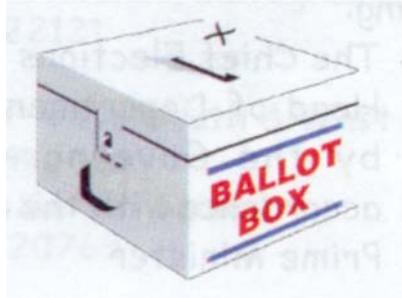


# *Guide to Election Officials*



*Elections and Boundaries Department  
Belize*

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**Updated May 2005**

### ***About This Manual***

An attempt has been made in this Manual to present the basic rules and regulations, which pertain to Elections in Belize. Its preparation was guided by the assumption that it will be used as a quick reference and guide only, and not as a substitute for the careful reading and study of the source material laid out in the Representation of The People Act (ROPA), Chapter 9 of the Laws of Belize, and other Acts pertaining to Elections.

The Manual was updated in May of 2005 to include Statutory Instruments as follows:

- ***The Representation of The People Act***
  - No. 43 of 2003
    - To allow for more Counting Agents and more ballot boxes to be counted simultaneously for General Elections
  - No. 65 of 2004
    - Incapacitated persons to be allowed to bring to the Polling Station a person of his/her choice to mark the ballot paper on his/her behalf and place such in the ballot box
  - No. 66 of 2004
    - Persons entitled to vote are those persons whose names appear on the register of electors as existing on the Nomination Day
- ***Town and City Councils***
  - No. 68 of 2004, No. 67 of 2004
    - Persons entitled to vote are those persons whose names appear on the register of electors as existing on the Nomination Day
    - Incapacitated persons to be allowed to bring to the Polling Station a person of his/her choice to mark the ballot paper on his/her behalf and place such in the ballot box

The Elections and Boundaries Department, in keeping with its commitment to continuous improvement, would welcome recommendations and suggestions to increase the utility and value of this Manual.

# **Introduction**

There are 4 types of elections in Belize. Although, this manual is geared towards national/general elections, the processes are the same for the Town/City Council Elections and Referendum. Therefore, the same rules apply in **most** instances. The Village Council Act Chapter 88, Revised Edition 2000 and Statutory Instrument 100 of 2003 guide the conduct of Village Council Elections.

Senior Public Officers are appointed to election duties as Election Officers. This manual provides information for Election Officers **and** covers the following topics:

## ***1. Types of Elections in Belize***

- General/National
- Town/City Council
- Referendum
- Village/Community Council

## ***2. Who are Election Officers?***

- The appointment
- The hierarchy
- Roles and responsibilities
  - Election Officers
  - Other Stakeholders

## ***3. Polling Stations and Election Supplies***

- Polling Station
  - Establishment of polling station
  - Limits of polling station
  - Hours of voting
- Who may visit the polling station
- Election supplies

## ***4. About Ballots***

- The What Is
  - How is the ballot paper marked
  - Is a ballot rejected if another mark is used

- Some examples of marks that are acceptable
- What is a spoiled ballot
- What causes a ballot to be rejected at the count

### ***5. Nomination Procedure***

### ***6. Voting Procedure***

- Flow Chart of process
- Who can Vote
  - Proxy voter
  - Incapacitated voter
- Questions which may be put to voter
- Spoilt ballot
- Sealing of ballot boxes and envelopes
- Transportation of ballot boxes

### ***7. Counting Procedure***

- Counting votes—The process
- Who may be admitted in the Counting Station
- Counting rules
  - Recount
  - Rejected ballot papers
  - Candidates with equal votes
  - Report to the Chief Elections Officer

### ***8. Return of Supplies***

- Sealing of all documents

### ***9. Return of Election to Commission (For General Elections only)***

### ***10. Overall Election Management Rules***

### ***11. Offences by Election Officers***

# **1. Types Of Elections In Belize**

## **General Elections**

General elections are conducted approximately every five years to elect leaders to the National Assembly. Twenty-nine Area Representatives are elected.

## **Municipal Elections**

Town and City Council elections are conducted approximately every three years to elect leaders at the municipal level. One Mayor and six Councilors are elected for each Town Council and Belmopan City Council; and one Mayor and ten Councillors for the Belize City Council.

## **Village/Community Council Elections**

A general Village Council election is called every three years to elect leaders at the village level. One Chairman and six Members are elected for Village Councils.

## **Referendum**

A Referendum can be called at anytime for electors to approve specific issues of national importance. The National Assembly passes a resolution to declare that a certain matter is of sufficient national importance, and electors exercise their franchise to vote for or against the issue.

