



## Policy Manual

Section:	Office of the CAO
Subject:	2026 Municipal Election Procedures and Forms for Voting and the use of Vote-counting Equipment
Policy Number:	
Approval Date:	
Approved By:	
Prepared By:	Legal and Legislative Services/Clerk

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish voting procedures and forms for voting and the use of vote counting equipment in the 2026 Municipal Election.

### Introduction

The Council of The Corporation of the Town of Essex (**the “Town”**) on Nov 17, 2025, enacted By-Law Number 2484 authorizing the use of a paper ballot vote (using mark sense ballots) together with the use of Optical Scanning Vote Tabulators for the 2026 Municipal Election.

The Clerk is responsible for the conduct of municipal and school board elections in the Town. In accordance with Section 42(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the Clerk is authorized to establish procedures and forms for the use of voting and vote counting equipment.

### Definitions

**Act** means the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996 S.O. 1996, c. 32. Sched. 8* as amended (*hereinafter “Municipal Elections Act, 1996”*)

**Advance Voting** means certain dates and times prior to Voting Day where an Advance Voting Place is open to the public for voting.

**Advance Voting Place** means a Voting Place that will be open to the public for voting prior to Voting Day.

**Ballot** means a piece of paper or like material containing the names of the Candidates and the office they are running for, as well as any questions submitted to electors as authorized by the Act.

**Ballot Box** means a box (cardboard or otherwise) provided to an Election Official for the purpose of securely storing Ballots and other election documents.

**Ballot Marking Device** means a device that produces a human and machine-readable marked paper Ballot from a blank sheet of paper, completely indistinguishable from a paper Ballot marked by hand.

**Ballot Marking Pen** means the pen provided to the Voter by an Election Official for the purposes of marking a Ballot within the Defined Areas on the Ballot.

**Ballot Statement** means a statement completed by an Election Official at the close of the Voting Place on which all Ballots either used, unused, declined, cancelled, defective or taken from the Voting Place are recorded and reconciled to the total number of Ballots provided to the Election Official by the Clerk.

**Candidate** means a person who has filed a Nomination Paper that has been certified by the Clerk.

**Clerk** means the individual appointed by Town Council as Clerk and the individual responsible for conducting elections in the Town pursuant to Section 11(1) of the Act.

**Defined Area** means the area within a circle, oval or other enclosed geometric shape that is filled in by the Voter in order to cast a vote.

**Deputy Returning Officer (DRO)** means a person whose duties will include assisting with opening and closing the poll, processing voters, issuing ballots, administering oaths and managing the Voters List.

**Election Coordinator** means a person appointed to assist the Clerk in the performance of duties as they relate to the planning and running of the election.

**Election Official** means any person who has been delegated or assigned election duties by the Clerk.

**Election Reporting System** means the hardware and software used to capture voting results and then totaled with results from other Voting Places and displayed to the public.

**Election Results Envelope** means an envelope into which the original signed copies of the Voting Place Ballot Statement, Ballot Statements and Report Tapes generated by the Vote Tabulator are placed.

**Election Supervisor** means a person delegated duties and responsibilities by the Clerk with respect to the direction and management of any Voting Place, Advance Voting Place, or Special Voting Place.

**Elector** means a person who meets the qualifications to vote as determined by Section 17 (2) of the Act.

**Memory Card** means a removable compact storage device sealed in a Vote Tabulator where all tabulated results are stored. The Memory Card is supplied by the manufacturer/supplier of the Vote Tabulator.

**Nomination Day** means August 21, 2026.

**Voter's List Amendment Clerk (VLAC)** means a person whose duties include assisting voters in **filling in the prescribed Form to add their name to the voters' list**, assisting with the opening and closing the poll and providing relief to the DRO when needed.

**Report Tape** means the printed paper tape produced by the Vote Tabulator after the close of voting indicating the total votes cast for each Candidate and all questions on the Ballot.

**Scrutineer** means a person appointed, in writing, by a Candidate to scrutinize the voting process at one or more Voting Places.

**Secrecy Folder** means a cardboard or paper folder into which a Ballot can be placed to conceal **the Voter's selections as marked on the face of the Ballot**.

