

Bee County Elections Administration
Central Counting Station
Management Plan
May 6, 2023
Joint Special and General Elections for
Pawnee ISD Bond Election, Beeville ISD Sub-District I Trustee, & City of Beeville Charter Amendment

In accordance with Section 127.007 of the Texas Election Code, Bee County Elections Administration has established a central count station. On election night, the Central Count Station (“CCS”) is the place where the results of Verity Scan voting equipment are accumulated to produce a final report.

Central Counting Station Personnel

In accordance with Sections 127.002-127.006, the roles and responsibilities of the CCS personnel are as follows:

Central Counting Station Manager – Laura Warnix, Elections Administrator
Tabulation Supervisor – Laura Warnix, Elections Administrator
Tabulation Assistant – Andrea Martinez, Assistant Elections Administrator
CCS Judges – Presiding Judge Grace Yturria and Alternate Judge Gloria Smith

Duties of Central Counting Station Personnel:

The CCS Manager is in charge of the overall supervision of the Central Count and must have a written plan for operation of the CCS. The manager, as well as the presiding judge, may appoint clerks to perform duties at the CCS. The manager has the knowledge and experience in the conducting of elections with the electronic voting system for which the CCS is established.

The CCS manager:

- Oversees the processing and scanning of Application for Ballot by Mail (ABBM) and Federal Post Card Application (FCPA) ballots through the configured Hart Verity Absentee Scan so early voting results may post publicly at approximately 7:05 p.m. local time.
- Directs the retrieval of voting system vDrive data devices used on Election Day while verifying the integrity of their respective security seals and processes the Election Day vDrives through Count.
- Supervises the preparation of duplicate ballots as necessary for damaged or photocopied ballots that cannot be scanned through Hart Verity Scan.
- Executes the second and third Logic & Accuracy Tests with oversight from the Central Counting Station Judge.
- Generates reports at the end of Election Day for Unofficial Cumulative & Precinct election results and posts them publicly on the county website.

The Tabulation Supervisor is:

- Accountable for counting the ballots and preparing the necessary reports such as the canvass, and the overvotes and undervotes reports.
- Responsible for the security of the program and ensures that no person, other than assistant tabulation supervisor, operates the tabulation equipment.

- Assists the Central Counting Station Manager with the execution of the vDrive Count.

The CCS Judge is:

- Responsible for maintaining order at the Central Counting Station.
- Custodian of the testing materials prepared for the test until the material are delivered to the general custodian of election records following the third test.
- After the tabulation supervisor has prepared the necessary reports for canvass, the presiding judge must certify their accuracy and prepare documents for proper distribution.

Procedures for Convening the Central Counting Station

The Central Counting Station personnel shall convene on election day from 6:00 p.m. until all election reports are complete and distributed accordingly. The personnel of the CCS will reconvene for the counting of provisional ballots and late ballots if necessary.

Administration of Oaths

All personnel of the Central Counting Station will be administered the appropriate oath for the election prior to commencing any of their duties. The following oath will be administered for the May 6, 2023 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. I will faithfully perform my duty as an officer of the election and guard the purity of the election."

Intake of ballots, electronic media, and supplies

In order to maintain control and chain of custody of the voting system equipment and electronic media associated with this equipment, on election night the Central Count Station shall receive the Hart Verity Scans with the vDrive still sealed inside. Polling location judges are trained to leave the seals intact and to return these to the Elections Administration Office on Election Night. The Central Count Station Assistant Tabulator will verify the seal numbers are correct and the seals are intact prior to breaking the seal and placing the vDrive in the appropriate Transfer Envelope to be given to the Tabulation Supervisor. Polling location judges will sign off on the transfer records when delivering equipment to the CCS. The CCS Judge will witness the transfer of equipment from the polling judge to the Tabulation Clerk.

Tabulation Procedures

In order to conduct a proper and orderly tabulation, the vDrive will be removed by the CCS Assistant Tabulator Clerk from the Scan when delivered from the polling location. Once removed, the vDrive is placed in the Transfer Envelope and it is delivered to the Tabulation Supervisor in the Tabulation Room. The Tabulation Supervisor will remove one vDrive at a time and place it in the reader. Once read, it will be removed, placed back in the envelope, initialed by the CCS Manager and they will also initial the vDrive Tracking Log. In addition, the CCS Judge will initial the transfer envelope verifying they viewed the vDrive being read.

Reconciliation

After the tabulation supervisor uploads the precinct results from the vDrive to the Count system, the Tabulation Supervisor will reconcile the Count's record of number of votes cast matches the number of signatures on the Poll Pads per precinct. This process will be done for early voting in person, early voting by mail, and election day.

