

**Wichita County Clerk - Elections Department**  
**Central Counting Station Plan**  
**May 6, 2023**

**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 combination form with the number of votes cast for an entire election.”

**B. LOCATION:**

The Wichita County Central Counting Station will be located at the  
Wichita County Courthouse  
900 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 270  
Wichita Falls, Texas 76301

**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 Elections Code:

- Central Counting Station Manager – Annette C. Stanley, County Clerk - Manage the overall administration of the station and supervision of personnel
- Tabulation Supervisor – Gina Inman, Elections Clerk - Operate automatic tabulating equipment.
- Assistant Tabulation Supervisor – Robin Fincannon, Elections Clerk - Assist the tabulation supervisor.
- Presiding Judge – Susan Morris – Will serve to maintain order at the Central Counting Station, administer oaths, and receive ballots to be counted. The presiding judge may confer with and advise the manager or tabulation supervisor on any activity at the counting station. The presiding judge shall be appointed in the same manner as a presiding judge and alternate presiding judge under Section 32.002.
- Alternate Presiding Judge – Laura Herrell, Chief Deputy Clerk – Will serve as the Alternate Judge at the Central Counting Station to serve in the capacity of the Presiding Judge in the event that the Presiding Judge is not present or available.

Note: The Presiding Judges are entitled to compensation at the same rate as the 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. Section 127.005(d)

- *Central Counting Station Clerks* may be appointed as needed by the *Central Counting Station Manager* and the *Presiding Judges* 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:**

CCS will convene as follows:

Must have name nametags as prescribed by SOS, Section 127.0015(c) of the Texas Election Code

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

- The Tabulation Supervisor will schedule and confirm a day for the Public Test (LAT test 1) and provide notice to the newspapers and publish on the County Website. The Central Counting Personnel will be available and assist in the conducting of the Public Test.
- Election Day – 6:00 PM ~ 05/06/2023~ In the Wichita County Courthouse, 900 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 270, Wichita Falls, Texas 76301:

Administer oaths

Conduct statutory 2<sup>nd</sup> test

Scan and resolve mail-in ballots

Duplicate any damaged, spoiled, or otherwise unreadable paper ballots for scanning

Process electronic Early Voting Ballot Records from EV

Tabulate Early Voting results and release result reports electronically for distribution.

Receive, process and tabulate Election Day precinct results as they are delivered by the Precinct Presiding Judges

Tabulate election results and release unofficial results report

Conduct 3<sup>rd</sup> test

Adjourn CCS

- The Central Counting Station will convene based on the size and type of election as determined by the Central Counting Station Manager and Presiding Judges.
- The Early Voting Ballot Board will begin the process to count early voting mail ballots on Saturday, May 6, 2023, at 5:00p.m.
- In accordance with Section 127.093 of the Texas Election Code, the second test of tabulating equipment will be conducted prior to beginning the process to count early voting ballots.
- The Central Counting Station will begin the process to count early voting in-person ballots on Tuesday, May 6, 2023 after 7:00p.m.
- The Central Counting Station will begin the process to count election day ballots on Saturday, May 6, 2023 at 7:00p.m.
- Reconvene during the week of May 12-May 15, 2023  
The Central Counting Station shall reconvene after the Ballot Board has completed its review of all Ballot by Mail ballots, FPCA ballots and provisional ballots for final tabulation and reporting of official results.

## **E. ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS**

### **TEC Ch. 127.0015 of the Texas Election Code**

Oaths shall be administered according to the provisions in the Election Advisory and Election Code on the day of the Public Test and on Election Day, immediately after the Central Counting Station is convened:

- **Oath for use in Primary Elections, General Election for State and County Officers, Elections ordered by the Governor:**

“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.”

- **For use in all Other Elections that do not contain Party Affiliation:**

“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.”

## **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.

- Election Judge, or their designee, brings paper ballots (in the locked and sealed ballot bag) and V-Drives (still sealed in the Verity Scanner, and Verity Controller) to the Wichita County Courthouse.
- Intake personnel will verify serial numbers and the seals on the equipment and ballot bags are the same as the seal numbers on the Official Chain of Custody.
- Wichita County Elections Staff will transport the V-Drives and the ballot bag to the Presiding Judge who will again verify the serial numbers and seals on the equipment and ballot bags match the Official Chain of Custody.
- The Presiding Judge and Alternate Judge will deliver the paper ballots (in the locked and sealed ballot bag) to the County Clerk's office for storage during the 60 day preservation period.
- The Unofficial accumulated results will be periodically released to the public via email and posting on the Wichita County Elections page on the Wichita County Website.
- The V-Drive will then be resealed into the V-Drive receiving envelope and stored in the election safe until 60 days after the election.
- As the media is loaded into the central accumulator, the Presiding Judge, Central Counting Station Manager or designee shall verify that the vote totals on the electronic media match the vote totals on the printed results tape.
- After tabulating all precinct results, the election official must verify and document that the total number of votes cast in an election matches the checked in votes. If there is a discrepancy, the Presiding Judge of the counting station in conjunction with the Central Counting Station Manager shall determine if a further audit is necessary.