## **Laws Governing Elections**

The laws governing the abovementioned elections are in the order set out below:

- a) Representation of The People Act
- b) Town Council Act, Belize City Council Act, Belmopan City Council Act
- c) Village Council Act
- d) Referendum Act

## **2. Who Are Election Officers**

### **Appointment**

The Chief Elections Officer monitors the preparations for elections, and the conduct of elections during and after the polls. It is the Election Officers who conduct and manage the elections. All Election Officers are Senior Public Officers who are appointed by the Elections and Boundaries Commission through the Chief Elections Officer. An Election Officer must take an Oath of Office. Election Officers are:

- Returning Officers
- Election Clerks
- Presiding Officers
- Poll Clerks
- Counting Clerks

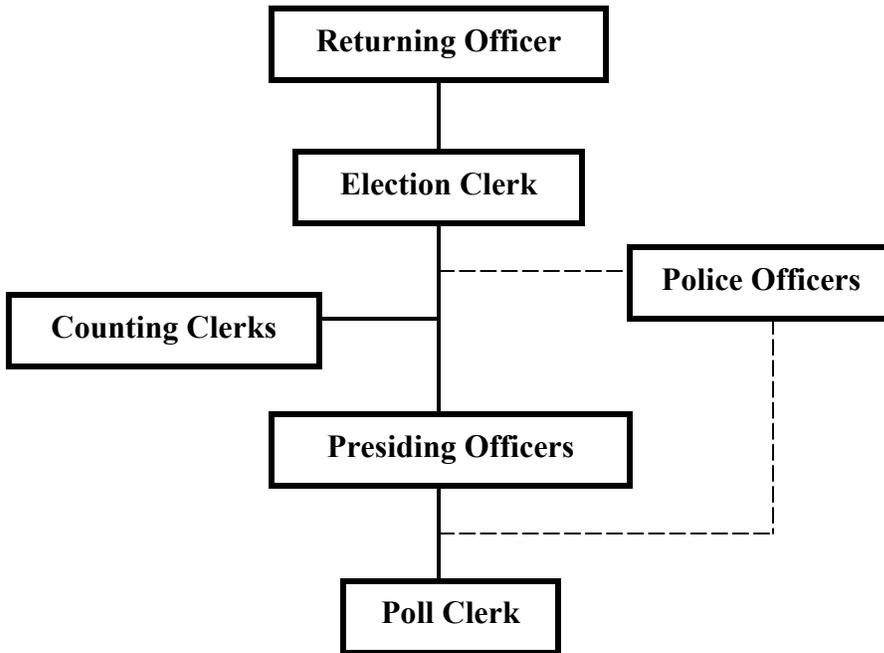
There are other stakeholders—those who maintain law and order (the Police), and those who witness the process (the Polling/Counting Agents).

### **Role and Responsibility of Election Officers**

#### *General*

The **Returning Officer** is the Chief Administrator in the conduct of elections. He/she is responsible to supervise all Election Officers. The **Election Clerk** is the Assistant to the **Returning Officer** and can be called upon to perform the duties of the **Returning Officer** should the need arise. The **Presiding Officer** maintains full control of the polling station and is assisted by **Poll Clerks**. The **Counting Clerks** count the votes under the guidance of the **Returning Officer**. The **Returning Officer** does not supervise the **Police Officers**, but the **Returning Officer** can request the assistance of the **Police** to maintain law and order.

## The Hierarchy



### *Returning Officer*

A Returning Officer is assigned to a Constituency/Municipality. The responsibilities of the Returning Officer are:

- Overall management of the election procedure in his Constituency/Municipality
- Distribution of election supplies to Presiding Officers and other Election Officers
- Accepting proxies and maintaining a record of such
- Supervision of counting
- Announcing of results
- Reporting of final results to the Chief Elections Officer on the completion of counting

- Certification of final results to the Chief Elections Officer

The work of the Returning Officer starts immediately with his appointment. He works closely with the Elections and Boundaries Department from the time of his appointment to the announcement and reporting of the election results. The first assignment is the receipt of nominations for candidates contesting the elections.

The Returning Officer coordinates the work of his Officers and ensures a state of preparedness. Before polling, he visits his polling stations accompanied by Presiding Officers to ensure that the stations are secure and that the environment both inside and outside is adequate for voting.

On Election Day, the Returning Officer visits, at intervals, each polling station in his jurisdiction during polling to satisfy himself that all is well. He consults with the Presiding Officer, offers advice and solves problems when necessary.

After the close of polls, he supervises the counting of votes and announces the results.

### ***Election Clerk***

The Election Clerk is to assist the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer can assign any election duty to his Election Clerk before and during the day of election.

### ***Presiding Officer***

The Presiding Officer is responsible for the supervision of the taking of the poll in the polling station on Election Day and ensures that the station functions efficiently and effectively. Other responsibilities of the Presiding Officer are to:

- Collect from the Returning Officer, prior to Election Day, all supplies for use in the polling station

Inspect the polling station and be satisfied that it is prepared for Election Day. He must arrange the station in a manner that will facilitate orderly voting

- Inspect and open all ballot boxes in the presence of candidates or polling agents to ensure that boxes are empty before the opening of poll
- Make the required entries in the station diary, signed by witnesses
- Declare the polling station open for voting
- Regulate the number of voters within the polling station
- Initial each ballot paper before issuing to voter
- Ensure that the voter's right forefinger, to at least the first joint, is dipped in indelible ink
- Mark the register to indicate that the voter has voted
- Cancel and initial spoiled ballot papers by marking "**Cancelled**" across them
- Ensure that **only** authorized persons are allowed inside the polling station
- Resolve any problems inside the polling station in an amicable manner
- Assist incapacitated voters, in the presence of agents
- Ensure that information on any elector not permitted to vote is recorded in station diary
- Ensure that the ballot Reconciliation Form is accurately filled out after completion of the taking of Poll, for presentation to the Returning Officer

