

CITY OF BURLINGTON ELECTIONS FIELD MANUAL FOR WARD CLERKS

Introduction

Supervising an election is a complex and time-consuming process. Over the years, the Clerks of the City and the various ward election officials have developed a number of different procedures designed to assist in the smooth and efficient operation of the ward polling places. The procedures detailed below are ones which have stood the test of time and ward election officials are encouraged to take the time before the election to read this manual and think through the various steps required to make Election Day a pleasant experience for the City's voters.

As with any manual, of course, it is important to remember that particular circumstances may compel the use of different procedures. This manual represents the cumulative wisdom of past election officials, but the application of any particular procedure must be tempered by common sense and a keen appreciation for what is appropriate for each ward and each election. Keep in mind that this is a work-in-progress; if you have any suggestions for changes or additions, please notify the Assistant City Clerk.

Election Overview

1. A well-run election is the fundamental basis of our system of government. As Ward Clerk, you perform a vital role in ensuring the fair and orderly operation of the City Election, and in the smooth transition from one administration to the next. In addition, you are the individual primarily responsible for insuring that each of Burlington's major Parties are fairly represented on your ward team.

But you are not completely on your own; although you are completely in charge of the election in your ward, the staff of the Clerk Treasurer's Office is available throughout the day (and into the night!) to assist you in making each election a smooth and efficient process.

2. There are two types of elections which Ward Clerks commonly supervise: **candidate elections** and **issue elections**.

Candidate Elections also fall into five types: **general elections, primary elections, Presidential primary elections, local elections and run-off elections**

General elections: Elections occur every second November in even-numbered years. These are on a state legislative district basis; all wards contain at least two legislative districts. The chief practical effect of state legislative district elections is that you need to use a separate voter checklist for each district in each ward.

Primary elections: Elections occur every second Tuesday in August in even-numbered years in which party candidates for state office are selected to appear later on a general election ballot. These are also on a state legislative district basis.

Presidential primary elections: Elections occur every fourth March in even-numbered years in which party candidates for President are selected to appear later on a general election ballot. These elections are on a ward basis, which means that there is only one checklist per ward.

Local elections: Elections occur every March in which candidates are elected to local office. These are also on a ward basis.

Issue elections: These elections occur whenever the City Council votes to put an issue on the ballot, or an issue is put on the ballot by petition (the signatures of 5% of the registered voters is required). Although they need not do so, such elections generally occur along with general or local elections.

Occasionally, Ward Clerks are called upon to supervise a **special election** (to decide one or more issues, or to fill a vacancy) in their ward.

3. The City of Burlington's election cycle is as follows:

March (first Tuesday) – **Annual City Election.** Offices include Mayor (every three years), City Councilor, School Commissioner, Ward Clerk (every two years) and Inspectors of Election (every three years—one vacancy filled every year—staggered terms). There is often an issue election as well.

March (first Tuesday) – **Presidential Primary Election.** Held in conjunction with a regularly scheduled Annual City Election, but only every fourth year, in years divisible by four.

August (second Tuesday) – **Primary Election.** Candidates may be nominated by party for the general election ballot. Offices include: all statewide offices including U.S. Senator (2 out of 3 elections), U.S. Congress Representative, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, State Treasurer, Secretary of State, Auditor of Accounts and Attorney General, county-wide offices include State Senator, High Bailiff and in years not divisible by four, Probate Judge, Sheriff and Assistant Judge), and State Representative.

November (first Tuesday after the first Monday) – **General Election.** Offices filled include: U.S. President and Vice President (every fourth year in years divisible by 4), all state-wide offices, including U.S. Senator (2 out of 3 elections), U.S. Representative to Congress, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, State Treasurer, Secretary of State, Auditor of Accounts and Attorney General, county-wide offices (State Senator, High Bailiff, and in years not divisible by four, Probate Judge, Sheriff and Assistant Judge), State Representatives and Justices of the Peace (15) are elected. There may also be an issue election at the same time.

4. For each election, voters go to their ward's polling place to vote. There is only one polling place per ward, regardless of how many state legislative districts the ward may contain. However, each legislative district will be set up separately within the polling place.