**Special Voting Place** means a Voting Place on the premises of a retirement home, which on Nomination Day has beds that are occupied by 50 or more persons, or a Voting Place on the premises of institutions, which on Nomination Day have beds that are occupied by 20 or more persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm.

**Tabulator Deputy Returning Officer (TDRO)** means a person whose duties will include assisting with testing of the equipment, assisting with set-up, opening and closing of the poll, receiving ballots from voters and feed ballots into the vote tabulator, troubleshooting tabulator issues and returning secured equipment, supplies and ballots to the Clerk or Elections Coordinator.

**Vote Tabulator (Tabulator)** means a device that optically scans Ballots to read and record votes and tabulate the results which are printed on the Report Tape.

**Vote Tabulator Identification** means a unique alpha-numeric combination code which is assigned to a specific Voting Place and TDRO.

**Vote Tabulator Station** means the location within the Voting Place where vote tabulating equipment accepts Ballots, records votes and tabulates the results. This is also where ballot marking pens and secrecy folders are collected after a Voter has marked their ballot.

**Voter** means an Elector who receives a Ballot at a Voting Place.

**Voters' List** means a document prepared by the Clerk, which lists the names and voting entitlement of eligible electors as provided by Elections Ontario (EO) in accordance with the Act.

**Voting Booth** means the area of the Voting Place where a Voter marks their Ballot in secrecy behind a screened enclosure.

**Voting Day** means October 26, 2026.

**Voting Place** means any location designated by the Clerk through By-Law or otherwise where Voters may attend to vote.

**Voting Place Ballot Statement** means a statement completed by the Election Supervisor after the close of voting on Voting Day on which all Ballots either used, unused, cancelled, declined, defective or taken from the voting place for each Election Official are recorded and reconciled to the total number of Ballots provided by the Clerk.

**Ward** means a defined geographical area within the Town where a qualified Elector resides or is the owner or tenant of land there or the spouse of such owner or tenant of land.

## Election Procedures

### 1. Elected Offices

The offices of Mayor and Deputy Mayor in the 2026 Municipal Elections in the Town will be elected by general vote at large. The six (6) Councillors will be elected by each of the respective Wards as follows:

Ward 1: Two (2) Councillors to be elected.

Ward 2: One (1) Councillor to be elected.

Ward 3: Two (2) Councillors to be elected.

Ward 4: One (1) Councillor to be elected.

## 2. Wards

For election purposes, the Town is divided into Wards. On or about September 1, 2026, the Clerk **shall prepare and distribute a Voters' List setting out each Ward** and the names of all Electors eligible to vote within each **Ward's Voting Places. In conjunction with the Voters' List, the Clerk** will prepare and make available a map identifying the boundaries of all Wards within the Town.

## 3. Voting Places

Voters may attend at a Voting Place in their Ward as designated by the Clerk to cast their Ballot. Voting Places shall be located in facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities and well known to Electors residing in the area. On Voting Day, Voting Places shall be open for Electors to vote from 10:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

The Clerk shall establish Special Voting Places and may reduce hours of voting for Special Voting Places on Voting Day.

Advance Voting Places shall be established where Electors can cast their Ballot prior to Voting Day and qualified voters will be able to vote at any of these locations. Public notice will be provided concerning the location, dates and voting hours for each Advance Polling Station.

## 4. Ballots

The Ballots to be used in conjunction with the Vote Tabulators for the 2026 Municipal Election will be printed on paper, or like material and shall be at a size as determined by the Clerk. The Clerk at his sole discretion may determine that an individual Ballot be used for one or a combination of offices. The Clerk further has discretion to select the paper stock and colouring of the Ballots. Ballots will contain the names of all certified Candidates except where a Candidate **has been elected by acclamation. The Candidates' names for each office shall appear on the** Ballot in alphabetical order based on their surnames and, in the case of identical surnames, by their forenames. There will be a Defined Area on the ballot (oval, circle or similar shape) corresponding to **each Candidate's name suitable for the Voter to mark the Candidate** of their choice.