- Ensure that the polling agents are permitted to monitor the process without interfering with the electors and the proceedings
- Seal ballot boxes, at the close of polls, in the presence of polling agents
- Escort ballot boxes to the counting station

### ***Poll Clerk***

The Poll Clerk is to assist the Presiding Officer. He is required to be at the polling station at least one hour before the polls are opened. The Poll Clerk inspects the identification card of every elector entering the polling station, to ensure that his/her name is on the Voters' List or in the Electoral Binder. He sends the elector to the Presiding Officer for a ballot paper. The Poll Clerk assists with the process of sealing all documents and ballot boxes at the close of polls at 6:00 p.m. The main functions of the Poll Clerk are to:

- Assist in monitoring the smooth flow of electors inside the Polling Station
- Call the name of the elector and inspect the identification card to ensure that the name appears in the Voters' List
- Mark a line with ink over the name of the elector on the Voters' List to indicate that the elector has voted
- Assist the elector to dip his right forefinger up to the first joint in indelible ink
- Observe that the elector deposits his ballot paper inside the ballot box

### ***Counting Clerk***

The Counting Clerk works in the Counting Station. He assists in the reconciliation and counting of votes under the supervision of the Returning Officer.

## **Other Stakeholders**

### **A. POLICE OFFICER**

Police Officers are stationed inside and outside of polling and counting stations to maintain law and order at the request of the Returning Officers, Election Clerks and Presiding Officers.

### **B. CANDIDATE**

The candidate or someone on his/her behalf is to deposit a sum of monies with the Government Treasury. Proof of payment (receipt) is to be presented to the **Returning Officer** at the time of nomination. For the Town Council Elections, it is \$25.00, Belmopan and Belize City Councils, it is \$50.00 and for General Elections, it is \$200.00.

### **C. POLLING AND COUNTING AGENTS**

Polling and Counting Agents are representatives of the Candidates officially designated to witness the polling and counting processes on behalf of their Candidates at specific polling and counting stations. Each Candidate may appoint Polling Agents to attend at polling and counting stations in a constituency/municipality being contested.

#### **Appointment of Agents**

Appointment of a Polling/Counting Agent is made in writing to the Returning Officer indicating the name and address of the appointee and duly signed by the Candidate. Application Forms can be obtained from Returning Officers and the Central Office of the Elections and Boundaries Department. Applications are to be filed no later than **twenty-four hours** before the commencement of polls.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities of Agents**

- To witness all aspects of the voting and counting processes, except the marking of the ballot paper
- Prior to the opening of polls, examine the ballot box to ensure that it is empty; and inspect the voting booth to ensure there is nothing there, which may in any way, influence the voter
- To witness the marking of ballots of Incapacitated Voters

- May, through the Presiding Officer, challenge and/or verify the identity of an elector
- To perform their functions in accordance with the election rules
- To cooperate fully with the instructions of the Election Officers
- To bring to the attention of the Presiding Officer/Returning Officer any action which they consider is not in accordance with the provisions of election rules
- To refrain from speaking to, or attempting to influence any voter, from the time the voter enters the polling station, until he/she leaves the polling station

## **Number of Agents**

### ***1. Belize City Council***

- **Polling Station**
  - Not more than **two (2)** Agents per Party/Independent Candidate
- **Counting Station**
  - A maximum of **five (5)** boxes will be counted simultaneously
  - A maximum of **two (2)** Agents per box per Party/Independent Candidate

### ***2. Belmopan City Council***

- **Polling Station**
  - Not more than **two (2)** Agents per Party/Independent Candidate
- **Counting Station**
  - A maximum of **three (3)** boxes will be counted simultaneously
  - A maximum of **two (2)** Agents per box per Party/Independent Candidate

### *3. Town Council*

- **Polling Station**
  - Not more than **two (2)** Agents per Party/Independent Candidate
  
- **Counting Station**
  - A maximum of **three (3)** boxes will be counted simultaneously
  
  - A maximum of **two (2)** Agents per box per Party/Independent Candidate

### *4. General Elections*

- **Polling Station**
  - Not more than **two (2)** Agents per candidate
  
- **Counting**
  - A maximum of **two (2)** boxes will be counted simultaneously
  
  - A maximum of **two** Agents per box per candidate

### **T-Shirts and Political Colours for Polling Agents**

- Polling Agents working/living inside the polling stations may **not** wear Party T-Shirts
  
- Polling Agents called “**runners**” who frequently visit the polling stations may wear Party T-Shirts or Colours
  
- An Election Worker (Public Officer) has **no** legal jurisdiction over Polling Agents outside the 100 yards line

**Non-attendance of Candidates and/or Agents will not invalidate the voting and/or counting proceedings.**

### **3. Polling Stations and Election Supplies**

#### **Polling Station**

##### ***Establishing the Polling Station***

The Polling Station refers to the room or building where voting takes place. It is usually a public building e.g. classrooms, and should be accessible to all voters. It comprises furniture, ballot boxes and voting booths. All instructions to electors are placed outside of the polling station. Entry and exit signs are to be visible at all times.

