Central Count Station Plan

A. Purpose:

Section 127.007 of the Texas Election Code requires the Manager of the Central Count Station (CCS) to "establish and implement written plan for the orderly operation of the Central Counting Station." This plan is to be 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 of comparing the number of voters who signed the combination form with the number of votes cast for an entire election."

B. Location:

Central Count Station (CCS) is located in Parker County Elections Building, 801 Santa Fe Dr, Weatherford. This location is to be secure. Only election officials and Parker County Sheriff/Deputy, and poll watchers will be permitted in this area. Name badges will identify all at Central Count. Results will be posted to the county website. (parkercountytx.com/482/Election-Results)

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 Counting Station Manager – Elections Administrator Crickett Miller (Section 127.002)
> Tabulation Supervisor – Stacey Bryan (Section 127.003)
> Tabulation Supervisor Assistant – Amy Gregory (Section 127.004)
> Presiding Judge Republican Party – Richard Heizer (Section 127.005)
> Presiding Judge Democrat Party – Stella Hunt (Section 127.005)
> Clerks – Election office staff along with clerks from each political party (Section 127.006)

Central Counting Station (CCS) Manager – The Manager is in charge of the overall supervision of the CCS and shall have a written plan for operation of the CCS. The Manager, as well as the presiding judge, may appoint clerks to perform duties at the CCS. The Manager oversees programming and is the general custodian of elections records. (Section 127.002)

Tabulation Supervisor - The Tabulation Supervisor is responsible for overseeing the counting of ballots and preparing the necessary reports such as the canvass. The Tabulation Supervisor may appoint one or more assistant tabulation supervisors. (Section 127.003)

Assistant Tabulation Supervisor – The assistant shall assist the tabulation supervisor in the operation of the automatic tabulating equipment and tabulation procedures as directed by the tabulation supervisor. (Section 127.004)

Presiding Judge Appointed by party chair – The presiding judge will maintain order at the CCS and administer oaths. If the CCS determines the ballots will be duplicated or manually counted, then the clerks will duplicate or hand count the ballots, but the presiding judge will resolve any questions concerning voter intent on ballots. (Section 127.005)

Alternate Judge – Appointed by party chair – The alternate judge serves as the presiding judge in the presiding judge's absence. Otherwise, the alternate judge performs the duties assigned by the presiding judge. (Section 127.005(f))

Clerks – Perform tasks assigned. (Section 127.006)

Note: To be eligible to serve as a clerk a person must be a qualified voter of the county in which the CCS 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 qualified voter of a county other than the county in which the CCS is located or because of the custodian's status as a candidate or officeholder. (Section 127.006(b))

A clerk is 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. (Section 127.006(c))

A clerk 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. (Section 127.006(d)) A judge at CCS is entitled to the same rate as a precinct election judge, except that a judge who serves for the entire time at CCS is in operation is entitled to a minimum compensation of five hours' pay regardless of the amount of time worked. (Section 127.005(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 may not begin the process to count early voting ballots until:
>   (1) The polls open on Election Day; or
>   (2) In an election conducted by an authority of a county with population of 100,000 or more or conducted jointly with such a county, the end of the period for early voting by personal appearance.

The CCS will convene based on the size and type of election as determined by the CCS Manager and Presiding Judges.

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 CCS. *(AW 8-3a)*

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."

F. Meeting Time:

The Central Count Station may not begin the process of counting ballots until: (a) the polls open on Election Day or (b) in an election conducted by an authority of a county with a population of 100,000 or more or conducted jointly with such a county, the end of the period for early voting by personal appearance. Prior to any duties taking place at the Central Count Station, the oaths are administered, and name badges distributed and worn. CCS workers will read this procedure manual and sign it.

No electronic devices and/or cell phones are allowed in the area while ballots are being processed for counting and no discussion of politics in central count.

No food or drink will be allowed in the Count Room.

G. Testing Procedures:

The first Public Logic and Accuracy test will be conducted at least 48 hours prior to early voting starting, notice of test will be posted on county website.
https://www.parkercountytx.gov/446/Notices

All tests will be conducted at the Elections Office at 801 Santa Fe Dr, Weatherford, TX 76086.

Second Logic & Accuracy test will take place before the counting of mail and early voting ballots (Section 127.097). Third Logic & Accuracy test will take place immediately after the tabulation of all ballots (Section 127.908), on Election night.

H. Intake of Ballots, Electronic Media and Supplies:

Section 129.051 and 129.52 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 will drive in all supplies and equipment to Parker County Elections Office.
2. Election Office intake personnel will verify polling location, receive all supplies and equipment along with the Chain of Custody form (8-3f) transferring scanner and ballots to Central Count.
3. seals on the equipment are the same as the seal numbers on the chain of custody forms.
4. Election Office personnel will remove vdrive's from Verity scanners and place in sealed transfer bag with chain of custody form. Central Count Station personnel will transfer sealed bags to Count Room. Where Presiding and Alternate Judge will review chain of custody and compare to initial chain of custody form.
5. The *Tabulation Supervisor* and/or *Assistant Tabulation Supervisor* will read all vdrives into the Count computer to tally votes.
6. As vdrives are uploaded into Count Computer, the Tabulation and Assistant Tabulation Supervisor, Presiding & Alternate Judge, and Central Count Station Manager shall verify that the vote totals on the vdrives match the vote totals on the printed results tape and match the number of voters that checked in on the poll pads for each polling location.

If there is a discrepancy, the presiding judge of the CCS in conjunction with the CCS Manager shall determine if a further audit is necessary.

