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Elections Administrator

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ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
REFUGIO COUNTY, TEXAS

CENTRAL COUNT STATION PLAN

A. PURPOSE:

In accordance with Section 127.007 of the Texas Election Code ("TEC"), Refugio County Elections Administration Office has established a Central Counting Station.

On Election Night, the Central Counting Station ("CCS") is the place where the results of the Verity Scan Voting System Equipment and Election Results is accumulated to produce a final report.

B. LOCATION:

The Refugio County Central Counting Station will be located at Refugio County Elections Administration, 414 C North Alamo Street, Refugio, Texas 78377.

C. ELECTION: **2022 – MAY 6 – JOINT GENERAL & SPECIAL**

D. VOTING SYSTEM: **HART INTERCIVIC – VERITY DUO**

E. CENTRAL COUNTING STATION PERSONNEL:

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

CCS – Manager	**Rachael B. Garcia**
CCS – Tabulation Supervisor	**Catherine Fuller/Rachael B. Garcia**
CCS – Asst Tabulation Supervisor	**Rebecca Wright**
CCS – Presiding Judge	**Sue Ellen Brown**
CCS – Alternate Judge	**Vickie Beck**
CCS – Clerks	(Varies Per Election)
CCS - Peace Officer	(Varies Per Election)

F. **DUTIES OF CENTRAL COUNTING STATION PERSONNEL:**

CCS – Manager (Elections Administrator):

Serves in the overall administration and supervision of Central Count.

Has the knowledge and experience in the conducting of elections with the electronic voting system for which the CCS is established.

Appoints the clerks to perform duties at the CCS.

- Oversees the processing and reading of vDrives in Count containing Application for Ballot by Mail (ABBM) and Federal Post Card Application (FCPA) ballots processed through the configured Hart Verity Absentee Scan so early voting results may post publicly after 7:00 p.m.
- Directs the retrieval of voting system vDrive data devices used during Early Voting while verifying the integrity of their respective security seals and processes the Early Voting vDrives through Count.
- 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 are unable to be scanned through Hart Verity Scan.
- Executes the second and third Logic & Accuracy Tests with oversight from the CCS Presiding Judge.
- Generates reports at the end of Election Day for Unofficial Cumulative & Precinct election results and posts results as required.

CCS - Tabulation Supervisor (Assistant Elections Administrator):

Serves to operate the automatic tabulating equipment for the voting system.

- 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 the CCS – Manager and the CCS - Assistant Tabulation Supervisor, operates the tabulation equipment.
- Assists the CCS - Manager with the execution of the vDrive Count and other CCS duties, as required.
- The CCS - Assistant Tabulation Supervisor will assist the CCS - Tabulation Supervisor.

CCS - Judge:

Responsible for maintaining order, along with the CCS – Manager and CCS – Tabulation Supervisor, at the CCS.

- Custodian of the testing materials prior to third test when delivered to the general custodian of election records.
- After the CCS - Tabulation Supervisor has prepared the necessary reports for canvass, the presiding judge must certify their accuracy and prepare documents for proper distribution.
- The EVBB - Alternate Presiding Judge of the Early Voting Ballot Board 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 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)

<u>CCS – Clerks</u>:

Appointed as needed by the Manager, the Presiding Judge, and the Alternate Presiding Judge
(Section 127.006 of the Texas Election Code)

Note: 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)

G. **PROCEDURES FOR CONVENING THE CENTRAL COUNTING STATION:**

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

Depending on type of Election, only designated and appointed CCS Personnel is allowed in the Central Counting Station. No exceptions.

The CCS 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.

H. **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 performance of any duties at the central counting station.

I. **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 Day Polling Place Judges are required to leave the vDrive seals intact on the Verity Scans to return to the Elections Administration Office on Election Night.

- The Election Day Judge and Alternate Judge, delivers the following to the Central Counting Station:
    - Verity Scan
    - Ballot Transfer Box (Official Ballots)
    - Provisional Ballot Bag
    - Emergency Ballot Bag
    - Required paperwork, logs, supplies and devices
- Intake personnel will verify location tags and verify the seals on the equipment are the same as the seal numbers on the Official Register of Seals.
- Polling location judges will sign off on the transfer records when the delivery of equipment, forms and supplies is complete.

The CCS – Presiding Judge, CCS – Manager or other CCS designee will verify that the Verity Scan vDrive seal numbers are correct and the seals are intact prior to breaking the seal and placing the vDrive, along with the Tally Report Tapes, in the appropriate vDrive Transfer Envelope to transfer to the CCS Tabulation Supervisor.