##### ***Limits of The Polling Station***

There will be a demarcation of one hundred (100) yards from the polling station where no person can assemble or congregate. The law prohibits politicians and campaigners to canvass an elector within the line. The Presiding Officer can request the assistance of the Police in removing persons violating the law.

##### ***Hours of Voting***

The Polls open at **7:00 a.m.** and closes at **6:00 p.m.** When the Presiding Officer announces the close of the polls at 6:00 p.m., one Police Officer on duty will stand behind the last person in the line to deter other persons from joining the line. Voting continues until all persons in the line have voted.

#### **Who May Visit the Polling Station?**

##### ***The Returning Officer***

The Returning Officer is the person who is in charge of the conduct of elections in a constituency/municipality.

##### ***The Election Clerk***

The Election Clerk is the assistant to the Returning Officer and can visit the polling/counting stations in a constituency/municipality.

##### ***The Chief Elections Officer***

The Chief Elections Officer (CEO) is the Head of the Elections and Boundaries Department. The CEO may appoint other staff to visit any polling/counting station.

### ***The Candidate***

Candidates representing any of the Political Parties are authorized to visit any of the polling stations within their electoral division. While inside the polling station, the candidate **must** limit his/her time and not interfere/influence the voters, nor the process.

### ***The Agent***

Polling Agents are persons appointed by candidates to represent them inside the polling/counting stations. Polling Agents observe/witness the process and report to their candidates. They are not allowed to question any voter. Not more than **two** Polling Agents per Political Party are to be allowed in the polling station and no more than **three** in the counting station to witness the process. **“Runners”** visit Polling Agents from time to time in the polling station. While inside the polling station, a **“Runner”** must limit his/her time and not interfere/influence the voters or the process. **“Runners”** are not allowed in the counting station.

### **Election Supplies**

#### ***Documents and Materials Used at the Polling Station***

Each Presiding Officer is provided with the following supplies and forms to be used at the polling station.

***List of Electors***—contains names of persons qualified to vote

***The Binder***—contains a Record Card for each qualified elector in the Division

***Ballot Paper***—a form used by the elector to record his vote by marking an X beside the desired candidate’s name

***Ballot Box***—a container that holds the ballot paper and accommodates approximately five hundred (500). It is placed in full view during the taking of poll

***Indelible Pencils***—used to mark an x next to the name of desired candidate

***Indelible Ink***—used to stain the elector’s forefinger

***Voting Booth***—compartment that protects the secrecy of the vote

***Guidance to Electors***—notices posted outside the polling station giving directions to the electors

***Polling Station Diary***—used by Presiding Officer to record information/activities for example:

- Inspection of ballot boxes at opening and closing of polls
- Particulars of electors who present themselves to vote after another person has voted using his/her name
- Particulars of electors not permitted to vote because of refusal to answer questions by the Presiding Officer
- Spoilt or cancelled ballot papers

***Hourly Rate of Voting***—to record voter turnout on the hour. This information is to be communicated to the Returning Officer and/or the Chief Elections Officer

***Envelopes***—used, unused or spoilt election documents are to be placed in envelopes. These envelopes display the purpose for which they are to be used. The polling station's name is to be clearly indicated.

***Oath Forms***—administered to all Election Officers and witnessed by a Justice of the Peace

***Tally Sheets***—used to record and verify the votes

***Report Forms—forms to record the result of the Poll***

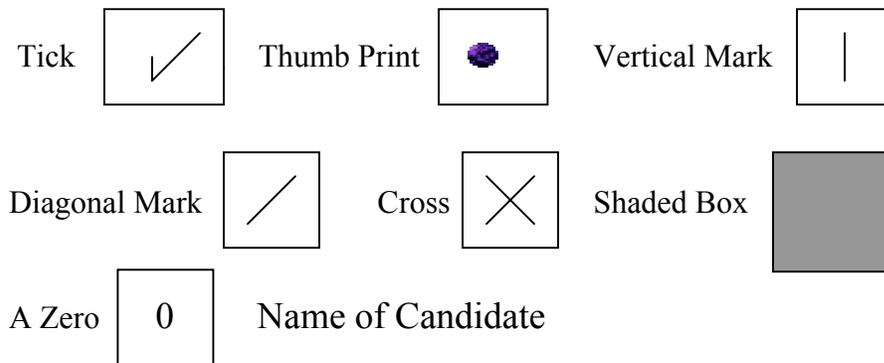
- **General Elections**
  - Reconciliation of Ballot Papers
  - Statement of the Poll for a Polling Station
  - Statement of the Poll for an Electoral Division
  - Results of a General Elections
  - Return of Uncontested Election
- **Municipality Elections**
  - Results of an Election for a Municipality
  - Statement of the Poll for a Municipality

## 4. About Ballots

### The What Is

1. ***How is the ballot paper marked?***
  - The ballot is marked with an “X” beside the name of the candidate chosen
  - A pencil is provided at the Poll
2. ***Is a ballot rejected if another mark is used?***
  - The ballot is not rejected if the mark clearly indicates which candidate the person is voting for

