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INTERIM ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATOR

## GUADALUPE COUNTY ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT CENTRAL COUNTING STATION PLAN March 3, 2026

### 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 Guadalupe County CCS will be located at Guadalupe County Election Administration Office, 3251 N State Hwy 123 (*Tabulation Room*), Seguin, Texas 78155.

### C. CENTRAL COUNTING STATION PERSONNEL:

The following are the roles and responsibilities inside the CCS, as contained in Sections 127.002-127.006 of the Texas Election Code:

- The Interim Elections Administrator (Michelle Shields) will serve as the *Central Counting Station Manager* to manage the overall administration of the station and supervision of personnel.
- The Interim Elections Administrator (Michelle Shields) will serve as the *Tabulation Supervisor* to operate automatic tabulating equipment.
- The following personnel will serve as the *Assistant Tabulation Supervisors* to assist the Tabulation Supervisor: Annette Parris, Tina Robinson, Courtney Bade, Wendy Smith, Julia Guardiola, Robin Arroues and employees of ES&S, and other qualified employees of Guadalupe County (as needed).
- The *Presiding Judge* will serve to maintain order at the CCS, administer oaths, and receive ballots to be counted. Cathy Boenig will serve as the *Presiding Judge*.

- The *Alternate Judge* will serve as the *Presiding Judge* if the regularly appointed presiding judge cannot serve. Latrice Newton will serve as the *Alternate Judge*.
- *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 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 a 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. (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 CCS will convene based on the size and type of election as determined by the *Central Counting Station Manager* and the *Presiding Judge*.

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 by mail (absentee) ballots.

The CCS will begin to process Absentee ballots on Tuesday, March 2, 2026, no earlier than 10:00 a.m.

The CCS may begin the process to tabulate Early Voting and Absentee ballots Tuesday, March 3 no earlier than 10:00 a.m.

The CCS will begin the process to tabulate Election Day ballots on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, no earlier than 7:00p.m.

The CCS will begin the process to count accepted provisional ballots and accepted late ballots by mail on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, no earlier than 10:00a.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 CCS.

This oath should be administered verbally to all members of the early voting ballot board and all personnel at the CCS prior to the performance of any duties by the board or the CCS.

For use on March 3, 2026, election (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. 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. The following is a description of these procedures:

#### **END OF EARLY VOTING PROCEDURES:**

1. Deputy Early Voting Clerk, and/or their designee, will bring paper ballots (in sealed ballot bin), Provisional Ballot Bags and the tablet portion of the Express Touch to the Guadalupe County Elections Administration Office intake.
2. Intake personnel will verify the early voting location returning the items and verify the seals on the ballot bags and bins match their respective seal numbers on the seal log for that early voting location. Any discrepancies that occur will be noted on the intake paperwork.
3. Intake personnel will deliver the ballot bin and Express Touch tablet to the secure ballot storage area and the provisional ballot bag to the Voter Registrar for review in accordance with the Texas Election Code.

## **ELECTION NIGHT PROCEDURES:**

1. Election Judge, and/or their designee, will bring paper ballots (in sealed ballot bin) and USB-Drives (in sealed data transfer bag) to the Guadalupe County Elections Administration Office intake.
2. Intake personnel will verify location tags on the bags and on the bins are the same as the location for which ballots, media and supplies are being returned.
3. Intake personnel will deliver the ballot bin to the secure ballot storage area and the data transfer bag to the Tabulation Room where *Central Counting Station Clerks* will verify the seal numbers of these items match their respective seal numbers shown on the Ballot and Seal Certificate under the supervision of the *Presiding Judge and/or Tabulation Supervisor*.

### **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*, with any assistants deemed 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 *Resolution Board* will make a determination of voter intent prior to duplication of a 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:**

#### **Mail Ballot Tabulation – Tuesday, March 3, 2026**

- After Ballot Board completes their review of the Early Voting ballots by mail, ballots approved by the ballot board for counting will be transferred to Central Count. Prior to ballots being scanned, a zero report will be run from the DS450. The zero report content shall be verified and signed by the *Tabulation Supervisor* and the *Presiding Judge of Central Count*. Mail ballots will be scanned by the DS450. Any ballots needing to be reviewed will be resolved by the resolution board under the direction of the *CCS Presiding Judges* and duplicated, if necessary, in accordance with the Texas Election Code and then scanned.

- After all Early Voting ballots by mail have been scanned, the batches will be saved, and the DS450 turned off, locked and sealed.
- Scanned ballots by mail will be placed in a ballot box which will be labeled as “Counted”, sealed by the *Presiding Judge of Central Count* and stored in the secure ballot storage area.

### **Early Voting in Person Tabulation – Tuesday, March 3, 2026**

- The *Tabulation Supervisor and tabulation assistant(s)* will verify seals on all Early Voting DS200’s and Express Touches. Seals and Equipment tag numbers will be checked against the Seal Log with the *tabulation assistants*.
- The *Tabulation Supervisor and assistants* will close the polls on all voting equipment used for early voting in person and print results reports. The reports and USB drives will be sealed in a data transfer bag to await upload into Election Ware at Central Count.
- In Election Ware, before any data from the USB drives are loaded, a Zero Report will be printed from the Election Ware software. The zero totals will be verified and signed by the *Tabulation Supervisor and Presiding Judge of Central Count*.
- All USBs will be read into the Election Ware Results Module by the *Tabulation Supervisor* with the *Presiding Judge of Central Count* 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 of scanned ballots will be saved onto a USB drive and loaded into the Election Ware Results Module.
- *Tabulation Supervisor and tabulation assistant(s)* 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 7p.m.

### **Election Day Tabulation – March 3, 2026**

- The *Tabulation Supervisor and tabulation assistant(s)* will verify seals on all incoming Election Day Polling Location Data Transfer Bags.
- The *Tabulation Supervisor and assistants* will verify serial numbers and upload totals for each USB drive removed from the Data Transfer Bags received from the Election Day Polling Locations.
- All USBs will be read into the Election Ware Results Module by the *Tabulation Supervisor* with the *Presiding Judge of Central Count* present.
- *Tabulation Supervisor and tabulation assistant(s)* will confirm the USB drives for each site have been loaded and are all accounted for.

- 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*.

#### **J. RECONCILIATION:**

The process for comparing the number of voters listed as having voted and the number of ballots cast is done periodically throughout the tabulation process and is done in three ways:

1. Early Voting in Person – Compare the number of early voting check-ins from EVID Poll Book 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 early voting check-ins from EVID Poll Book 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 CCS 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* shall prepare the election returns and sign the returns to certify their accuracy. The same number of copies of the returns shall be prepared as for a precinct polling place using regular paper ballots.

The printed returns will be prepared in accordance with Section 127.131, Texas Election Code.

The *Presiding Judge* 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. The form

shall be posted on a website maintained by the county along with election returns and results.

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 127.1311, Texas Election Code).

Unofficial election results will be released via Guadalupe County's Elections Office webpage, beginning no earlier than 7:00p.m. 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 completion of the Texas Secretary of State's 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 CCS personnel while still being able to observe all activities. There will be a maximum limit of two (2) poll watchers at any time in the *Tabulation Room*. There will be a maximum limit of six (6) poll watchers at any time in the *CCS Main Room (EVBB room)*.

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.