

McLennan County Elections Administration
Central Counting Station
Management Plan
March 5, 2024 Joint Primary Election

In accordance with Section 127.007 of the Texas Election Code, McLennan 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 – Jared Goldsmith, Elections Administrator
Tabulation Supervisor – Jared Goldsmith, Elections Administrator
Tabulation Assistant – Michelle Sanchez
CCS Judges – Presiding Judge Barbara White and Alternate Judge Londria Gilmore

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 software 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 6:30 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 March 5, 2024 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

I. Runners bring kits, poll book laptops, and Verity Scan device from the Judge's cars into the front room. As the election supplies are returned, the Receiving Clerk gives Judges a receipt at their car. In front room, kits are placed along wall under windows, and Verity Scan devices are placed on the Verity Scan table next to the right side of the door. Signs are put on the racks and left outside until Central Count is completed; signs are then brought into room with racks.

There are three Processing Stations for the Verity Scan devices. Clerk #1 checks in Verity Scan, Clerk #2 counts signatures, Clerk #3 handles the vDrive, and Clerk #4 verifies Verity Scan tape with signature count, Judge's paperwork, and cancelled ballots.

II. Verity Scan Processing Station

A. Materials

1. Three small tables set up side by side (horizontally) in the front room
2. Three rows of two sets of long tables (set up end-to-end) set up side by side in the middle room
3. Three small tables set up horizontally at end of each row of long tables
4. Pens, calculators, highlighters, paperclips, SortKwik, small clippers, and plastic sleeves
5. Central Count Paperwork

B. Personnel

1. 12 processing clerks plus staff

2. 3-4 runners (1 moves Verity Scan and plastic sleeve from Clerk #4 to Room 3)
- C. Procedure
 1. Processing Clerk #1 (Check-In):
 - a. Takes Verity Scan from stack on verity Scan table and checks Vote Center name and records time processed on the Check-In Station form.
 - b. Collects brown Main Envelope and grey Envelope #2 & 4.
 - c. Checks for daily report tape left on Verity Scan by the Election Judge. If tape is not on Verity Scan, Clerk powers on Verity Scan and prints daily report and leaves attached to Verity Scan.
 - d. Verifies Voter Center on the report tape with name of Vote Center on Verity Scan case.
 - e. Takes Verity Scan and places on table between Clerk #2 and Clerk #3.
 - f. Takes brown Main Envelope and grey Envelope #2 & 4 to Clerk #2.
 2. Processing Clerk #2 (Count Signatures):
 - a. Removes items on bright yellow slip titled "Pull from Grey Envelope—Goes to Kayla" and give to Kayla. Places Envelope #2 & 4 with remaining paperwork in plastic storage box on floor.
 - b. Removes Combination form, Reconciliation Log, and Spoiled Ballot Log from brown envelope.
 - c. Counts the signatures on the Combination form and records the number on a pink Signatures Counted slip.
 - d. Gives Signatures Counted slip, Reconciliation Log, and Spoiled Log to Clerk #3.
 3. Processing Clerk #3 (Verity Scan vDrive):
 - a. Verifies the seal number on the Verity Scan to the Vote Center on the seal list.
 - b. If seal number is same, clerk will break seal and open the vDrive door stores the seal in a plastic sleeve.
 - c. Removes vDrive and tears the daily report tape from the Verity Scan.
 - d. Places the vDrive and daily report tape in a plastic sleeve along with the Reconciliation Log, the Spoiled Ballot Log and Signatures Counted Slip.
 - e. Inserts "Counted" label on Verity Scan case.
 - f. Gives plastic sleeve to Clerk #4.
 - g. Closes Verity Scan case and places on floor near Clerk #4.
 4. Processing Clerk #4 (Verification):
 - a. Verifies that the number of cast ballots from the daily report matches the number written on the Reconciliation Log.
 - b. Verifies that both numbers compared in step above matches the number written on Signatures Counted slip.
 - If the numbers do not match, then that Verity Scan and associated materials are given to the Resolution Station (Jared).

- If the numbers do match, then Verity Scan and plastic sleeve is delivered to Clerk #5 (Michelle).
5. Processing Clerk #5 (Count):
 - a. Place plastic sleeves on LEFT side of workstation in plastic tub.
 - b. Insert vDrive into device reader.
 - c. When vDrive is removed, place counted vDrive into plastic sleeve with paperwork on RIGHT side of workstation in a plastic storage box.
 - d. Enter any Provisional Ballots that are to be counted into Count, store envelope in plastic storage bin. Clerk #6 - Kayla will give Provisional Ballot Envelopes to Jared that are to be counted.
 - e. Reports are run at Jared's direction.
 - f. Gives flash drive to website staff member for posting results to the Internet.
 - g. Prints status report for Resolution Team for final verification that all precincts are counted and reported correctly before final is posted on the Internet.
 6. Processing Clerk #6 (Kayla):
 - a. Provisional Ballot Boxes (green canvass bags) will be pulled from the Kits. Seal Numbers will be verified. If seal has not changed from the original seal sent out on box, there are no Provisional Ballots. (Check List of Provisional Ballots)
 - b. If seal is different, there should be completed Provisional Envelope(s) in green canvass bag.
 - c. Voter's information must be verified with voter registration files.
 - If ballot is to be counted, Provisional Ballot Envelope is copied for voter registration records and original envelope is given to Count operator (Michelle).
 - If ballot is rejected, Provisional Ballot Envelope is copied for voter registration records and original envelope is placed in plastic storage box. (Election Staff must complete Back of Envelope for all Provisional Ballot Envelopes).

II. Resolution Station (Jared & Michelle):

A. Procedure

1. The Resolution Team will receive boxes from Clerk #4 that have numbers that don't balance. If the numbers on the Verity Scan daily report tape don't match the Reconciliation Log and/or the Combination form, the Resolution Team will have to reconcile the discrepancy.
2. Compare number of signatures on Combination form to number of names on Signature List to verify that the numbers match. Review daily report tape to see if number of access codes issued matches, check for spoiled ballots to see if that is where the discrepancy occurred.
3. After reconciled, send plastic sleeve to Count and Verity Scan to center of Room 3.

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 combination forms 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 9:00 a.m. on February 19, 2024. The Early Ballot Board will also serve as the Late/Provisional Ballot Board.

Members of the Early Ballot Board are:

Presiding Judge – Cheryl Foster

Alternate Judge – Sue Hanson

Member – Angelika Hoeher

Member – Lovie Langston

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

Election Administrator (EA) – Responsible for overall operation of both the March 5, 2024 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 procedures 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.