### Some examples of Marks that are Acceptable



**One Big X** for all Candidates of one Party as in a Solid Vote for Municipal Elections

3. ***What is a Spoiled Ballot?***
  - A ballot marked in error by the voter which is returned to the Presiding Officer for another
  - The spoiled ballot does not go into the ballot box
4. ***What is a Rejected Ballot?***

A ballot is declared **rejected** at the count for the following five reasons. Any ballot paper:

- a) Which does not have the Presiding Officer's initials on the back of it
- b) In which the elector has voted for more candidates than there are seats to be filled
- c) Which is not marked for any candidate
- d) Which contains any writing or mark by which the elector could be identified
- e) Which is unmarked or void for uncertainty
- f) A rejected ballot is **void** and **not** counted as a vote

For **Municipal Elections only**

- In the case of 4 (b) above:  
 The vote for Mayor **must** be treated separately from that of Councilors as follows:
  - ▶ **IF** the vote is for **one** Mayor but **more** candidates than needed for Councilors then the vote for Councilors is to be rejected.
  - ▶ **IF** there are enough votes for Candidates but **more** votes than needed for Mayor then the Mayoral vote is to be rejected

## **5. Nomination Procedure**

Each candidate deposits with the Government Treasury:

- |  |   |          |
|--|---|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> For General Election                              | - | \$200.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> For Town Council Election                         | - | \$ 25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City of Belmopan & Belize City Councils Elections | - | \$ 50.00 |

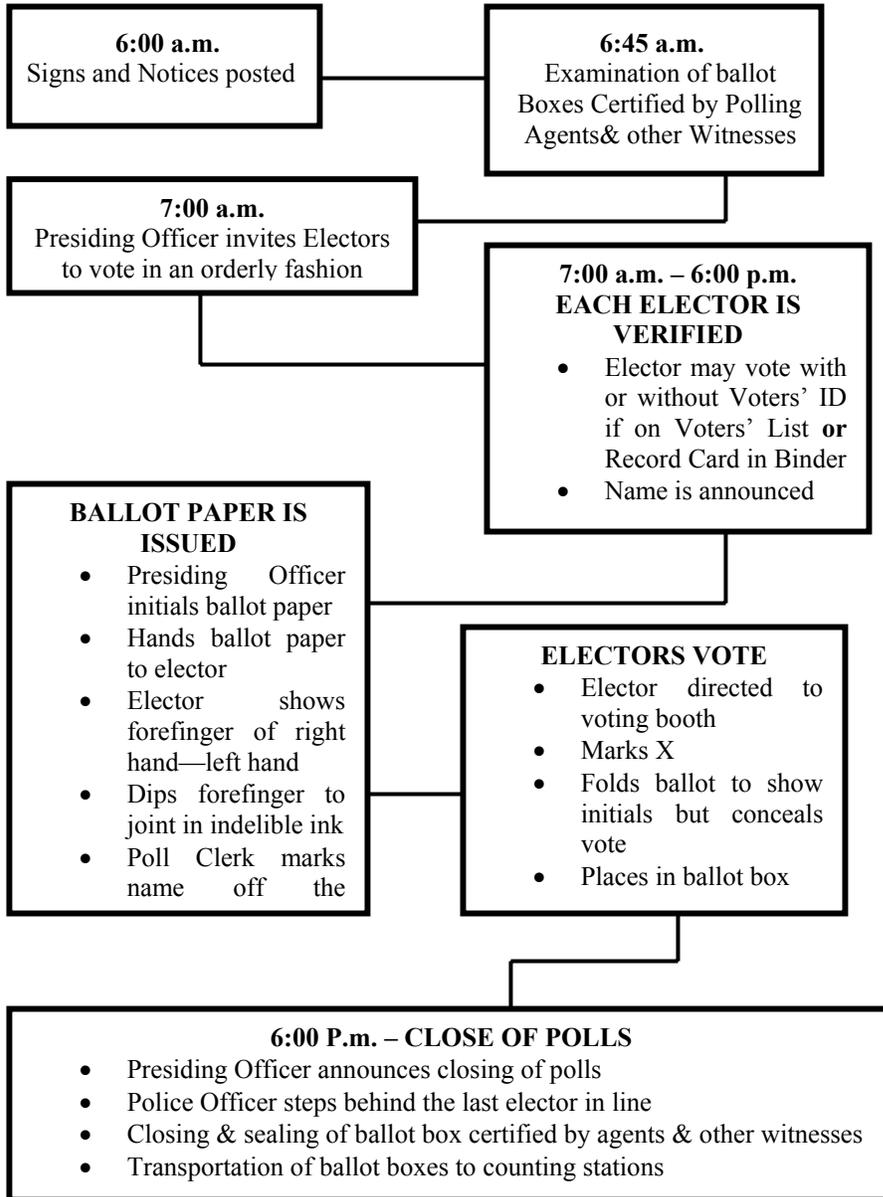
The original receipt issued by the Government Treasury is to be shown to the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer receives nominations from all candidates of a constituency/municipality.

The Returning Officer gives the nomination paper to the persons nominating.