If a Candidate wishes and the Clerk agrees, another name that the Candidate also uses may appear on the Ballot instead of, or in addition to, his/ her legal name. No reference to a **Candidate's occupation, degree, title, honour or decoration** will appear on the Ballot. If the surnames of two or more Candidates for an office are identical or in the **Clerk's** opinion so similar **as to cause possible confusion, every Candidate's qualifying address will appear under their** name.

## 5. Vote Tabulators

Each Voting Place, shall have at least one optical scan Vote Tabulator for the purpose of scanning Ballots and tabulating votes. Vote scanning and tabulating equipment may not be used at Special Voting Places due to the small number of Electors. Ballots cast at a Special Voting Place may be sealed in the Ballot Box and brought to the Voting Place in the Ward where the Special Voting Place is located and tabulated using the Vote Tabulator at that Voting Place, and in that case will be counted at as soon as possible after the close of the Special Voting Place poll.

## 6. Logic and Accuracy Certification

Prior to Voting Day, the Clerk, or delegate, will ensure testing is completed on all Vote Tabulators to ensure they accurately scan and count the votes cast for all Candidates. The testing will take place concurrently with the TDRO training program. The certification process shall be carried out as established below:

### Initial Tabulator Verification

A pre-audited set of Ballots shall be prepared and processed by each Vote Tabulator to be used by a TDRO at Advance Voting and on Voting Day. The pre-audited set of Ballots shall have the same specifications as those to be used at Advance Voting and on Voting Day except for the actual names of the Candidates. The pre-audited Ballots shall include Ballots, which are blank, marked ambiguously or improperly marked. The Ballots shall also contain a predetermined number of valid votes for each test Candidate and any test question.

Where the Ballot is blank, marked ambiguously or improperly marked or there are over votes, the Vote Tabulator will be tested with respect to returning the Ballot without further processing. For those Ballots that contain valid votes, the votes shall be tabulated and compared to the pre-audited verified totals. Vote Tabulators correctly returning the blank, ambiguously marked, improperly marked and over voted Ballots and with the same totals as the pre-audited totals shall be certified as functioning properly and pass initial testing. Any issues arising resulting in Vote Tabulators not passing initial testing shall be returned to the vendor for correction. Once returned or replaced, the Vote Tabulator will again be tested using the above procedure. Testing and issue correction will continue until all Vote Tabulators have been tested and certified to be operating and tabulating accurately.

The Vote Tabulators to be used for accessible voting that produce a human and machine-readable marked paper Ballot shall be tested in the same manner with the same pre-audited set of Ballots, however the input from each test Ballot will be made through assistive devices connected to the Vote Tabulator.

## Final Tabulator Certification

After Voting Day the same testing procedure as followed during initial verification will be conducted using the same pre-audited set of the Ballots and the same verification steps. Upon successful completion of the testing regime, the Vote Tabulator results shall be certified as accurate.

## Election Results Reporting System

Once each Vote Tabulator has been certified, the certified results as recorded in the Vote **Tabulator's** Report Tapes and backed up on the Memory Cards, will be entered into the Election Reporting System that aggregates the total votes and presents the results publicly on the Town website.

## 7. Procedures at the Voting Place

### Prior to Opening the Voting Place

Every Voting Place, except Special Voting Places, shall have one Election Supervisor and at least 3 other Election Officials. The TDRO is responsible for the proper functioning and use of the Vote Tabulator, the DRO is responsible for the management of ballots and their laptop and the VLAC is responsible for the Forms, laptop and printer. After set-up but prior to opening the Voting Place, the Election Officials shall complete the following:

- 1) Check the Vote Tabulator identification located on the Vote Tabulator to verify it has been assigned to the correct Voting Place;
- 2) In the presence of any Scrutineers, inspect the Ballot Box to ensure it is empty and then seal the Ballot Box to ensure Ballots may only enter the Ballot Box through the Vote Tabulator;
- 3) The TDRO will power on the Vote Tabulator and cause it to print two (2) copies of all totals in its Memory Card on a Report Tape confirming zero (0) totals for all Candidates and any questions on the Ballot;
- 4) The TDRO and one other Election Official will verify that the heading at the top of the Report Tape reports the correct Voting Place and lists all **Candidates' offices and any questions on the Ballot** in the exact order as they appear on the Ballot;
- 5) The TDRO and one other Election Official will check the public counter on the operator screen of the Vote Tabulator to ensure it displays zero (0) ballots processed;
- 6) The TDRO, along with any Candidates or Scrutineers who are present and choose to do so, will sign the first copy of the Report Tape and provide it to the Election Supervisor. During

voting hours any Elections Official, Candidate, Scrutineer or member of the public may request to view the zero Report Tapes;