Note: A person other than the Tabulation Supervisor or Assistant Tabulation Supervisor may not operate the automatic tabulating equipment or handle the ballots that are automatically counted from the time the ballots are delivered to the CCS for counting until the automatic counting is completed. (Section 127.127)

I. Tabulation Procedures:
1. The Verity Count system will produce a zero report, to illustrate that no pre-exiting votes exist on the official database, prior to reading vdrives.

2. The *Presiding Judge* will verify seals on ballot boxes with absentee ballots to Seal Log and Provisional Bags with Chain of Custody.
3. The *Tabulation Supervisor* and/or *Assistant Tabulation Supervisor* will scan all un-scanned ballots into Verity Central scanner/computer in batches relative to quantity and type (Early Voting, Absentee, Election Day, Limited, Provisional) as appropriate.
4. All scanned ballots will be reviewed by the software which will identify any ballot that needs human review (over-votes, damaged, etc.). Once complete, batches will be written to designated vdrive.
5. The v-drive(s) will be read into Verity Count for addition to the database.
6. Vdrives delivered to CCS will be read into tabulation as they are received, as the polling locations report to Elections Office on Election Day.
7. The *Tabulation Supervisor* will confirm that the number of v-drives read into the Count is accurate and all accounted for.
8. On Election Day, Early Voting ballots, including absentees received up to that point, must be tabulated, under no circumstance will results be tabulated or released prior to 7:00 pm.

J. Reconciliation:

The process of comparing the number of voters listed as having voted and the number of ballots cast is done three ways:

1. **Early Voting in Person** – Compare the number of early vote check-ins from each early vote location from the Poll Pads to the number of ballots cast from the scanners.
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. (Section 87.021, 87.1221)
3. **Election Day** – Compare the number of voter check ins on the Poll Pad, plus the Omissions List, to the total number of ballots cast from each scanner polling location. (Section 127.007(b))

K. Printing of Precinct Returns and Election Totals:

After the counting of ballots (or accumulation of vote totals) has occurred, the Tabulation Supervisor and Assistant Tabulation Supervisor of the Central Count Station are 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 that has been adjusted to include any hand counted ballots (if necessary) constitutes the certified precinct returns. (Section 127.131(e)).

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

Unofficial election results will be released via Parker County's Election Night Results webpage, https://www.parkercountytx.gov/482/Election-Results beginning after 7:00 pm. Election Day results will be released incrementally as processed through acceptance and tabulation until all results are in. (Section 121.1311)

L. Reporting Results to the Secretary of State (SOS) (if applicable):

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. (Section 68.001) This information can be reported to the SOS through their online portal.

> The *Tabulation Assistant or Tabulation Supervisor* will prepare reports with the unofficial totals for the Secretary of State and report to the SOS.

M. Poll Watchers:

Poll watchers are entitled to be present during the time the Central Count Station 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)

The poll watcher must deliver their certificate of appointment to the Presiding Judge of the Central Count Station, and the poll watcher must countersign their certificate of appointment. The poll watcher must also deliver the Certificate of Completion of Training from the Secretary of State.

A watcher may not leave CCS without the *Presiding Judge's* permission if the counting of ballots at the CCS has begun. (Section 33.055(b))

Poll watcher(s) are permitted to stand or sit to observe the counting activities. The Presiding Judge may dictate where 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 comply with Sections 33.055, 33.056, 33.060 and the current *Poll Watcher's Guide* issued by the Secretary of State.

N. Delivery of Materials to the General Custodian of Election Records:

After 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.

O. Duplication of Ballots:

Certain ballots that are counted with the automatic tabulation equipment may have to be duplicated if the ballot is damaged or cannot be read with the equipment.

> 1. *Presiding judge* shall have clerks duplicate the ballots. Duplication team must record the serial number of the original ballot on the duplicate ballot and vice versa. Duplicate ballot must have "Duplicate" written on the ballot in red – do

not write on the sides of the ballots, write the number and words in open white spaces. (Section 127.126 (e)) (3-person process caller, recorder and observer with at least two members of differing political parties.)

2. After duplication has occurred, the Central Count Manager may accept the ballots for processing. (Section 127.127)
3. The two ballots will be paper clipped together & placed with the other ballots that have been scanned in a secured & sealed ballot box.

P. Resolving Voter Intent:

At the direction of the *Presiding Judge,* a voter's intent will be resolved on the ballots as they are duplicated or manually counted, as applicable.

1. Ballots that are not damaged will be resolved in the Central Count System upon successfully capturing the image of the ballot.
2. Ballots that are damaged and cannot be scanned by the Central Count System will be duplicated. Prior to duplicating the ballot, the *Presiding Judge* will determine the manner in which the voter intent is deciphered. The duplicate ballot will then be created in the manner in which the *Presiding Judge* determines. (Section 65.009)

Q. Write-Ins:

Write-ins will be sorted on Verity Central Reporting System. The *Presiding and Alternate Judges* with any assistants if needed, will review any ballots with write-in selections. The *Presiding and Alternate Judge* will keep a manual tally sheet of the Write-In votes attributed to each certified write-in candidate and those that are not certified. The *Tabulation Supervisor* will attribute the write-in votes, as determined by the *Presiding Judge.* After all of the write-ins have been attributed, the *Presiding Judge* and *Tabulation Supervisor* will reconcile the Manual Tally counts with Verity Central Reporting System. The same process is done with tabulation of write ins as vdrives from scanners on the Verity Central Reporting System.

Please sign this page affirming that you have read and understand the rules and procedures of the Central Count Station and agree to abide by them.

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Date_____