data from the V-Drive drives are loaded, a Zero Report will be printed from the Verity Count Reporting System software and signed by the *Tabulation Supervisor* and *tabulation assistants*.
- All V-drives will be read into the Verity Count Reporting System Results Module by the *Tabulation Supervisor* with *tabulation assistants* present.
- Any un-scanned, approved ballots will be scanned at the Verity Central, and any ballots needing to be reviewed will be resolved by the resolution board under the direction of the CCS *Presiding Judge*.
- Results of the remaining un-scanned ballots will be saved onto a V-DRIVE drive and loaded into the Verity Count Reporting System Results Module.
- *Tabulation Supervisor* and *tabulation assistants* will confirm the V-DRIVE drives for each site have been loaded and are all accounted for.
- On Election Day, Early Voting ballots, including ballots by mail received up to that point, will be tabulated before 7pm, but in no case will results reports be released before 7:00pm.

Write-In Procedures

- After V-DRIVE media has been tabulated in Verity Count Reporting System, the *Presiding Judge* with any assistants deemed necessary, will review any ballots with write-in selections using the Write-In Report of Verity Count Reporting System.
- The *Presiding Judge* and clerks will keep a manual tally sheet of the Write-In votes attributed to each certified write-in candidate and those that are not certified.
- The *Tabulation Supervisor* will attribute the write-in votes, as determined by the *Presiding Judge* and clerks using the write-in review module.
- After all write-ins have been attributed, the *Presiding Judge* and the *Tabulation Supervisor* will reconcile the Manual Tally counts with Verity Count Reporting System.

Health and Safety Measures

- Masks and/or Face Shields are optional.
- All individuals working at or observing Central Count and Ballot Board will socially distance from others, maintaining 6 feet distance as space permits.
- If work is needed to be done in the Tabulation Room, Poll Watchers will be limited to one in the room at a time, Poll Watchers will take turn of 30-minutes in length before leaving the room to allow a different Poll Watcher an opportunity to enter the room.

J. RECONCILIATION:

The process for comparing the number of voters listed as having voted and the number of ballots cast is done in three ways:

1. Early Voting in Person – Compare the number of early voting check-ins from the TEAM System database, plus the spoiled ballot log, to the number of ballots cast.
2. Early Voting by Mail – Compare the number of ballots entered on the “Ballot Transmittal Form” from the early voting ballot board to the number of ballots counted. (87.021, 87.1221)
3. Election Day – Compare the number of early voting check-ins from ePulse, plus the spoiled ballot log, to the number of ballots cast. (127.007(b))

K. PRINTING OF PRECINCT RETURNS AND ELECTION TOTALS:

Under Section 127.127, the *Tabulation Supervisor* and the assistants to the *Tabulation Supervisor* are the only ones authorized to operate the automatic tabulating equipment or handle ballots that are automatically counted. After the counting of ballots (or accumulation of vote totals) has occurred, the *Presiding Judge* of the CCS is responsible for preparing the precinct election returns. The *Presiding Judge* is required to sign the precinct returns to certify their accuracy.

The printed “precinct by precinct” report will be adjusted to include any hand-counted ballots (if necessary) and constitutes our certified precinct returns. (Section 127.127(e)), Texas Election Code.

The unofficial election results shall be released as soon as available after the polls close. Alternatively, the *Presiding Judge* of the CCS, in cooperation with the Elections Administrator may withhold the release of unofficial results until the last voter has voted. (Section 66.056, 121.1311).

Unofficial election results will be released via Hood County's Elections Department webpage, beginning no earlier than 7:00 pm on Election Day. Election Day results will be released incrementally as processed through acceptance and tabulation until all results are in.

L. REPORTING RESULTS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE:

For certain elections, including primary elections, the general election for state and county officers, and constitutional amendment elections, the SOS is required to tabulate the unofficial results statewide. (68.001). For this election, this information will be reported to the SOS through an online portal established by the SOS.

M. POLL WATCHERS:

Central Count Station watchers are entitled to be present during the time the CCS has convened for the "purpose of processing or preparing to process election results and until the election officers complete their duties at the station." (Section 33.055).

The poll watcher must deliver their certificate of appointment to the *Presiding Judge* of the CCS and the poll watcher must countersign their certificate in the presence of the *Presiding Judge*. (Section 33.051) A watcher serving at Central Counting Station may be present at any time the station is open for the purpose of processing or preparing to process election results and until the election officers complete their duties at the station. The watcher may serve during the hours the watcher chooses, except as provided by Subsection (b) a watcher may not leave during the voting hours on Election Day without the *Presiding Judge's* permission if the counting of the allots at the Central Counting Station has begun.

Watcher(s) are permitted to stand or sit to observe the counting activities. The *Presiding Judge* may dictate where the watcher(s) may stand and/or sit in order to prevent interference with the duties of the Central Counting Station personnel while still being able to observe all activities.

All activities of the watcher(s) shall be in compliance with the current *Poll Watchers Guide* issued by the Secretary of State.

A poll watcher may request a printed copy of an audit log produced by a central count accumulator:

- (1) Before any votes are tabulated;
- (2) After early voting results are tabulated; and
- (3) Immediately following the completion of the vote tabulation.

N. DELIVERY OF MATERIALS TO THE GENERAL CUSTODIAN OF ELECTION RECORDS:

After the completion of the counting of ballots both on election day and after election day, if necessary, voted ballot cards, electronic media, election records, and election equipment will be retained by this office, who is the general custodian of election records, through the appropriate retention period.