5. Each ward had three kinds of election officials—Ward Clerk (two-year terms); Inspectors of Election (three-year terms) and Assistant Election Officials (as many as needed - appointed each election).

The elected officials of each ward – the Ward Clerk and Inspectors of Election – are responsible for certifying the results in each ward. Staff members designated by the Clerk Treasurer’s Office are the overall coordinators of each election, but it is the ward election officials who carry out the election policies of the City in each ward.

Ward Clerk – It is the general responsibility of each Ward Clerk to prepare for and oversee the operation of the ward polling place on Election Day. By statute, the Ward Clerk is charged with keeping the records of the elections held in the ward, furnishing a Certificate of Election to each elected candidate, and certifying the results of the ward vote to the Clerk/Treasurer’s Office.

Inspectors of Election – The Inspectors of Election are charged with presiding over and preserving order at all elections, with deciding any questions as to who should vote¹, with the sorting and counting of ballots, and with announcing the results to observers. Along with the Ward Clerk, the Inspectors serve as the “presiding officers” of the polling place.

Assistant Election Officials – Assistant Election Officials are individuals hired by the City to assist in the preparation for and operation of the polling place on Election Day. Tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting in the set up and/or breakdown of the polling place, demonstrating the voting process to voters, checking voters in, assisting voters with the voting process, keeping the voting place neat and orderly and counting the ballots.

6. The Ward Clerks have already been sworn in by the Clerk/Treasurer’s Office following their election. Ward Clerks may then administer the oath to other election officials prior to the start of their shift.

The Weeks Prior to the Election

1. If you know ahead of time that you or one of the Inspectors of Election will be unable to work on Election Day, please let a Clerk Treasurer’s Office staff member know **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**.
2. In the weeks leading up to the election, the Ward Clerk should undertake the following tasks:

Review this field manual.

Plan the layout of the polling place. Use grid paper to do an initial layout allowing space for the voting area (roped off), the placement of tables, voting booths, the voting machine, etc.

Plan the number of Assistant Election Officials you will need.

¹ In Burlington, the Board for the Registration of Voters (BRV) has developed the practice of assigning one of its members to each ward during voting hours to assist with questions related to the voter list.

Recruit Assistant Election Officials and assign each to one or more shifts (depending on interest and availability) to make sure that you have enough people for each shift. Make sure that you plan to have people to take down the polling booths/carrels, put away supplies, clean up, etc. The staff of the Clerk Treasurer’s Office will assist you in determining how many Assistant Election Officials you will need for each shift. Keep in mind that you must make an effort to balance the number of Assistant Election Officials from each party.

Visualize Election Day and any potential problems that may arise. Review the practices and procedures for each part of the day and discuss them with the Inspectors of Election.

Attend all training sessions.

Communicate with the staff at your polling place to ensure the building will be available for your desired set up time on the Monday prior to the election. Let the Assistant City Clerk know what time you anticipate setting up on the Monday.

3. In addition to the above planning and preparation, it is the responsibility of the Ward Clerk to plan the layout and operation of the polling place.

Side Checkers: Make sure that the Side Checkers are at a separate table from the entrance table. They should be located outside of the guard rail or rope, but positioned so that they can hear the names of voters as they are called out without interfering with the check-in process, unless they opt to use the audio check-in system.

Voting Machine (tabulator): It is important that the voting machine be set up in such a way that voters are given some privacy while feeding their ballots into the machine. Obviously, the size and configuration of some of the polling places may make it difficult or impossible to give the voting machine that much space. In addition, an election official should be stationed at or near the voting machine to assist voters with any problems they might have. The person stationed at the voting machine should be careful to avoid looking at the ballots as they are fed into the voting machine.

Keep in mind that the voting machine should be positioned so that an observer can see how many ballots have been deposited.

The Day Before the Election

1. The Ward Clerk is responsible for picking up the election materials from the Clerk Treasurer’s Office on day before the election. Ask the Assistant City Clerk when the materials can be picked up at the Clerk Treasurer’s Office.
2. The afternoon or night before the election, the election officials should set up the polling place. Using the polling place layout, make sure that the following items are in place:

Guard Rail: make sure that the guard rail forms a secure voting area, access to which will be easy to control. There should be no gaps in the rail except for the entrance and exit. When done, review the setup to make sure that it is safe (no loose cords, posts in the way, etc.).