- For **General Elections** six persons whose names appear on the Voters' List sign the nomination form as witnesses for a candidate. The candidate assents to the nomination by signing on the nomination form. If at four o'clock in the afternoon only one candidate has been nominated for the seat to be filled, the Returning Officer declares such candidate to have been elected and certifies by endorsing the return of that candidate on Form 20 and returns the Writ to the Chief Elections Officer for transmission to the Governor-General.
- For **Municipal Elections** two persons whose names appear on the Voters' List sign the nomination form as witnesses to a candidate. The candidate assents to the nomination by signing on the nomination form. One hour is given for nomination—11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

## 6. Voting Procedure

### Flow Chart of the Voting Process



Only registered electors whose names appear on the register for that division, as existing on the Nomination Day can vote in a Referendum, Municipal or General Elections. An elector can vote **with** or **without** a Voters' Identification Card if his name appears on the Voters' List and/or has a Record Card in the binder. See the following examples.

- i. A voter is **not** on the Voters' List but **has** a Record Card in the Binder; *he is to be allowed to vote*
- ii. A voter **has** an Identification Card, but is **not** on the Voters' List **nor** in the Binder; *he is not to be allowed to vote*

The Presiding Officer is to record such occurrences in his Polling Day Diary.

#### ***Other Rules***

- Any Candidate or Polling Agent may challenge the identity of an elector
- The elector may be refused a ballot paper if he does not comply with the staining of the forefinger of the right hand or left hand if no right

#### **Questions Which May be put to the Voter**

If the elector's identity is called into question, the Presiding Officer has the right to ask questions of the elector relating to identity, such as age, place of residence etc., for example:

1. Are you the same person whose name appears on this Voters' List?
2. Have you voted in this election?

The Presiding Officer may ask the above questions of any voter at the time of voting. The Candidate or Polling Agents may ask the above questions through the Presiding Officer.

#### **Spoilt Ballot**

Should an elector spoil his ballot paper, the Presiding Officer is to issue another after retrieving, canceling and recording the initial ballot paper. The elector delivers the spoilt ballot paper to the Presiding Officer who issues another ballot paper to the elector. The Presiding Officer cancels

the spoilt ballot paper by writing the word **Cancelled** across the face of the ballot. He initials and retains the cancelled ballot paper.

### **Sealing of Ballot Boxes and Envelopes**

At the close of polls, the Presiding Officer seals the following in the presence of Polling Agents and other witnesses:

- Ballot boxes used at his station preventing the introduction of additional ballot papers
- Keys of ballot boxes used at the poll
- Unused and spoilt ballot papers
- Marked copies of the Voters' List

### **Transportation of Ballot Boxes**

Each Presiding Officer, accompanied by Police Officers, transports the ballot boxes and parcels to the Returning Officer of his/her Constituency/Municipality.

### **Proxy Voter**

A proxy is an elector appointed to vote for another elector. This vote is called a proxy vote. The elector identifies the proxy and applies to the Returning Officer for appointment. To be a proxy, the person **must** be qualified to vote. **Only** the following persons can appoint proxies:

#### ***a) Municipal Elections***

- Employees in an essential service
- Members of the Belize Defence Force
- Policemen assigned for duty in another Electoral Division on Election Day
- Election Officers for another Electoral Division
- Those employed in transporting or assisting an Election Officer in another Electoral Division

#### ***b) General Elections***

- Members of the Belize Police Department
- Members of the Belize Defence Force
- Persons employed as Election Officers
- Rules of Proxy

- Application and appointment to be made on specified forms
- Only persons 18 years or over, and not subject to legal incapacity, can be appointed
- A person is not entitled to have more than one person at a time appointed as proxy
- The application is to be signed by a Justice of the Peace, Commissioner of Police, Commandant of the Belize Defence Force, Notary Public, Honorary Counsel

The Returning Officer is to maintain a record of elections for which proxies have been appointed and the names and addresses of the persons so appointed.

### **Incapacitated Voters**

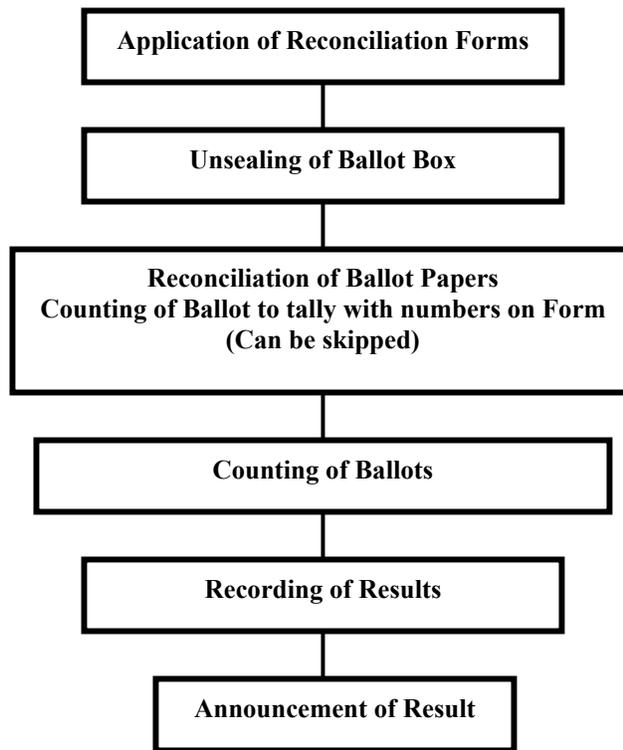
Any voter who is incapacitated by blindness or other physical cause from voting, will be allowed, by the Presiding Officer, to bring along with him into the polling station, a person of his/her own choice to mark the ballot paper on his behalf and to place the ballot paper in the ballot box. The name and number on the proper register of voters whose ballot paper is marked for the incapacitated voter, and the reason why it is marked, together with the name of the person who marked the ballot paper on behalf of the incapacitated voter, will be entered on a list, which will be kept by the Presiding Officer.