J. TABULATION PROCEDURES:

On Election Day, Early Voting ballots, including absentees received up to 7:00 P.M., may be tabulated, but in no case will results be released prior to 7:00 P.M.

The Verity Count Station will be used to produce zero reports to illustrate that no pre-existing votes exist on the official database.

The CCS - Tabulation Supervisor will remove one vDrive at a time and place it in the reader.

- Once read, place vDrive back in the envelope, with the Tally Reports Tape from the Verity Scan
- Initial the transfer envelope and tape verifying the vDrive reading matches the total on the Tally Reports Tape and vDrive Transfer Envelope.

As the vDrive media is loaded in the Verity Count Station, the CCS – Manager and CCS - Presiding Judge shall also verify that the vote totals on the vDrive match the vote totals on the Tally Reports Tape.

After reading all Election precinct vDrives in the Verity Count Station, the election official must verify and document that the Verity County Station total number of votes cast in an election matches the number of signatures on the combination form (Knowink Poll Pad).

If there is a discrepancy, the CCS – Manager, CCS – Tabulation Supervisor and CCS - Presiding Judge shall determine if a further audit is necessary.

K. 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 Poll Pad, minus any ballots-thrown-out (e.g. spoiled), 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 voters on the Knowink Poll Pad, plus the Omissions List entries, minus any ballots-thrown-out (e.g. spoiled), to the total number of ballots cast. (127.007(b))

After the completion of reading all vDrives in the Verity Count Station to tally the totals, the CCS - Tabulation Supervisor will print reports for comparison.

- All reports will be signed by the CCS – Manager, CCS – Tabulation Supervisor and the CCS - Presiding Judge certifying the results.

NOTE: The Presiding Judge of the CCS shall provide and attest to a written reconciliation of votes and voters at the close of tabulation for election day and again after the CCS meets for the last time to process late-arriving ballots by mail and provisional ballots.

L. **PRINTING OF PRECINCT RETURNS AND ELECTION TOTALS:**

The CCS – Manager, CCS - Tabulation Supervisor/CCS - Assistant Tabulation Supervisor are the only ones authorized to operate the automatic tabulating equipment or handle ballots that are automatically counted. (Section 127.127, Texas Election Code)

After the counting of ballots (or accumulation of vote totals) has occurred, the precinct election returns are prepared.

The CCS – Manager and the CCS - 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 127.131(e), Texas Election Code)

The unofficial election results shall be released as soon as available after the polls close.

Election Day results will be released incrementally as processed through acceptance and tabulation until all results are in. (Section 121.1311, Texas Election Code)

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 121.1311, Texas Election Code)

Unofficial election results will be released via Refugio County's Election Administration website and/or posted in a public facility for public viewing, beginning no earlier than 7:00 PM.

M. **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 Texas Secretary of State is required to tabulate the unofficial results statewide. (Section 68.001, Texas Election Code)

- The CCS – Manager will prepare reports with the requested totals for the Secretary of State.
- The CCS – Manger and/or other CCS - Clerks/Staff will report the totals to the Secretary of State using the SOS online portal (TEAM) or via telephone as appropriate.

N. **POLL WATCHERS**:

Poll Watchers are entitled to be present during the time the CCS has convened to observe, for the "purpose of processing or preparing to process election results and until the election officers complete their duties at the station."

All activities of poll watcher(s) shall comply with the current Poll Watchers Guide issued by the Secretary of State. (Sections 33.0015, 33.055, 33.056, 33.060, Texas Election Code)

The Poll Watcher:
- Must deliver both Certificate of Completion for the Texas SOS Poll Watcher Training and Certificate of Appointment to the CCS – Manager and CCS - Presiding Judge
  - The CCS – Manager and CCS - Presiding Judge must countersign their certificate of appointment.
- May not leave and return if the counting of ballots at the central counting station has begun.
  (Section 33.055(b), Texas Election Code)
- Permitted to stand, sit or move freely without obstructing the conduct of the election or interfering with the duties of the CCS personnel, while still being able to observe all activities. (Section 33.0015, Texas Election Code)

NOTE: Poll Watchers may be limited to (2) Poll Watchers at a time, due to the limited space in the CCS.

O. DELIVERY OF MATERIALS TO THE GENERAL CUSTODIAN OF ELECTION RECORDS

All tabulation equipment and voted ballots are returned to the General Custodian of Election Records, the Refugio County Elections Administrator, on Election Night.

