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**TRAVIS COUNTY CLERK
ELECTIONS DIVISION
CENTRAL COUNTING STATION PLAN
MARCH 3, 2020**

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 must 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 Travis County Central Counting Station will be located at Travis County Elections Division 5501 Airport Blvd. Austin, TX 78751. The Central Counting Station will convene at 10am on Tuesday, March 3, 2020.

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:

Central Count Presiding Judge: Maria Jimenez
Central Count Presiding Alt Judge: Bruce Latour
Central Station Manager: Bridgette Escobedo
Tabulation Supervisor: Erik Buntin
Assistants to Tabulation Supervisor: Candi Semple, Adam Alvarez, Tessa Rowland
Roseanne Thornhill, Kyle Rush, Scott Flom, Dan Roman, Dan Grosser, and
Adana Hess

- The Elections Division Director, Bridgette Escobedo, will serve as the Central Counting Station Manager to manage the overall administration of the station and supervision of personnel.
- The Ballot Technology Manager, Erik Buntin, will serve as the Tabulation Supervisor to operate automatic tabulating equipment.
- The Assistants to Tabulation Supervisors will assist the Tabulation Supervisor in the operation of the automatic tabulating equipment as directed by the Tabulation Supervisor.
- The Presiding Judge will serve to maintain order at the Central Counting Station, administer oaths, and receive ballots to be counted. Maria Jimenez will serve as the Presiding Judge. Bruce Latour will serve as the Alternate Presiding Judge.

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)

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

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 Judge.

The Central Counting Station will begin the process to count early voting ballots on Monday, March 2, 2020 at 10:00a.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 election day ballots on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 at 7:00p.m.

The Central Counting Station will begin the process to count accepted provisional ballots and accepted late ballots by mail on Monday, March 9, 2020 at 2:00p.m.

E. ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS:

Section 127.0015 of the Texas Election Code prescribes a required oath for all CCS personnel.

This oath will 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 March 3, 2020 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."

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.

1. Election Judge, or their designee, brings paper ballots (in locked and sealed ballot bin) and USB-Drives (in sealed election results bag) to the Travis County Elections Division intake.
2. 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.
3. Intake personnel will deliver the ballot bin to a secure area in the warehouse, and deliver the election results bag with the USB Drive to the Multi-purpose Room where Central Counting Station Clerks will verify the seal numbers with the Ballot and Seal Certificate under the supervision of the Presiding Judge.

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 Judges of the Early Voting Ballot Board, Maria Jimenez, Bruce Latour and Donna Beth McCormick with any assistants they deem necessary, will duplicate any damaged ballots in accordance with Section 127.126 of the Texas Election Code.

H. RESOLVING VOTER INTENT:

At the direction of the Presiding Judge, 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 at least two other members will make a determination of voter intent prior to duplication of a ballot.
2. The duplicate ballot will then be created under the supervision of the Presiding Judge in the manner in which the voter's intent was determined.

I. TABULATION PROCEDURES:

Monday EVBB After Early Voting – March 2, 2020

- Presiding Judge of Ballot Board and one clerk will confirm seals match the Seal Log for Early Voting USB Bags, Ballot Bins, and Provisional Bags.
- Election results bags are opened and USB Drive verified and then placed into sealed container and secured in the vault to be opened on Election Day by the Tabulation Supervisor. Ballot Bins will be stored in a vault and remain unopened until the Partial Manual Recount. Once seals have been verified, Provisional bags will be given to Elections Staff for processing.
- The second test of the tabulation equipment will be conducted by counting of the public test full-page paper ballots by scanning them at the DS450 and printing a paper

copy of the results. The results will also be saved to a USB to be used to perform the Second Logic & Accuracy Test on ElectionWare immediately before results are collected on Election Day.

- After Ballot Board completes their review of all Early Voting ballots by mail, approved ballots will be scanned at the DS450, the resolution board under the direction of the Presiding Judge will resolve any ballots needing to be reviewed.
- After all Early Voting ballots by mail have been scanned; results will be saved to a USB drive, sealed and stored in the vault to be read into the ElectionWare Results Module on Election Day.
- Ballots by mail will be placed in a security bag, which will be sealed by the Presiding Judge of Ballot Board and stored in the vault.

Election Day – March 3, 2020

- The Tabulation Supervisor will login to the ElectionWare computer, and complete the Second L&A Test with the Central Count Presiding Judge using both the DS200 USBs from the Initial Public Logic & Accuracy Test, as well as the USB containing the results of the full-page paper ballots scanned at the March 2nd Early Voting Ballot Board.
- The Tabulation Supervisor will break the seal on the Early Voting USB storage container, and Serial number will be checked against the Seal Log with the tabulation assistants.
- In ElectionWare, before any data from the USB drives are loaded, a Zero Report will be printed from the ElectionWare software and signed by the Tabulation Supervisor and tabulation assistants.
- All USBs will be read into the ElectionWare Results Module by the Tabulation Supervisor with tabulation assistants present.
- Any un-scanned approved ballots will be scanned at the DS450 , and any ballots needing to be reviewed will be resolved by the resolution board under the direction of the Presiding Judge.
- Results will be saved onto a USB drive and loaded into the ElectionWare Results Module.
- Tabulation Supervisor and tabulation assistants will confirm the USB drives for each site have been loaded and are all accounted for.
- On Election Day, Early Voting ballots, including ballots by mail received up to that point will be tabulated before 7pm, but in no case will results reports be created before 7pm.

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 Precinct Central to the number of ballots cast.

2. 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)
3. Election Day – Compare the number of election day check-ins from Precinct Central to the number of ballots cast. (127.007(b))

K. PRINTING OF PRECINCT RETURNS AND ELECTION TOTALS:

Under Section 127.127, the Tabulation Supervisor and the assistants to the Tabulation Supervisor 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 Division Director 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 the Travis County Clerk Elections Division webpage, beginning no earlier than 7:00PM 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 their certificate of appointment to the Presiding Judge of the CCS and the Presiding Judge must countersign their certificate.

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 being able to observe all activities.

All activities of poll watcher(s) shall be in compliance with the current Poll Watchers Guide issued by the Secretary of State.

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 ballot cards, 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.