## **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 by the equipment.

- The Presiding Judge, with any assistants they deem necessary, will duplicate any damaged ballots in accordance with Section 127.126 of the Texas Election Code.
- In a partisan, non-primary elections, all duplication of ballots will be conducted with at least two members of differing political parties.
- Each duplicate 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.
- Central Counting staff (Manager and Presiding Judge) will follow the same procedure should a

ballot need to be duplicated in case of necessity.

#### **H. RESOLVING VOTER INTENT:**

- The Central Counting Manager shall confer with the Presiding Judge and they will agree on the process for resolving voter intent.

#### **I. TABULATION PROCEDURES:**

- The Presiding Judge of Central Counting, Manager and the Tabulation Supervisor will complete the 2<sup>nd</sup> Testing of the Tabulation Equipment.
- Before any data from the V-Drives drives are loaded, a Zero Report will be printed from the software and signed by the Judge, Manager, and Tabulation Supervisor and alternates.
- The Judge & Alternate will verify seals and Serial numbers on bags with V-Drives & will be checked against the Seal Log for the Early Voting tabulation.
- After all Early Voting ballots by mail have been scanned, results will be saved and ballots by mail will be placed in a sealed ballot box.
- Early Voting Results will be released when the polls close at 7:00
- 

#### **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:

- Early Voting in Person – Compare the number of early voting check-ins from Knowink Pollbooks, plus the ballot log, to the number of ballots cast.
- 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)
- Election Day – Compare the number of early voting check-ins from Knowink Pollbooks, plus the ballot logs, to the number of ballots cast. (127.007(b))

#### **K. PRINTING OF PRECINCT RETURNS AND ELECTONS TOTALS:**

- Under Section 127.127, the Tabulation Supervisor and the Assistant Tabulation Supervisor are the only ones authorized to operate the automatic tabulating equipment or handle ballots that are automatically counted, from the time they are delivered to the tabulation supervisor for counting until the automatic counting is completed.
- After the counting of ballots (or accumulation of vote totals) has occurred, the Tabulation Supervisor and Assistant Tabulation Supervisor of the CCS are 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 that has been adjusted to include any hand-counted ballots (if necessary) constitutes the certified precinct returns. (Section 127.13 l(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 County Clerk may withhold the release of unofficial results until the last voter has voted. (Section 121.1311, Texas Election Code).
- Unofficial election results will be released via Wichita County Elections webpage, beginning no earlier than 7:00PM.
- Election Day results will be released incrementally as processed through acceptance and tabulation until all results are in. (Section 121.1311, Texas Election Code)

#### **L. REPORTING RESULTS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE (if applicable):**

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, Texas Election Code).

This information can be reported to the SOS through their online portal or via telephone.

- The Assistant Tabulation Supervisor will prepare reports with the requested totals for the Secretary of State.
- The County Clerk will report the totals to the Secretary of State using the SOS online portal (TEAM) or via telephone as appropriate.

#### **M. POLL WATCHERS:**

##### **TEC Chapter 33.002-33.006**

- Poll 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.” TEC Section 33.055
- The poll watcher must deliver their certificate of appointment by a candidate or a measure to the Presiding Judge of the CCS and the Presiding Judge must countersign their certificate.
- The poll watcher must also deliver a Certificate of Training Completion by the SOS
- The poll watcher must disable all recording devices upon entering the Central Counting Station.
- Poll Watchers are permitted to stand or sit to observe and hear the counting activities. The presiding Judge has the authority to intervene if there is interference by a Poll Watcher with the duties of CCS Personnel.

#### **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 ballots, election records, and election equipment will be retained by this office, who is the general custodian of election records, remaining securely stored throughout the appropriate retention period.

**O. SECURITY PROCEDURES:**

- A Licensed Peace Officer will be posted at the CCS as required (Section 127.1232(a), Texas Election Code) throughout the period of tabulation at the central counting station.