Voting Booths/Carrels: Assign a crew of two or more Assistant Election Officials to set up the booths/carrels. Using your polling place layout, show them where the booths/carrels should be set up.

Campaign-Free Zone: Assign a crew of two or more Assistant Election Officials to mark off the campaign-free zone outside the polling places. Instruct them to put down stakes and/or posts, but to not run rope at this time. If there is concern about potential vandalism, the campaign free zone can be posted the following morning.

Voting Machine: Put the large black ballot box in position. You will pick up the tabulator from City Hall at 6:00am on Tuesday morning.

Tables, etc.: Set up tables for entrance checkers, ballot distributors, side checkers, the Ward Clerk and (if necessary) additional voting carrels. Tape “Guidelines for Side Checkers” to the side checkers’ table and set up chairs.

Posting: Assign one or more Assistant Election Officials to post the various materials provided by the Clerk Treasurer’s Office.

Miscellaneous: Display a secrecy folder on the ballot distribution table. Put a magnifying glass on the ballot distribution table. **DOUBLE CHECK** everything. Review the division of responsibility for the election with the Inspectors of Election. When everyone is satisfied, establish a starting time for the following morning.

3. **Planning Use of Assistant Election Officials:** The Ward Clerk should decide in advance the duties which will be assigned to each Assistant Election Official. The shifts for Assistant Election Officials vary depending on needs and schedules.

The Evening Before the Election

1. Once the polling place is set up and ready for the following morning, the Ward Clerk and another election official should:

Put the Entrance Checklist in a binder or binders depending on whether you intend to split it.

Put alphabet tabs on the Entrance Checklist to make it easier for the Entrance Checkers to use the list(s).

Mark the checklist to reflect those voters who submitted voted absentee ballots by placing an “A” in front of their name on the Entrance Checklist.

2. **The Voter Checklist:** Decide whether to split it into two separate lists (one containing approximately A-K and the other L-Z). The Clerk Treasurer’s Office advises that the list be split for mayoral and general elections, where the turnout tends to be heavier. The list

should be split the night before the election and tables should be inserted to indicate changes in letters and the location of the split.

3. **Access to Polling Place:** The Ward Clerk should coordinate with the staff of the polling place to ensure that the polling place can be accessed the night before the election when setting up the polling place and early the next morning to complete the set-up before opening the polls at 7:00 a.m.
4. **Review of the Polling Place:** Review of the polling place by Clerk Treasurer’s Office staff may be requested of any or all wards to ensure all election requirements have been satisfied.

The Day of the Election

1. Having set up the equipment in the polling place on the previous day, the Ward Clerk and Inspectors arrive on the morning of the election no later than 6:30 a.m.; and the Assistant Election Officials (AEO’s) come in at 6:45 a.m. **Distribute name tags and swear people in using the forms provided as they arrive for their shifts.**

2. The Ward Clerk checks to determine that all equipment and supplies are in place such as:

Entrance Check-In Table: rulers, pens, audio system for side-checkers (if any), signs, list of absentee voters, starter supply of ballots. **Amend** the Entrance Checklist using the Supplemental List found in the red folder.

Side-Checker Table: amplification system (if any), chairs for four to six people, ropes and stanchions to separate checkers from the voting area.

Voting Booths and Tables: instructions for filling out ballot(s), appropriate pens for marking ballots, carrel tops.

Voting Machine: plugged into live AC circuit, signs directing voters to voting machine and thence to the exit, for the August Primary—“Vote One Party Ballot Only” and “Deposit Unused Ballots Here” signs need to be posted and a receptacle for the discarded ballots provided near the voting machine.

BRV (Board for Registration of Voters) Member: two chairs and table; provide easy access to table for voters who are referred there with checklist registry issues.

Voter Registration: two chairs and a table. The ward clerk or their designated election official must review all voter registration applications submitted at the polling place and shall approve those applications that meet the requirements.