The General Custodian shall verify all tabulation equipment and ballots are accounted for by comparing the serial numbers and seals on the inventory control log.

All other voting equipment and election supplies will be returned and accounted for. After the completion of the counting of ballots both on election day and after election day, if necessary, voted ballots, 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 in order to allow for the review of serial numbers as required.

P. LICENSED POLICE OFFICER

Per Section 127.1232 of the Texas Election Code, a licensed peace officer shall be posted in the Central Count Station to ensure the security of ballot boxes containing voted ballots throughout the period of tabulation at the Central Counting Station.

EARLY VOTING BALLOT BOARD

A. **LOCATION:**

The Refugio County Central Counting Station will be located at Refugio County Elections Administration, 414 C North Alamo Street, Refugio, Texas 78377.

B. **CONVENE DATE:**   <u>**MAY 6, 2023 – 10:00 A.M.**</u>

C. **RECONVENE DATE:**   *(TO BE DETERMINED)*

D. **PURPOSE:**

An Early Voting Ballot Board (EVBB) shall be created in each election to process early voting results. (Section 87.001, Texas Election Code)

The EVBB consists of a Presiding Judge and at least two other members.

E. **EARLY VOTING BALLOT BOARD PERSONNEL:**

ELECTIONS ADMININSTRATOR	**Rachael B. Garcia**
ASSISTANT ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATOR	**Catherine Fuller**
EVBB – Presiding Judge	**Sue Ellen Brown**
EVBB – Alternate Judge	**Vickie Beck**
EVBB – Clerk(s)	**Rebecca Wright**

F. **DUTIES OF CENTRAL COUNTING STATION PERSONNEL:**

Following are roles and responsibilities of the Early Ballot Board:

- Generally, meets twice during an election.
  - First, to qualify ballots by mail on Election Day or after the last day to vote early by personal appearance.
  - Second, after Election Day to review any provisional ballots and to qualify any late ballots.
- Must convene to Qualify and Process:
  - Regular Ballots by Mail
  - Late Ballots
  - Provisional Ballots
  - Limited Ballots
  - Military Ballots
  - Presidential Ballots
  - Emergency Ballots

Election Administrator (EA) / Assistant Elections Administrator (Asst EA)**:**

Responsible for overall operation of both the and the Early Ballot Board.

The EA administers the oaths for the Early Voting Ballot Board.
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The EA ensures the integrity and efficiency of the voting systems and processes utilized to execute said election.

- Delivers the required material to the EVBB
- Receives and secures all ballots, voting equipment and supplies after completion of each meeting of the EVBB.

Oversees the retrieval of Hart Verity Scan vDrives used during Early Voting along with verifying the integrity of their respective security seals.

EVBB - Presiding Judge:

- Responsible for receiving and the security of all ballots, voting equipment and supplies when convening.
- Responsible for reviewing and qualifying ballots with assistance from the EVBB members.
- Has the final authority to accept or deny ballots for processing based on the Election Code.
- Assist with preparing duplicate ballots, as necessary, for damaged or photocopied ballots that cannot be scanned through Hart Verity Scan.
- Processes voted ballots through the Absentee Hart Verity Scan, as appropriate.
- Review provisional ballots and to qualify any late ballots.

EVBB - Alternate Judge:

- Responsible for reviewing and qualifying ballots with assistance from the EVBB members.
- Assist with preparing duplicate ballots, as necessary, for damaged or photocopied ballots that cannot be scanned through Hart Verity Scan.
- Assist the EVBB – Presiding Judge and will serve as the EVBB - Presiding Judge in the event that the
- EVBB – Judge is not present or available.
- Assist with the process of voted ballots through the Absentee Hart Verity Scan, as appropriate.
- Assist with review of provisional ballots and to qualify any late ballots.

EVBB - Clerks:

- Assist with all duties performed by the EVBB.

G. 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.

- 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.
- The valid portion of a partially invalid ballot may be duplicated on another ballot so that the valid portion 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 labeled "Duplicated" and must bear the serial number of the replacement 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.

H. RESOLVING VOTER INTENT

At the direction of the Presiding Judge, EVBB members will resolve any voter intent questions on the ballots as they are duplicated or manually counted, as applicable.

- Ballots that are not damaged will be resolved in the Central Count System upon successfully capturing the image of the ballot.
- Ballots that are damaged and cannot be scanned by the Central Count System will be duplicated. Prior to duplicating the ballot, the Presiding Judge, or an appointed ballot board team, with members from differing parties, will determine the manner in which the voter's intent was deciphered.