## **7. Counting Procedure**

### **Counting of Votes—The Process**

The Returning Officer receives all ballot boxes from the Presiding Officers. He then reads the rules of conduct and the count. He dismisses the Presiding Officers and welcomes the Counting Officers, Polling/Counting Agents and Observers. Tally Sheets issued by the Elections and Boundaries Department are to be used to record the count. The Returning Officer is to ensure that the Reconciliation Forms presented by the Presiding Officers are arithmetically accurate before dismissing them.

## Flow Chart of the Counting Process



### Who May Be Admitted into the Counting Station?

- The Returning Officer and other Staff
- The Chief Elections Officer and other Staff
- Polling Agents (as per section on Agents) per Political Party to monitor the process
- Candidates—**one** for General and **two** for Municipal as **Observers** only

### The Method of Count

Election Officers are to use the prescribed Tally Sheets and Forms for reporting the count. Agents are to sign off on the Forms.

***For General Elections:***

Below is the step-by-step procedure to be followed:

1. Receive all Ballot boxes and completed Reconciliation Forms from Presiding Officers
  
1. Dismiss Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks and clear counting station
  
2. Announce procedure
  
3. Open Ballot Box

***For Municipal Elections:***

- (a) (i) Place **solid** votes in batches of twenty-five (25) by Candidate/Party  
  
(ii) Place **questionable** votes and **split** votes in two separate batches
  
- (b) Tally **solid** votes – record and have witnesses confirm
  
- (c) Use Tally Sheets to count **Split** Votes by individual Candidate/Party
  
- (d) Tally **Split** Votes by:
  - (i) Individual Candidate
  - (ii) Political Party
  
- (e) Decide on **questionable** votes – separate **rejected** from **good** votes
  
- (f) File away **rejected** votes as per rules
  
- (g) Tally **good** votes and include in the count for solid or split votes

- (h) Tally **all** votes for **each** Ballot Box and record on multiple forms provided; and have agents witness by signature
- (i) Combine votes/results for **ALL** Ballot Boxes on form provided and have agents witness by signature
- (j) Share combined results with **ALL** Agents
- (k) Attach results of individual boxes to the combined result
- (l) Publicly announce results

***For General Elections:***

- (m) (i) Place votes in batches of twenty-five (25) by Party/Candidate
  - (ii) Place **questionable** votes in one separate batch
- (n) Decide on **questionable** votes – separate **rejected** from **good** votes
- (o) File away **rejected** votes as per rules
- (p) Tally **good** votes and include in the Party/Candidate batches
- (q) Tally **all** votes for **each** ballot box and record on multiple forms provided and have witnesses confirm
- (r) Combine votes/results for **ALL** ballot boxes on form provided and have agents witness by signature
- (s) Share combined results with **ALL** Agents

- (h) Attach results of individual boxes to the combined result
- (i) Publicly announce results

## **Counting Rules**

### ***Recount***

The Candidate or his Agent may request:

- a) Recounting of ballot papers
- b) Rechecking of figures recorded by the Counting Clerk or the Returning Officer

The Returning Officer may refuse such request if he believes that it is **not** reasonable.

The Returning Officer may request a recount if he questions the accuracy of the count or recheck the figures recorded by the Counting Clerks.

### ***Rejected Ballot Papers***

The Returning Officer shall declare **“Rejected” void and not count** a ballot paper if:

- The ballot paper does not have the Presiding Officer’s initial on the back of it
- The elector has voted for more candidates than there are seats
- The ballot paper is not marked for any candidate
- The ballot paper contains any mark or writing that could identify the elector
- The ballot paper is unmarked or void for uncertainty

If any of the above occurs on a ballot paper, the Returning Officer shall mark **“Rejected”** and **“Rejected Objected To”** if **any objection** is made to his decision by any of the persons who are entitled to be present.

The decision of a Returning Officer is final. If an election or return is petitioned, the Returning Officer’s decision is subject to reversal.

## **Candidates with Equal Votes**

### ***1. Municipal Elections***

If two or more candidates garner an equal number of votes, lots are drawn to decide the winner.

### ***2. General Elections***

A re-election in the electoral division is to be held no later than **three months** after the date of count.

## **Report to The Chief Elections Officer**

The Returning Officer declares the final results after consulting with the Chief Elections Officer. After results are declared, each Returning Officer submits a report to the Chief Elections Officer showing the number of persons who voted at each polling station, number of spoilt ballot papers, and number of persons supplied with ballot papers.