Hallway Outside Entrance to Polling Place: Public (Posting) Checklist copy, map of wards and districts; notice of Official Polling Place, arrows pointing to entrance and further direction of checklist is split into two or more parts by alphabet or district.

Ward Clerk's Table: Important Papers notebook (red folder); be sure all workers have been administered oaths and, if they haven't worked before, have completed a W9 along with their timesheet.

Guide Ropes: to route voter traffic properly through the balloting process.

3. Assign Inspector A to manage ballot replenishment
4. Assign Inspector B to manage the processing of absentee voter ballots
5. Ward Clerk and Inspector C (who is assigned to manage the voting machine) open the voting machine using the tabulator guide procedures.
6. Check to see that each Assistant Election Official knows their duties as described earlier in this manual. It is a good idea to type out an assignment sheet which is readily accessible to all workers.
7. Pray that you haven't forgotten anything essential. If anything is not working properly, call the Clerk Treasurer's Office immediately (865-7000) (e.g., the voting machine won't work).

Open the Polling Place

1. At 7:00 a.m., invite the voters waiting in the hallway into the polling place.
2. Welcome side-checkers. If the BRV representative has not arrived, call the Assistant City Clerk.
3. Direct the Assistant Election Official assigned to monitoring the queue of voters in the hallway outside the polling place to be sure that the signs outside of the building restricting campaign activity to a distance of 30 feet are in place and that the regulation is being observed. This worker should check the condition at regular intervals during Election Day. Exit interviews are prohibited within this same protected space.
4. Remind assistant election officials assigned to voting booths/carrels to check regularly for the presence of any campaign materials and to remove them if discovered.
5. Caution entrance checker(s) and ballot distributor(s) to ask voters to remove all obvious campaign paraphernalia (e.g., candidate buttons) while in the polling place.
6. The Ward Clerk consults with the Inspectors and the assistant election officials assigned to monitor voter lines on the advisability of splitting the checklist (unless already done) if the lines become unreasonably long. This procedure should not be undertaken if the condition appears to be temporary.

7. Canvass all workers who will continue onto the second shift (1:00 – 7:00 p.m.) concerning preferences for a lunch break. There should be enough staff on duty to allow a rest break once during each shift for each worker.
8. Ensure that the starter supply of ballots has been supplemented by delivery of additional ballots from the Clerk Treasurer’s Office if needed. Inspector A monitors the supply of ballots at the Entrance Checker table, records ballot consumption on the appropriate form, collects and secures “spoiled ballots”, and advises the Clerk Treasurer’s Office staff if the ballot supply grows short.
9. Inspector C notifies the Ward Clerk if the black ballot box appears to be getting full (which can lead to ballots becoming jammed in the voting machine). If it becomes necessary to remove voted ballots one or more times during the day, the process is conducted by the Ward Clerk and at least one Inspector. They unlock the black ballot box, remove the ballots to auxiliary ballot bags, close and seal the bags or containers, re-lock the black ballot box and continue voting. Usually, this condition does not occur until later in the second shift.

During Election Day

1. **Absentee Ballots** should be processed whenever there is a drop in voter volume. Inspector B, with another election worker, opens the returned absentee ballot envelopes, checking to be sure the envelope is signed by the voter according to the instructions. The envelopes (with the ballots inside) are taken to the Entrance Check-In table and are “read in” as if the voters were present and voting. The ballots are then taken to the voting machine and fed in. Save the envelopes. If necessary, a voters ballot marking choices may be transferred (using the transfer instructions in the tabulator manual) from ballots not able to be read by the machine (faxed, e-mailed or damaged) to ballots that are machine readable. Additional absentee ballots will be delivered during the day from the Clerk Treasurer’s Office and, if voter traffic is heavy, these may have to be processed after the close of the polls at 7:00 p.m.
2. Assistant Election Officials reporting for work on the afternoon shift (1:00 – 7:00 p.m.) are welcomed by the Ward Clerk who administers their oath and determines that each knows her or his work assignments. If work loads have changed, adjustments should be made at this point. ID badges are given to each new worker and W9 should be filled out along with their time sheet (if necessary).
3. Continue to monitor polling place conditions as outlined above for the first shift.
4. During the afternoon, as opportunities present themselves, the Ward Clerk prepares materials for the third shift, which will process the ballots, counting and recording write-ins of candidates. They should assemble the following materials:
 - a. Summary Sheets
 - b. Official Return of Votes

c. Ballot bags, seals and labels

Most of the “paperwork” associated with the day’s work is given the name “important papers” and is kept in the red folder. These constitute the permanent record (other than the ballots themselves) of the election activity.