- 7) If the Report Tape heading or offices are incorrect, or the Report Tape totals are not zero (0) for all Candidates and any questions on the Ballot, or the public counter showing the number of Ballots processed does not display zero (0), the Election Supervisor shall immediately notify the Clerk and will be directed to use the other Vote Tabulator on site, be provided with a substitute Vote Tabulator, or will conduct the vote using the back-up compartment of the Ballot Box until an operational and zeroed Vote Tabulator is provided.

## Voting Procedures

- 1) The Clerk shall designate DROs to initial a Ballot before the Ballot is provided to the Voter.
- 2) The DRO shall provide each Voter with an initialed Ballot, Secrecy Folder and Ballot Marking Pen and instruct the Voter with respect to the voting process.
- 3) Upon receiving the Ballot and Secrecy Folder, the Voter will:
  - a) Proceed to the designated Voting Booth;
  - b) Using the Ballot Marking Pen provided, vote by completely filling in the Defined Area corresponding to the Candidate(s) name they intend to vote for and completely fill in the **Defined Area to the right of the "Yes" or "No" response to any questions on the Ballot;**
  - c) Insert the Ballot into the secrecy Folder allowing for only the DRO Initials to be visible;
  - d) Leave the Voting Booth without delay;
  - e) Deliver the Secrecy Folder containing the Ballot to the TDRO at the Vote Tabulator Station; and
  - f) Deposit the Ballot Marking Pen in the tray provided at the Vote Tabulator Station.
- 4) The TDRO will ask the Voter to remain at the Vote Tabulator Station until the Vote Tabulator processes the Ballot. In the presence of the Voter and without removing the Ballot from the Secrecy Folder, the TDRO will verify the initials of the DRO on the Ballot, and:
  - a) Insert the Secrecy Folder containing the Ballot with the initials of the DRO face down into the feed area of the Voter Tabulator in full view of the Voter; or
  - b) If a Vote Tabulator is not available in the Voting Place, insert the Ballot with the initials of the DRO face down directly into the Ballot Box from the Secrecy Folder in full view of the Voter.

- 5) If a Vote Tabulator fails to function properly, the TDRO will:
- a) Insert all marked Ballots into the back-up compartment of the Ballot Box in full view of the Voter; and
  - b) Remove and insert the Ballots from the back-up compartment into the feed area of the Vote Tabulator once the Vote Tabulator becomes operational or is replaced.

## Detection and Correction of Voting Errors

### Blank Ballot

If the Vote Tabulator detects a blank Ballot, the Election Official responsible for the Tabulator will explain to the Voter that no marks were detected on the Ballot, and:

- a) Ask the Voter if they would like the Ballot returned and advise the Voter that once the Ballot is accepted by the Vote Tabulator the Voter will not receive a new Ballot;
- b) If the Ballot is returned to the Voter, instruct the Voter concerning the Ballot marking process and allow the Voter to return to the Voting Booth to mark the Ballot correctly;
- c) If the Voter indicates that he or she would like to cast a blank ballot, allow the Vote Tabulator to accept the Ballot.

### Ambiguous Mark

If the Vote Tabulator detects an ambiguous mark, it will automatically return the Ballot. The TDRO will explain to the Voter that the Ballot was not counted because an ambiguous mark was detected, **and the Voter's intent cannot be determined. The Voter will be asked to review the Ballot to ensure it is clearly marked in the Defined Area provided and allow the Voter to return to the Voting Booth to mark the Ballot correctly.** The Voter will be instructed concerning the Ballot marking process. There are two possible types of ambiguous marks:

