

Karnes County Elections Administration
Central Counting Station
Management Plan
May 6, 2023
Joint Special and General Elections for
Pawnee ISD Bond Election, Falls City ISD General 1 Trustee and Special Election 1 Trustee Unexpired
Term & City of Karnes City Mayor and District 2 & 4, City of Kenedy- District 3, Runge ISD – District 3,
Evergreen UWCD - Director

In accordance with Section 127.007 of the Texas Election Code, Karnes 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 – Beth Montalvo, Elections Administrator
Asst. Central Counting Station Manager - Karla Moczygemba, Chief Election Deputy Clerk
Tabulation Supervisor – Beth Montalvo, Elections Administrator
Asst. Tabulation Supervisor - Veronica Almeida, Elections Deputy Clerk Central
Counting Station Judge - Susan Poole

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 the 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 Absentee Scan so early voting results may be posted publicly at approximately 7:10 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:

- 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.
- Ensures the final count total of the vDrives

The CCS Judge:

- Responsible for maintaining order at the Central Counting Station.
- Custodian of the testing materials prepared for the test until the material is 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 6:00 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.

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 May 6, 2023 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

In order to maintain control and chain of custody of the voting system equipment and electronic media associated with this equipment, on election night the Central Count Station shall receive the Hart Verity Scans with the vDrive still sealed inside. Polling location judges are trained to leave the seals intact and to return these to the Elections Administration Office on Election Night. The Central Count Station Assistant Tabulator will verify the seal numbers are correct and the seals are intact prior to breaking the seal and placing the vDrive in the appropriate Transfer Envelope to be given to the Tabulation Supervisor. Polling location judges

will sign off on the transfer records when delivering equipment to the CCS. The CCS Judge will witness the transfer of equipment from the polling judge to the Tabulation Clerk.

Tabulation Procedures

In order to conduct a proper and orderly tabulation, the vDrive will be removed by the CCS Assistant Tabulator Clerk from the Scan when delivered from the polling location. Once removed, the vDrive is placed in the Transfer Envelope and it is delivered to the Tabulation Supervisor in the Tabulation Room. The Tabulation Supervisor will remove one vDrive at a time and place it in the reader. Once read, it will be removed, placed back in the envelope, initialed by the CCS Manager and they will also initial the vDrive Tracking Log. In addition, the CCS Judge will initial the transfer envelope verifying they viewed the vDrive being read.

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 Poll Pads 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 1:00 p.m. on May 6, 2023. The Early Ballot Board will also serve as the Late/Provisional Ballot Board.

Members of the Early Ballot Board are:

Presiding Judge – Susan Poole

Alternate Judge – Belinda Pace

Member – Sandra Yanta

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

Election Administrator (EA) – Responsible for overall operation of both the May 6, 2023 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

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*, 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

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 members 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.

Preparation

- All personnel take the prescribed oath for election officials.
- Assign function to personnel.
- Perform a second LAT test on Election Day before any ballots are scanned.

Ballot Bag

- Verify seal with Asst CCS Manager
- Sign-off on log sheet that seal and bag match.
- Hand off sealed ballot bag to Deputy
- Deputy to take ballot bag and place in 60-day storage room

Ballot Paper Unused Stock

- Verify total of unused ballot stock with Asst CCS Manager/ with Ballot Stock Form
- Hand off Ballot Stock to Deputy
- Deputy to take ballot stock and place on shelf in Tally/Supply Room
- Leave Black Rolling bin with Asst CCS Manager

SCAN and V-Drives

- Hand off SCAN device to Asst Tabulation Supervisor
- Asst Tabulation Supervisor to verify seal # matches to the Seal Certificate Form

- Asst. Tabulation Supervisor will remove the v-Drive from SCAN and take to Tally Room

V-Drive and Tally

- Asst Tabulation Supervisor and Tabulation Supervisor verify all V-Drives are accounted for each polling location
- Run V-Drives for each polling location
- After all V-Drives have been read then tabulate and run Unofficial Results Reports

Poll Pad

- Judge is to take Poll Pad and set it on bench in hallway and open it up and turn on the poll pad.
- Login to KNOWiNK app and make sure the Wi-Fi is on. Then hit the Sync button.

Binder

- Go to Multipurpose Room and turn in completed forms to respective stations.
 - Compensation Forms
 - Voter Forms – List of Provisional Voters, Reasonable Impediment, Surrendered Ballots, Combination Form... etc

TABULATION PROCEDURES:

EVBB After Early Voting – Wednesday, May 3, 2023

- *The Presiding Judge* of Ballot Board will designate 2 Ballot Board members who will confirm seals match the Seal Log for Provisional Bags.
- Early Voting Provisional Bags will be given to Elections Staff for processing.
- After Ballot Board completes their review of the Early Voting ballots by mail, ballots will be placed in a ballot box which will be sealed by the *EVBB Presiding Judge* and stored in the Tabulation Room.

Election Day – May 6, 2023

- Beginning at 1:00 pm, the *Presiding Judge of Central Count*, and the Tabulation Supervisor will complete the 2nd Testing of the Tabulation Equipment.
- The *Presiding Judge of Central Count* and the *Alternate Presiding Judge of Central Count* will confirm the seal match the Seal Log for Early Voting USB Bags, Ballot Bins, and Emergency Bags.
- Early Voting vDrive bags and Emergency Bags will be returned to the Tabulation Room to be opened by the *Tabulation Supervisor*.
- The *Ballot Board* will scan the Early Voting ballots by mail approved by Ballot Board using the Verity Scan.

- Any ballots needing to be reviewed will be resolved by the resolution board under the direction of the *Presiding Judge*.
- After all Early Voting ballots by mail have been scanned, the CCS Manager and the Ballot Board Judge will close polls on the Verity Scan. The vDrive will be removed and given to the Asst. Tabulation Supervisor
- The *Tabulation Supervisor* will break the seals on all Early Voting vDrive Bags, and Serial numbers will be checked against the Seal Log with the *tabulation assistants*.
- In Count, before any data from the USB drives are loaded, a Zero Report will be printed from the software and signed by the *Tabulation Supervisor* and *Presiding Judge of Central Count*.
- All vDrives will be read into Count by the *Tabulation Supervisor* with the *Presiding Judge of Central Count* present.
- *Tabulation Supervisor* and *tabulation assistants* will confirm the vDrives for each site have been loaded and read and are all accounted for.
- On Election Day, Early Voting ballots, including ballots by mail received up to that point, will be tabulated before 7p.m., but in no case will results reports be released before 7p.m.
- After the polls close at 7:00p.m., one (1) or more *tabulation assistants* will use the Early Voting DS200 USB drives to print the results tapes for each Early Voting Site.
- The following reports will be generated and will be made available at request on a County Provided USB Drive along with any reports generated during Central Count: Admin Audit Events Report, Election Audit Events Report, Machine Audit Events Report.

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 Poll Pads, 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 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 KNOWiNK poll pads, plus the spoiled ballot log, to the number of ballots cast. (127.007(b))

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.

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 Administrator, may withhold the release of unofficial results until the last voter has voted. (Section 121.1311, Texas Election Code).

Unofficial Early Voting election results will be released via Karnes County’s Elections Department webpage, beginning no earlier than 7:10p.m. on Election Day. Unofficial Election Day results will be released as soon as all the precincts vDrives have been read and validated and processed through acceptance and tabulation and all results are in.

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).

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 both their certificate 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 being able to observe all activities. There will be a maximum limit of four (4) poll watchers at any time in Room 412-*Tabulation Room*. There will be a maximum limit of ten (10) poll watchers at any time in Room 402-*CCS Main Room*.

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

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.