## **8. Return Of Supplies**

### **Voting Papers, Ballot Boxes and Other Documents to be returned to The Chief Elections Officer**

After the counting, the Returning Officer places all the voting papers and copies of the Voters' List used at the polling station, inside the ballot box. The box is placed in a secure environment.

Ballot boxes are delivered, as soon as possible, to the Chief Elections Officer, Central Office, Elections and Boundaries Department. The Returning Officer will immediately seal into one parcel the following:

- Voting papers
- Marked copies of the register of electors
- Other papers that were used at the Polling Stations

## **9. Return of Election to the Commission (General Elections Only)**

On or before the date established, the return of the Writ of Elections shall be transmitted to the Governor-General.

The Returning Officers shall submit the Return of Elections on Form #27.

## **10. Election Management Rules**

### **The Polling Agents**

Not more than **two** Polling Agents per Political Party are allowed within the polling station at any one time; and not more than **three** Polling Agents are allowed within the counting station at any one time. **“Runners”** are allowed limited time to consult with Polling Agents inside the polling station **only**. Agents are strictly prohibited from campaigning within the one hundred yards line.

### **The Press at the Polling Station**

The Press is **not** allowed within the one hundred yards line of the polling station nor inside the polling station. Once the Returning Officer has updated the Chief Elections Officer, he/she may pass the information to the Press beyond the one hundred yards marker. The Chief Elections Officer will brief the Media on a timely basis.

### **Weapons and Cellular Phones**

No weapon is allowed within the one hundred yards line of the polling station and the counting station.

Cellular phones with vibrators are acceptable. The ringing of cellular phones will not be allowed inside the counting station. Should an Agent wish to respond to a vibrating cellular call, he/she is to do so outside of the counting station.

### **Counting Stations**

The Returning Officer sets the rules in the counting station. His/her decision is final. Anyone who disagrees may file a petition after Election Day, as per The Representation of The People Act, Chapter 9, Part VIII, “Disputed Elections”, Sections 45 –63. Refer to the Counting Rules and the following as guidelines to these rules.

- The Chief Elections Officers and/or Staff
- The Candidate
  - Town and City Councils Elections
    - Not more than **two (2)** candidates as **Observers**
  - General Elections
    - Not more than **one (1)** candidate as **Observer**

## **Polling Agents as Witnesses**

### ***Belize City Council***

- i. A maximum of **five (5)** boxes will be counted simultaneously
- ii. A maximum of **two (2)** Agents per box per Party/Independent Candidate

### ***Belmopan City Council***

- iii. A maximum of **three (3)** boxes will be counted simultaneously
- iv. A maximum of **two (2)** Agents per box per Party/Independent Candidate

### ***Town Councils***

- v. A maximum of **three (3)** boxes will be counted simultaneously
- vi. A maximum of **two (2)** Agents per box per Party/Independent Candidate

### ***General Elections***

- ❑ A maximum of **two (2)** boxes will be counted simultaneously
  - ❑ A maximum of **two (2)** Agents per box per Candidate
2. Only Polling Agents appointed by candidates, and on the roster of the Returning Officer will be allowed into the Counting Station. The Polling Agent may be requested to provide Identification by the Returning Officer.
  3. Non-attendance or absence of candidates and/or agents even for a brief period will neither hinder nor invalidate the counting.
  4. The Returning Officer will limit movements in and out of the counting station.
  5. Any Polling Agent who leaves the counting station will **not** be allowed to re-enter **nor** will he/she be replaced with an alternate.
  6. Only the Returning Officer and his/her Assistant, the Police Officer and the Chief Elections Officer or staff is allowed to use a cellular phone inside the counting station.
  7. All Polling Agents will be provided with Tally Sheets and pens/pencils, deemed to be only supplies needed in the counting station.

### **The Procedure for Handling Campaigning within the One Hundred Yards Line**

The Police is to enforce the area within the one hundred yards line outside the polling station.

Strict observation by Election Officers and the Police should be conducted to ensure against any infraction.

If the campaigning persists the Police Officer shall consult with the Returning Officer and the Presiding Officer and take collaborative action to end the situation.

## **11. Offences by Election officers**

As per The Representation of The People Act Chapter 9, Part VII “Offences”, Section 30, every Election Officer who is guilty of the following offences, on conviction, is liable to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding five years.

- a) Makes, in any record, return or other document which he is required to keep or make under this Act, any entry, which he knows or has reasonable cause to believe to be false, or does not believe to be true; **or**
- b) Permits any person whom he knows or has reasonable cause to believe not to be a blind person or an incapacitated person to vote in the manner provided for blind persons or incapacitated persons, as the case may be; **or**
- c) Refuse to permit any person whom he knows or has reasonable cause to believe to be a blind person or an incapacitated person to vote in a manner provided for blind persons or incapacitated persons, as the case may be; **or**
- d) Willfully prevents any person from voting at the Poling Station, which he knows has reasonable cause to believe is validly cast for any candidates in accordance with the provisions of this Act; **or**
- e) Willfully counts any ballot paper as being cast for any candidate, which he knows or has reasonable cause to believe was not validly cast for such candidate.