- a) The Voter has made a mark that is too light or too small which needs to be darkened in order to be clearly counted as a vote, the voter may have used another writing utensil and may need to be directed to use the provided Ballot Marking Pens;
- b) The Voter has inadvertently made a small mark in an oval or similar area where they had not intended to, in which case they must return the Ballot to the DRO and obtain a new Ballot. The DRO **shall mark the Ballot "cancelled," place the Ballot in the cancelled Ballot envelope, deliver another Ballot to the Voter, and instruct the Voter how to properly mark the Ballot.**

## Over Vote

If the Tabulator detects more votes for an office or question than is allowed, the TDRO will explain to the Voter the Ballot has not yet been counted because the Voter has filled in too many choices. It may be that the Voter has inadvertently made a mark where the Vote Tabulator can read it. The Election Official will:

- a) Offer the Voter the choice of having the Ballot returned or accepted by the Vote Tabulator (in which case only the correctly marked offices will be tabulated) and explain that once the Ballot is accepted, the Voter cannot receive a new Ballot;
- b) If the Voter requests the Ballot be returned, place the returned Ballot back into the secrecy sleeve. The Ballot shall be returned to the DRO **who shall mark the Ballot "cancelled,"** place the Ballot in the cancelled Ballot envelope, deliver another Ballot to the Voter, and instruct the Voter how to properly mark the Ballot;
- c) **If over voting is the Voter's intention, the** TDRO will allow the Vote Tabulator to accept the Ballot. The Vote Tabulator will not record the votes with respect to Candidates and questions for which the Voter has over voted but will accept votes for Candidates and questions where there is no over vote.

## Defective Ballot

If the Vote Tabulator detects a defective Ballot it will automatically return the Ballot. The Election Official will explain to the Voter that the Ballot was not counted and needs to be reinserted. If the Ballot is not accepted on the second try, the Ballot will be returned to the DRO who shall mark **the Ballot "defective," place the Ballot in the defective Ballot envelope and deliver another** Ballot to the Voter. The DRO must ensure that their initials are correctly placed on all ballots to not be rejected.

## Voter Has Left the Vote Tabulator Station

Where the Vote Tabulator has returned a Ballot for any reason and the Voter has left the Vote Tabulator Station, the Election Official will permit the Vote Tabulator to accept the Ballot and votes on the Ballot shall be counted to the full extent possible given the nature of votes that exist on the Ballot.

## Close of Voting Procedures

If a Vote Tabulator has been used to tabulate the votes cast in a Voting Place, the Election Supervisor and TDRO will, after the close of voting, check the back-up compartment of the Ballot Box to ensure all Ballots have been tabulated, then immediately:

- a) Secure the Vote Tabulator against receiving any more Ballots;

- b) Cause the Vote Tabulator to print two Report Tapes indicating the total votes for each Candidate and any questions on the Ballot;
- c) Sign the Report Tapes along with any Candidates or Scrutineers who are present and wish to initial the Report Tape.

The Election Supervisor will then attach one signed Report Tape to the signed Report Tape generated prior to the opening of the Voting Place. The Report Tape generated at the close of voting is used by the Election Supervisor to reconcile all Ballots using the Voting Place Ballot Statement. As soon as the Voting Place Ballot Statement is completed, the Election Supervisor calls the Clerk to report the totals verbally for unofficial results reporting.

One copy of the statement and the Report Tapes are then placed in the Election Results Envelope. The second copy of the signed Report Tape generated after the close of voting is to be placed in the Ballot Box.

The TDRO shall then remove one of the memory cards from the Vote Tabulator and give it to the Election Supervisor who will include it in the Election Results Envelope. Both the Election Results Envelope and the Ballot Box must then be sealed for immediate return to the Clerk.

The TDRO is responsible to package and transport the Vote Tabulator and the Ballot Box to the designated secure storage location. The other Election Officials are responsible for completing the clean-up of the polls, packaging all equipment and supplies and ultimately the Elections Supervisor is responsible for returning the Elections Results Envelope and ensuring the Voting Place is cleared and all Elections materials and equipment are properly returned to the Clerk.

