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Absentee Ballot Handling and Procedure

It is important to note that once a ballot is issued, it is tracked by ballot number and is associated with a specific voter up until the moment it is tabulated. Voters can view the status of their application or ballot by going to www.mi.gov/vote

Issuing Ballots

Within 75 days before an election, the Township will send out ballot applications to everyone on the permanent absentee list. Voters not on the permanent list can request or send an application at any time. When those applications are received back at the Township (either by mail, outdoor drop box, or in the office drop box- **all under dual control**), they are:

- recorded in the Qualified Voter File (QVF) and signatures are verified
- issued a ballot number
- filed numerically by precinct

Ballots are issued 40 days before the election, and then on an on-going basis as new applications are received. Voters requesting a ballot after the initial ballot mailing will be issued a ballot within 24 hours of receiving the application.

If a signature does not match or if a signature is missing, the application is not recorded in QVF. The voter is then contacted by phone or mail to resolve the issue.

Receiving Ballots

Absentee ballots are mailed to voters (who have signed a returned an application) 40 days before the election. ballots are received back at the Township (either by mail, outdoor drop box, or in the office drop box), they are:

- recorded in the Qualified Voter File (QVF) and signatures are verified
- filed numerically and by precinct
- locked in the election room. Only Election Administrators and maintenance have access to the locked room (security keypad)

If a signature does not match or if a signature is missing, the ballot is not recorded in QVF. The voter is then contacted by phone or mail to resolve the issue.

Storing Ballots

Ballots are either stored in a locked room or are always directly supervised by an Election Administrator. Oshtemo Township has three Elections Administrators who are certified through the Michigan Bureau of Elections.

Ballots are sorted numerically by ballot number and by precinct. They are stored in large plastic bins on a mobile metal shelf unit.

At times it is necessary to bring the ballots into the main office area, but only under direct supervision of an Election Administrator. This might be necessary for ballot balancing, sorting, or during times that require access for spoiling and reissuing ballots.

Large quantities of ballots come in each day, and they are not always able to be sorted and filed each day. Those ballots are placed in separate containers in the locked election room until they can be sorted and filed.

Once per week, all ballots are recounted and balanced against the information in QVF. Discrepancies are corrected immediately.

Retrieving Ballots (Spoiling)

Voters have the right to request to spoil their ballot and revote. The voter requests in writing for their ballot to be spoiled (usually on their original application), the ballot envelope is marked spoiled and it is placed in the election room with other spoiled ballots, a new ballot is issued, and the original application has the new ballot number added and is filed appropriately.

Processing Ballots

Oshtemo Township had two Absentee Voter Counting Boards that process absentee ballots on election day. We will likely have three or four in the very near future. Ballots are assigned to each AVCB. The number of ballots determines the start time for tabulating ballots each election.

Boards have a Chair and usually 5 additional election workers. A balance of Republicans and Democrats comprises each Board, as availability allows.

Once counting begins, election workers are not allowed to leave the building or use communication technology until after 8 PM when voting ends.