5. Remind entrance checker(s) that the **checklist(s) must be tallied** before departing.
6. Review all work assignments for the ballot processing session.
7. As the voting period begins to draw to a close, the set-up/tear-down crew may begin disassembly of booths/carrels no longer in use. A place should also be provided, which will be outside the counter area, for observers who will witness all or part of the ballot tallying process.

Closing of the Polling Place

1. At 7:00 p.m., announce the closing of the polls. All voters in line at that time are allowed to vote after the closing time. This procedure is monitored by the AEO in charge of the waiting line. When all in line are inside the polling place, the doors may be closed, but not locked. When voting has been completed, observers are invited into an area which segregates them from the ballot processing area.
2. Disassembly of voting booths/carrels continue.
3. Priority is given to shutting down the voting machine and printing out its tally of votes so that the review of the ballots may proceed.
4. Make sure that ALL ballots have been read by the machine (refer to the transfer instructions in the tabulator manual).
5. The Ward Clerk and at least one Inspector close down the voting machine using the procedures outlined in the tabulator guide.

REMINDER: The Initial Tabulator Printout (with zero printout attached) should accompany the machine to City Hall. The second tabulator printout is sealed with the voted ballots. The third tabulator printout can be posted at the polling place. The Tabulator/Memory Card Chain of Custody Form should also accompany the machine to City Hall.

6. Unless other plans are made, this is an appropriate time to have dinner.
7. A team assigned by the Ward Clerk unloads the black ballot box in preparation for reviewing the ballots.

Processing the Ballots

All ballot processing should be performed by teams of two or more AEO's/ Inspectors representing, as much as possible, the political parties included on the ballots.

Overview

The main purpose of the following procedures is to record write-in votes AND to compare and balance the number of ballots read by the machine to the number of voters checked off the checklist.

1. Empty the black ballot box of its contents.
2. If the black ballot box had been emptied earlier in the day, combine these ballots with those just removed.
3. For state and federal election, **ALL** write-ins must be recorded on the summary sheets provided for state and federal election.

For **city elections only**, write-in votes do NOT need to be tallied when there is a single candidate **and** the total number of write-in votes is less than the number of votes the candidate received. Write-in votes DO need to be tallied when:

- Only one candidate is running but the total write-in votes received are more than the number of votes the candidate received
 - No candidates are running for the seat
 - Multiple candidates are running for the same seat
4. Once summary sheets have been completed for ballots containing write-ins where the ovals have been filled in, those ballots may be bundled and placed in a ballot bag. A separate summary sheet should be completed for those write-ins with ovals **not** filled in. These ballots may then be bundled and placed in the ballot bag.

Processing Wrap Up

All voted ballots must be returned to the Clerk Treasurer's Office on the night of the election. Each type of ballot (no write-ins; write-ins with ovals filled in; write-ins where ovals were not filled in) must be separately bundled, identified by type and packed in sealed bags for transport.

Please return any unused ballots, Summary Sheets and Official Return of Vote forms to City Hall.

1. At City Hall, the boxes will be checked by the Clerk Treasurer's Office staff.

2. Place in one spot things which will be picked up on the following day by city staff. These include: voting booths/carrels, stanchions, ropes and the black ballot box. Rented tables should be placed near but separately from other equipment returning to City Hall.
3. Be sure that any furnishings supplied by the site are clearly separated from the items to be picked up.
4. Leave the site clean, with all trash deposited in proper containers. Take note of any personal effects left behind and secure them.
5. All ballot bags being transported to the Clerk Treasurer's Office should be brought to City Hall by two elected election officials from different political parties.

Don't be surprised if you swear never to do this again. The feeling will pass with time.

See you at the next election!