Each DRO in the Voting Place will:

- a) Complete the DRO Ballot Statement, indicating the following items:
  - Ballots received from the Clerk;
  - Unused Ballots;
  - Declined Ballots;
  - Cancelled Ballots;
  - Defective Ballots;
  - Ballots taken from the Voting Place; and
  - Ballots processed by the Vote Tabulator

Most Wards will contain two (2) or more DROs and Vote Tabulators. In this case, the statements from the two (2) or more DROs regarding **“Ballots Received from the Clerk”, “Unused Ballots”, “Declined Ballots”, “Cancelled Ballots”, “Defective Ballots”, “Ballots taken from the Voting Place” and “Ballots Processed by the Vote Tabulator”** shall be added

together and deemed to be one document for the purposes of ballot balancing by the Election Supervisor.

In addition to the foregoing, in the case where a poll receives the ballots from a Special Voting Place pursuant to Section 3 of this policy, the statements of the DROs regarding **“Ballots Received from the Clerk”, “Unused Ballots”, “Declined Ballots”, “Cancelled Ballots”, “Defective Ballots”, “Ballots taken from the Voting Place” and “Ballots Processed by the Vote Tabulator”** shall be added together and deemed to be one document for the purposes of ballot balancing by the Election Supervisor.

- b) Provide the Election Supervisor with the original copy of the completed Ballot Statement;
- c) Provide the Election Supervisor with the Ballot Envelope containing the completed Ballot Statement along with other specified election materials and documents, including separate sealed envelopes containing all **“Unused Ballots”, “Declined Ballots”, “Cancelled Ballots” and “Defective Ballots.”**
- d) Place the remaining specified election documents and supplies in the container provided for that purpose.

The Election Supervisor will:

- a) Ensure all calculations and results as set out on the Ballot Statements are completed accurately, and signed;
- b) Using the Ballot Statements, complete the Voting Place Ballot Statement ensuring all Ballots reconcile correctly with the Ballot Statements;
- c) Place the original copies of the signed Voting Place Ballot Statement and Ballot Statements in the Election Results Envelope;
- d) Place into the Ballot Box a duplicate copy of the signed Voting Place Ballot Statement and all Ballot Envelopes containing duplicate copies of all completed Ballot Statements along with separate sealed envelopes containing all **“Unused Ballots”, “Declined Ballots”, “Cancelled Ballots” and “Defective Ballots”; and**
- e) Place other designated documents and election supplies into the Ballot Box.

If a Vote Tabulator has been used to tabulate votes cast in a Voting Place but the tabulation of the votes cannot be completed because the Vote Tabulator is not operating or cannot be made to operate after the close of voting, the Election Supervisor will, contact the Clerk or Elections Coordinator and will be directed to complete the following:

- a) Seal the Ballot Box in such a manner that it cannot be opened or any Ballots be deposited in it without breaking the seal;
- b) Inform any Candidates or Scrutineers at the Voting Location of the situation and what the next steps are;
- b) Secure the Vote Tabulator against receiving any more Ballots;
- c) Personally deliver the Ballot Box, Ballots, forms and election supplies to a place designated by the Clerk where a back-up Vote Tabulator is located;
- d) Follow the steps as set out in this procedure to ensure the totals of the back-up Vote Tabulator are zero (0) for all Candidates and questions on the Ballot; and
- e) Assist the Election Official in following the steps as set out in this procedure for processing Ballots at the close of voting.

If a Vote Tabulator has not been provided at a Voting Place, the Clerk will designate a Voting Place to which the Ballots will be taken to be tabulated after the close of voting.

## 8. Advance Voting

One or more Election Supervisors will supervise each Advance Vote.

At each Advance Vote, the Election Supervisor will open the Voting Place following the procedures as set out under Section 7 of this policy.

At the close of each Advance Vote, the Election Supervisor will proceed as follows:

- a) Check the back-up compartment of the Ballot Box for Ballots to ensure that all Ballots have been processed;
- b) In accordance with the Vote Tabulator instructions and the TDRO training, secure and shut down the Vote Tabulator against receiving more Ballots and return the tabulator for safe keeping in a designated secure location;
- c) Complete the DRO Ballot Statement; and
- d) Return to the Clerk or Election Coordinator the sealed Ballot Box, forms, election documents and other equipment for safekeeping.

In accordance with the close of voting procedures established by this policy, the total of all votes cast at the Advance Votes will be tabulated and disclosed after 8:00 p.m. on Voting Day.

