

REFUGIO COUNTY ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
CENTRAL COUNT STATION PLAN
NOVEMBER 7, 2023

PURPOSE

In accordance with Section 127.007 of the Texas Election Code, Refugio County Elections Administration Office to establish and implement a written plan for the orderly operation of the Central Counting 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.

LOCATION

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

CENTRAL COUNTING STATION PERSONNEL

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

- **CCS - Manager** - Rachael B. Garcia, Elections Administrator
Serve as the Central Counting Station Manager to manage the overall administration of the station and supervision of personnel.
- **CCS - Tabulation Supervisor** - Catherine Fuller, Assistant Elections Administrator
Rachael B. Garcia, Elections Administrator
Serve as the Tabulation Supervisor to operate automatic tabulating equipment.
- **CCS - Assistant Tabulation Supervisor** – Karina Porter
Donna McMahan
Assist the Tabulation Supervisor.
- **CCS - Presiding Judge** - Sue Ellen Brown
Serve to maintain order at the Central Counting Station, administer oaths, and receive ballots.
- **CCS - Alternate Judge** – Karina Porter
Serve to assist Presiding Judge.

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.

A clerk appointed by the Manager serves under the Manger 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. (127.006c Texas Election Code)

PROCEDURES FOR CONVENING THE CENTRAL COUNTING STATION

Section 87.0241 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 Judges.

Early Voting Ballot Board will convene on Election Day, November 7, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

The Central Counting Station will begin the process to count the ballots by mail and early voting in-person ballots on Tuesday, November 7, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. and continue with the process of counting ballots voted on Election Day until the last box has been returned to the Election Administration Office and reports are complete and distributed accordingly.

The personnel of the EVBB and/or CCS, if necessary, will begin the process to count accepted provisional ballots and accepted late ballots by mail on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

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 Primary Elections, General Elections for State and County Officers and 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."

INTAKE OF BALLOTS, ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND SUPPLIES

Sections 129.051 and 129.052 of the Texas Election Code require the general custodian of the 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 sealed Ballot Transfer Box), locked & sealed Verity Scanner, along with other designated equipment supplies and paperwork to the Refugio County Elections Administration Office.
- Intake personnel will verify location tags and verify the seals on the bags and bins are the same as the seal numbers on the seal log.
- The CCS Judge, Refugio County Elections Staff, or designee, will break seal and remove the vDrive from the Scan, remove the tabulation tape from the Scan and place in the vDrive Transfer Envelope.
- The vDrive Transfer Envelopes will be delivered to the CCS Tabulation Supervisor.

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.

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.

RESOLVING VOTER INTENT

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

- The Presiding Judge and Resolution Board will make a determination of voter intent prior to duplication of a ballot.
- The duplicate ballot will then be created by the Presiding Judge and CCS clerks in the manner in which the voter intent was deciphered.

TABULATION PROCEDURES

ELECTION DAY – NOVEMBER 7, 2023

- Beginning at 10:00 a.m. EVBB will convene to verify any ballots that were returned to the election office and process as required.
- After Ballot Board completes their review of the Early Voting ballots by mail, approved ballots will be scanned on Central Scanner. Any ballots needing to be reviewed will be resolved by the resolution board under the direction of the CCS Presiding Judges on Election Day.
- After all Early Voting ballots by mail have been scanned, results will be saved to the vDrive, and locked and stored until read into Central Count on Election Day, November 7, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.
- Ballots by mail will be placed in a ballot box which will be sealed by the EVBB Presiding Judges and stored.
- On Election Day, Early Voting ballots, including ballots by mail received up to 7:00 p.m. will be tabulated, but in **NO** case will results reports be created before 7:00 p.m.
- 2nd Testing of the Tabulation Equipment will be conducted by the Tabulation Supervisor at 5:00 p.m. on the Verity Count Station.
- All vDrives will be read into the tabulation Verity Count Station to tally the totals.
- Vote totals on the electronic media will be verified that the vote totals matched the vote totals on the results tape.
- After polls close at 7:00 p.m. Election Manager will release the reports for Early Voting Results and again after all Election Day Polls have returned and Tabulation Supervisor has processed all reports.
- 3rd Testing of the Tabulation Equipment will be conducted by the Tabulation Supervisor at the end of the night on the Verity Count Station.

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, plus the spoiled 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 Poll Pad, plus the spoiled ballot log, to the number of ballots cast. (127.007 b)

PRINTING OF PRECINCT RETURNS AND ELECTION TOTALS

Under Section 127.127, the Tabulation supervisor and the Tabulation Assistants 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 Judges of the CCS are responsible for preparing the precinct election returns. The Presiding Judges are 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 Judges of the CCS, in cooperation with the Elections Administrator may withhold the release of unofficial results until the last voter has voted

Unofficial election results will be released via the Refugio County Elections Administration Office webpage, beginning no earlier than 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. Election Day results will be posted after the last voting polling location has returned. In some cases, results may incrementally be posted as processed through acceptance and tabulation. (Section 121.1311, Texas Election Code).

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 Texas Election Code). For this election, this information will be reported to the SOS through an online portal established by the SOS.

POLL WATCHERS

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.” (Section 33.055, Texas Election Code)

The poll watcher must deliver their certificate completion of the Texas SOS Poll Watcher Training and their certificate of appointment to the appropriate Presiding Judge of the CCS and the Presiding Judge must countersign their certificate of appointment.

Poll watcher(s) are permitted to stand or sit to observe the counting activities. The Presiding Judges may dictate where the poll watchers may stand and/or sit in order to prevent interference with the duties of the Central County Station personnel while still being able to observe all activities. There will be a maximum limit of four (4) poll watchers at any time in Room 4 Tabulation Room.

All activities of poll watchers shall be in compliance with the current Poll Watchers Guide issued by the Secretary of state.

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, 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.

SECURITY PROCEDURES

A Licensed Peace Officer will be posted at the CCS as required (Section 127.1232(a), Texas Election Code) at any time that the CCS is convened to ensure security of ballot transfer boxes containing voted ballots.