

CENTRAL COUNTING (ACCUMULATION) STATION
COMAL COUNTY, TEXAS
MAY 4, 2024

A. PURPOSE:

Section 127.07 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 the 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 Central Counting (Accumulation) Station (CCS) is located at 396 N. Seguin Ave., New Braunfels, Texas 78130, (830) 221-1352. The Central Counting Station will convene at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 4, 2024.

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 Election Code:

- The County Clerk (Bobbie Koepp) will serve as the *Central Counting Station Manager* to manage the overall administration of the station and supervision of personnel.
- The Elections Coordinator (Cynthia Jaqua) will serve as the *Tabulation Supervisor* to operate automatic tabulating equipment.
- The *Presiding Judges* will serve to maintain order at the Central Counting Station, administer oaths, and receive ballots to be counted.

Donna Dandridge will serve as the *Presiding Judge*.

Anissa Correll will serve as the *Alternate Presiding Judge*.

- *Central Counting Station Clerks* may be appointed as needed by the *Central Counting Station Manager* and the *Presiding Judges* as outlined in 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 elections 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. (127.006b)

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*. (127.006c)

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. (127.006d)

D. 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*.

The Early Voting Ballot Board will begin the process to count early voting mail ballots on Thursday, April 25, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

The Central Counting Station will begin the process to count early voting in-person ballots (if applicable) on Saturday, May 4, 2024 after 11:00 a.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 county early voting ballots.

The Central Counting Station will begin the process to count accepted provisional ballots and accept late ballots by mail on Monday, May 13, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

E. 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 May 4, 2024 election (all Other Election 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 offer 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 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.

1. Election Judge, or their designee, brings paper ballots (in sealed ballot bin), Controller (sealed and containing vDrive), and Scan (sealed and containing vDrive) to the Comal County Elections Office.
2. Intake personnel will verify the seals on the ballot bin, Controller, and Scan are the same as the seal number on the seal log.
3. Intake personnel will deliver ballot bin, Controller, and Scan to the Tabulation Room where the *Central Counting Station Clerks* will verify the seal numbers under the supervision of the *Presiding Judges*.

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 with the equipment.

1. The *Presiding Judge of each party*, with any assistants they deemed necessary, will duplicate any damaged ballots in accordance with Section 126.126 of the Texas Election Code.

H. RESOLVING VOTER INTENT:

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

1. The *Presiding Judge* and *Early Voting Ballot Board* will make the determination of voter intent prior to duplication of the ballot.
2. The duplicate ballot will then be created by the *Presiding Judge* and *CCS clerks* in the manner in which the voter intent was deciphered.

I. TABULATION PROCEDURES:

EVBB after Early Voting – Friday, May 3, 2024

- After the Ballot Board completes their review of the Early Voting ballots by mail, approved ballots will be scanned into Central through a Cannon Scanner. Any ballots needing to be reviewed will be resolved by the Ballot Board under the direction of the CCS Presiding Judge on Election Day.
- After all Early Voting ballots by mail have been scanned into Central, results will be saved to a vDrive, and stored in the Count Room to be read into the Count on Election Day.
- Ballots by mail will be placed in a ballot box which will be sealed by the EVBB Presiding Judge and stored in the Count Room.

Election Day - May 4, 2024

- Beginning at 11:00 a.m., the *Presiding Judge or Alternate Presiding Judge of Central Count*, and the *Tabulation Supervisor* will complete the 2nd Testing of the Tabulation Equipment.
- In Count, before any data from the vDrives are loaded, a Zero Report will be printed from Count and signed by the *Tabulation Supervisor* and *Presiding Judge or Alternate Presiding Judge of Central Count*.
- All vDrives will be read into Count by the *Tabulation Supervisor* with the *Presiding Judge or Alternate Presiding Judge of Central Count* present.
- Any un-scanned approved ballots will be scanned into Central, and any ballots needing to be reviewed will be resolved by the ballot Board under the direction of the *Presiding Judge or Alternate Presiding Judge of Central Count*.
- Results of the remaining un-scanned ballots will be saved to a vDrive.
- *Tabulation Supervisor* and *Presiding Judge or Alternate Presiding Judge of Central Count* will confirm the vDrives are all accounted for.
- On Election Day, Early Voting ballots, including ballots by mail received up to that point, will be tabulated before 7 p.m., but in no case will results reports be created before 7 p.m.
- After the polls close at 7:00 p.m., the *Tabulation Supervisor* will tabulate the results of Early Voting and ballots by mail. The results will then be posted on the Elections website (votecomal.com).
- As the *Presiding Judges and Alternate Judges* arrive from the Election Day polling locations with the Scan, Controller, Duo Standalone, KnowInk ePollbooks, Ballot Bag, The and unused ballots, they are checked in by the *CCS Clerks*. The seal and serial numbers of the voting equipment are verified.
- After verification, the *CCS Clerks* take the Scan, Controller, and Duo Standalone are taken to the Count Room. The seals are verified before running the tapes and taking the vDrives to the *Tabulation Supervisor* for tabulation.
- *Tabulation Supervisor* verifies each vDrive for the correct voter count from each Election Day polling location as the vDrives are tabulated.
- After tabulation, the *Tabulation Supervisor* creates a USB drive on Count to take to the Election Office computer to report the results on the Election's website (votecomal.com). Each time that the results are reported on the website, a new USB is used.

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:

1. Early Voting in Person – Compare the number of early voting check-ins from KnowInk ePollbooks, Controller, Duo Standalone, and Scan plus the spoiled ballot log, to the number of ballots cast.
2. Early Voting by Mail – Compare the number of ballots entered on the “Ballot Transmittal Form” from Early Voting Ballot Board to the number of ballots counted. (87.021, 87.1221)
3. Election Day – Compare the number of Election Day check-ins from KnowInk ePollbooks, Controller, Duo Standalone, and Scan plus the spoiled ballot log, to the number of ballots cast.

Additionally, in accordance with Texas Election Code Section 127.131(f), the *Presiding Judge* of the Central Counting Station shall provide and attest to a written reconciliation of votes and voters at the close of tabulation for Election Day and again after the Central Counting Station meets for the last time to process late-arriving ballots by mail and provisional ballots using a form created and rules promulgated by the Secretary of State to facilitate compliance with this subsection. Once completed, the form shall be posted on a website maintained by the County along with election returns and results.

K. 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 Judge* of the CCS is 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 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 Judge* of the CCS, in cooperation with the *Elections Coordinator* 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 Comal County’s Election Department website (votecomal.com), beginning no earlier than 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. Election Day Results will be released incrementally as processed through acceptance and tabulation until all results are in.

L. 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.

M. 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 the certificate of completion of the Texas SOS Poll Watcher Training and their certificate of appointment to the *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 Judge* may dictate where the poll watcher(s) may stand and/or sit in order to prevent interference

with the duties of the Central Counting Station personnel while still be able to observe all activities. There will be a maximum limit of two (2) poll watchers at any time in the Count Room. There will be a maximum limit of four (4) poll watchers at any time in the Main Room of the Elections Office.

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, 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.