Vote Tabulators deployed at regular Voting Places on Voting Day will be equipped with the Ballot Marking Device and other assistive devices to permit the casting of ballots by individuals with accessibility needs. The Vote Tabulator will record the vote in the same manner as a paper Ballot, as outlined in Section 9 of this policy.

## 9. Accessible Voting

The Town recognizes that many members of our municipality may have special needs and as such is committed to make the 2026 municipal election as accessible as possible.

### Accessible Voting Technologies

Voting Places may be equipped with Vote Tabulators with Ballot Marking Devices, which permit the independent casting of Ballots by individuals with accessibility needs and those who cannot mark a paper Ballot with a Ballot Marking Pen. The system consists of the following four components:

- Image-Cast Vote Tabulator;
- Accessible Voting Handheld Controller (Figure 1) and a set of headphones that a Voter uses to interact with the system;
- External printer for printing the audio session Ballot once the Voter has made his or her selections; and
- Other input interfaces as necessary to accommodate a Voter's **individual needs, including a Sip and Puff Input Interface and a Paddle Button Input Interface.**

The Voter uses headphones to hear the Ballot presentation and a handheld controller device (Audio-Tactile Interface) to control the voting session and select Candidates as well as respond **with a "yes" or "no" to questions on the Ballot. The Voter can also use the other available assistive devices such as sip and puff or paddles if they are unable to use their hands to press the selection buttons on the handheld controller.**



**Figure 1 - Accessible Voting Handheld Controller, with Braille labels and buttons of different colours and shapes for visually-impaired voters**

When a Voter wishes to use the accessible voting equipment, the TDRO will assist the Voter into position close to the Vote Tabulator. The Voter will hear the audio ballot through the available headphones and use the Accessible Voting Handheld Controller or other assistive devices to adjust volume, speed of the audio presentation, move between contests, and select votes. The audio presentation will confirm votes selected for Voter verification. When the Voter has made and confirmed all their vote selections, they use the Accessible Voting Handheld Controller to direct the Ballot Marking Device to print their actual paper Ballot. The Ballot Marking Device will automatically process and print the full Ballot on the sheet complete with the vote markings selected by the Voter.

The printed Ballot is indistinguishable from a Ballot marked by hand. The Ballot Marking Device contains a library of random hand-made marking images that it uses to print the Ballot so the printed markings look just like marks made by hand with a Ballot Marking Pen.

This feature ensures that if the paper ballots are later reviewed by Election Officials, they will not be able to determine which Ballots were made by the Ballot Marker Device, thereby maintaining Voter privacy.

The printed paper Ballot emerges from the Ballot Marking Device and printer into a Secrecy Folder. The TDRO will then insert the Ballot face down into the scanner component of the Vote Tabulator. The scanner will be configured to perform a second independent review of the Ballot, by interpreting the vote markings in order to ensure the paper Ballot generated by the printer is correctly marked with the votes they selected.

While an accessible voting session is underway, the Vote Tabulator can continue processing paper Ballots delivered to the TDRO by other Voters, allowing the Vote Tabulator to handle both voting channels and maintain the flow of Voters through the Voting Place.

## Accessible Voting Technologies

Voters with accessibility needs are encouraged to engage with the Ballot as they determine including the use of magnifiers, digital viewers (including personal cell phones or tablets) as well as engaging the assistance of a family member, caregiver or other support worker. These assistants will need to take an oath and declaration of secrecy prior to being permitted to assist a Voter in the Voting Booth. All Elections Officials at the Voting Place are also under oath and able to assist any Voter with understanding and marking their ballot.

## 10. Candidates and Scrutineers

Candidates who appoint Scrutineers to represent them at a Voting Place shall do so in writing using an appointment of Scrutineers form **provided in the Candidate's Nomination package** or through the Clerk.