Printing of Precinct Returns and Election Totals

After the accumulation of vote totals, the CCS Manager is responsible for the preparation of election returns. The unofficial results shall be released as soon as available after the polls close. In order to facilitate returns in a timely manner, the Tabulation Supervisor shall print a Zero Report for the precincts and Cumulative Report prior to entering any results. Periodically, usually once per half hour, cumulative reports will be run and results announced along with the status of the number of precincts reported. These announcements will be available on the Elections Administration website and posted in a public facility for use by the media and/or other groups. The Presiding Judge is required to sign the final precinct returns to certify their accuracy.

Reporting Results to SOS

Election returns are required to be reported to the SOS via their online portal. The Central Counting Station Manager will report these results in accordance with the instructions received and in the timeframe required.

Poll Watchers

Poll watchers that provide the Presiding Judge of the CCS their certificate of appointment and Certificate of Completion from the Secretary of State Training Program may be present in the Central Counting Station for the purpose of observing the processing or preparing to process election results and until the election officers complete their duties at the station. The Presiding Judge must sign this certificate. Poll watchers may not impede the process in any way including sitting or standing in an area that will not allow freedom of movement by the Central Counting Station personnel.

Delivery of materials to the General Custodian of Election Records

The CSS Manager is also the General Custodian of Election Records, therefore all equipment, voted ballots, must be returned to her. The General Custodian shall verify all equipment, supplies, and ballots are accounted for by comparing the serial numbers and seals on the inventory control log.

Early Ballot Board Personnel

The Early Ballot Board will convene no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 6, 2023. The Early Ballot Board will also serve as the Late/Provisional Ballot Board.

Members of the Early Ballot Board are:

Presiding Judge – Georgia Combs

Alternate Judge – Mary Joy

Member – Andi Westmoreland

The roles and responsibilities of the Early Ballot Board are as follows:

Election Administrator (EA) – Responsible for overall operation of both the May 6, 2023 Election, Central Count Station, and the Early Ballot Board. The EA administers the Oaths for the Early Voting Ballot Board, Central Counting Station Board and the Late & Provisional Ballot Board. The following oath will be administered to the Early Ballot Board:

"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."

The EA ensures the integrity and efficiency of the voting systems and processes utilized to execute said election. Oversees the retrieval of Hart Verity Scan data cards used during Early Voting along with verifying the integrity of their respective security seals.

Presiding Judge – Serves on the Early Voting Ballot Board and the Late & Provisional Ballot Board. The Presiding Judge is responsible to review and qualify ABBM/FPCA voter signatures against carrier envelope signatures with assistance from the Board Members. The Presiding Judge (PJ) has the final authority to accept or deny an ABBM/FPCA for processing based on the signature review. Reviews Early Voting and Election Day Provisional Ballots with authority to accept or deny based on Election Staff verification of voter status and/or voter remediation within 6 days of voting ballot. Assists with preparing duplicate ballots as necessary for damaged or photocopied ballots that cannot be scanned through Hart Verity Scan. The PJ processes voted ballots through the Absentee or Polling Precinct configured Hart Verity Scan, as appropriate.

Board Members – The members assist with the review and qualification of ABBM/FPCA voter signatures against carrier envelope signatures. Assist with the review and processing of Early Voting and Election Day Provisional Ballots. Assists with preparing duplicate ballots as necessary for damage or photocopied ballots that cannot be scanned through Hart Verity Scan. In addition, assists with processing voted ballots through the Absentee or Polling Precinct configured Hart Verity Scan, as appropriate.

Duplication of Ballots

In accordance with Section 127.126 of the Texas Election Code, the Early Ballot Board Judge may have a ballot duplicated for automatic counting. The valid portion of a partially invalid ballot may be duplicated on another ballot so that the valid portion can be automatically counted. If an electronic system ballot is damaged to the extent it cannot be automatically counted, the ballot may be duplicated so it can be automatically counted. A procedure other than duplication may not be used to process a ballot subject to this section unless the procedure is expressly authorized by the secretary of state. Each duplicated ballot must be clearly labeled "Duplicate" and must bear the serial number of the original ballot. The duplicate shall be substituted for the original ballot in the ballots prepared for automatic counting. The original shall be preserved with the other voted ballots for the same period. The Presiding Judge is responsible for completing the log of duplicate/replacement ballots.

Resolving Voter Intent

The ballot shall be examined by the Presiding and Alternate Judge to determine the voter's intent. If necessary, at the direction of the presiding judge, Early Ballot Board member may resolve any voter intent questions on the ballots as they are duplicated or manually counted, as applicable. Once the intent has been determined, the ballot will be duplicated as outlined above.