Scrutineers and Candidates have the following rights:

- a) to enter the Voting Place 15 minutes prior to the official opening in order to inspect the Ballots, Ballot Box, and other election documentation; however this right, and any actions taken in relation to it, shall not in any way impede or delay the opening of the Voting Place;
- b) to sign the Report Tapes which are generated by the Vote Tabulator prior to the opening of the Voting Place, at any point throughout the day should the Vote Tabulator need to be restarted or replaced, and at the conclusion of voting when the results have been tabulated;
- c) to object to a person voting. In the event a Scrutineer or Candidate objects to a person voting, it will be the responsibility of the DRO to note the objection beside the name of the **voter on the Voters' List, including the relevant facts of the objection provided by the Scrutineer or Candidate.** If the Elector swears a Declaration of Identity to the effect that he or **she is the person named on the Voters' List and has not already voted, he or she shall be** issued a Ballot and be permitted to vote; and
- d) to observe the election process.

Scrutineers and Candidates shall:

- a) present themselves immediately to the Elections Supervisor on site, show their appointment form and swear an Oath of Secrecy upon attending a Voting Place and before being permitted to remain in the Voting Place;

b) notify the Election Supervisor in a Voting Place, or any Election Official within a Special Voting Place, of any concerns with respect to the conduct of the election process within the Voting Place, or Special Voting Place.

Scrutineers shall:

- a) be appointed in writing by the Candidate;
- b) produce, upon request by any Election Official or Elector, evidence of their appointment by the Candidate;
- c) leave the Voting Place when the Candidate enters the Voting Place;
- d) wear, at all times within the Voting Place, a button, sticker or other item supplied by an Election Official identifying them as a Scrutineer, without reference to a particular Candidate.

Scrutineers and Candidates shall not:

- a) compromise the secrecy of the voting;
- b) examine or object to Ballots or to the counting of votes on a Ballot as provided for in clauses 47(5)(e), 47(5)(f) and Subsection 54(3) of the Act;
- c) interfere or attempt to interfere directly or indirectly with how a Voter votes;
- d) interfere or attempt to interfere with an Elector who is marking a Ballot;
- e) obtain, or attempt to obtain, in a Voting Place, any information about how an Elector intends to vote or has voted;
- f) communicate any information about how an Elector intends to vote or has voted;
- g) **display or distribute a Candidate's election campaign material in, or on the property of, the Voting Place;**
- h) communicate, or attempt to communicate with any Elector on any matter;
- i) sit at any table used by any Election Official;
- j) use a cellular phone or other method of mobile communication within the Voting Place; and
- k) attempt to directly or indirectly interfere with the duties of any Election Official.

Where a Candidate or Scrutineer violates any of the above noted prohibitions, an Election Supervisor in the case of a Voting Place, or any Election Official in the case of a Special Voting

Place, may order that individual to vacate the Voting Place. Once ordered, the individual shall vacate the Voting Place, shall not remain anywhere in, or on the property of the Voting Place, and may not return to the Voting Place. The decision of the Election Official is final and binding.

## 11. Emergency Situations

The Clerk may declare an emergency if he or she is of the opinion that circumstances have arisen that are likely to prevent the election from being conducted in accordance with the Act. This authority relates not only to the conduct of the vote but also to any aspect of the election process. When declaring an emergency, the Clerk will make such arrangements as she or he considers advisable for the proper conduct of the election. Such arrangements, if they are consistent with the principles of the Act, prevail over anything in the Act and regulations made under it. The emergency continues until the Clerk declares it has ended. If the declaration of any emergency is done in good faith, the declaration and the related arrangements will not be reviewed or set aside by a court on account of unreasonableness or supposed unreasonableness (Section 53, *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*).

## 12. Posting Results

The Clerk will, publicly post unofficial results following the closing of the polls using the information provided by phone by the Election Supervisors. As soon as possible following Voting Day, the Clerk will declare the Candidate or Candidates having the highest number of votes for each office to be elected and publicly post the certified results along with the results of any questions on the Ballot.

## 13. Recounts

If a recount of votes is held, the recount shall be conducted in the same manner as the original count and in accordance with the Act and the **Town's** Municipal Elections Recount Policy.

## 14. Retention of Records

The Clerk will retain, at the completion of the count, all Ballots, Vote Tabulator verification and certification records, Voting Place documents, elections reports and other completed election forms and documents for the same period as established by Section 88 of the Act.

## 15. Statement of Certification

These are the certified procedures for voting and for the use of vote counting equipment that shall be followed for the 2026 Municipal Elections in the Town.

These procedures may be amended from time to time as deemed necessary by the Clerk.