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2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION PROCEDURES

As Clerk of the Township of Billings for the municipal elections, I do hereby certify the following procedures for conducting the 2026 municipal elections. and also certify the forms noted (or similar version, either paper or electronic) as being those permitted to be used during this election process.

April 30th, 2026
Date Approved

Clerk

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1. DEFINITIONS

Act - means the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, S.O. 1996, C. 32, as amended.

Ballot - means a composite ballot when there is an election for more than one office.

Ballot Counting Location - means the designated place where the ballots are counted, being the Park Centre located at 34 Henry Drive, Kagawong Ontario.

Ballot Counting Station - means the designated areas within the ballot counting location where the ballots are counted.

Ballot Return Station - means a designated location where electors can drop off completed return envelopes directly into the care of the Clerk or designate rather than forwarding it by mail, being the Municipal Office.

Ballot Status: Issued / Returned / Rejected / Voided / Counted

Candidate - means a person who has been nominated under Section 33 of the Act.

Chain of Custody: Documented control of ballots and materials from issuance to storage

Clerk - means the Clerk of the municipality who is responsible for conducting municipal elections under the authority of the Act. All references to the Clerk for the purposes of this manual shall mean the Returning Officer (R.O.) for the 2026 Municipal Election. All references to Clerk's designate shall mean the delegated duties of the R.O.

Election Campaign Advertisement – means advertisement in any broadcast, electronic, print or other medium having the purpose of promoting/supporting the election of a Candidate.

Election Official - means the Clerk or other person(s) appointed in writing by the Clerk to carry out election duties under the Act. An Election Official can only carry out the tasks and duties as assigned in writing by the Clerk and must take the prescribed oath. [s.15(4)]

Municipal Office - means the Township of Billings office located at 15 Old Mill Road.

Preliminary List of Electors - means a list of electors for the municipality compiled by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) and provided to the municipality on or before September 1 of an election year. s.19.(1.1))

Regular Office Hours - means Monday - Thursday, 8:30am to 4:00pm & Friday 8:30am - 12:00pm

Replacement Kit: A re-issued voter package where the original is voided

Scrutineer - means an individual, appointed in writing by a certified candidate, to represent him or her during the voting process, or an individual appointed by Council, a local board or the Minister in relation to a by-law or question, or by an elector in the case of a recount.

Secure Drop Box – means a locked receptacle for ballot return, subject to controlled collection

Voter's Kit - means the set of documents mailed to each elector at the elector's mailing address on the Voters' List to enable him or her to cast his or her vote and includes:

- Voting Instruction Sheet
- Composite Ballot
- Ballot Secrecy Envelope
- Return Envelope
- Voter Declaration Form
- Such other material as the Clerk deems necessary

Voter Kit ID – means a unique identifier assigned to each issued ballot package

Voters' List - means the Preliminary List of Electors, as corrected by the Clerk, under the provisions of Section 22 of the Act.

Voting Day (not to be confused with Voting Period) - means the final day on which the final vote is to be taken in an election and shall be October 26, 2026. with the close of voting to be at 8:00 pm.

2. AUTHORITY

These procedures are established by the Clerk (Returning Officer) pursuant to sections 11, 12, and 42 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* ("the Act"). They govern the conduct of the 2026 municipal election using vote-by-mail and prevail over conflicting provisions of the Act where permitted (s.42). The procedures included in this document may be amended by the Clerk as necessary to ensure integrity, security, and accessibility. Any amendments will be shared with candidates as they take effect.

The Clerk's interpretation of these procedures is final.

Council of the Township of Billings has enacted By-law 2026-18 authorizing the use of Vote by Mail as an alternative voting method which eliminates the need for advanced voting and proxy voting.

2.1. Roles and Responsibilities

Clerk (Returning Officer)

- Overall authority for election conduct
- Establishes and enforces procedures
- Final decision on ballot validity

Election Officials

- Appointed in writing
- Must take oath
- Perform assigned duties only

Deputy Returning Officer (DRO)

- Supervises ballot processing and count
- Makes decisions on ballot acceptance/rejection

2.2. Procedures and Forms

The purpose of this document is to establish procedures for "Vote by Mail" that are consistent with the principles of the *Municipal Elections Act*. Section 42(4) states that the procedures and forms established by the Clerk, if they are consistent with the principles of this Act, prevail over anything in this Act and the regulations made under it. With respect to matters of policy and procedure for alternative voting methods and interpretation of this document, the Clerk's decision is final as per section 12 of the *Municipal Elections Act*.

The Clerk has the right to amend this document at any time to reflect changes in procedures necessary to facilitate the vote, count & security of the election process. If amendments to these procedures are necessary, a notice of the amendment will be communicated to each candidate & third-party advertiser, as applicable, at the address shown on the nomination/registration form.

2.3. Emergencies

In the event of any condition of an emergency or circumstance that will undermine the integrity of the election, the Clerk may declare an emergency and make any arrangements as are considered necessary for the conduct of the election.

For the purposes of these procedures, an emergency may include, but is not limited to, disruptions to mail delivery, natural disasters, significant service interruptions, or any circumstance that may affect the integrity or administration of the election. In such cases, the Clerk may implement adjustments to procedures or timelines as necessary and shall document any actions taken.

2.4. Principles of the Act

- The election shall be conducted in accordance with the following principles:
- the secrecy and confidentiality of the individual votes is paramount;
- the election should be fair and non-biased;
- the election should be accessible to the voters;
- the integrity of the process should be maintained throughout the election;
- there be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast; and
- voters and candidates should be treated fairly and consistently within a municipality.

3. ELECTION TIMELINE & KEY DATES

The Clerk shall establish and administer all key election dates, including the nomination period, nomination day, certification of candidates, withdrawal deadlines, voting day, and declaration of results. The Clerk shall ensure that all statutory deadlines are met and that candidates and the public are informed of key dates through appropriate communication channels. Where adjustments are required due to unforeseen circumstances, the Clerk shall implement appropriate administrative measures within the authority provided.

Key Dates

Nomination period start:	May 1, 2026
Nomination Day	August 21, 2026 (by 2pm)
Certification of candidates	August 24, 2026 (by 4pm)
Withdrawal deadline	August 26, 2026
Voting Day	October 26, 2026
Declaration of results	As soon as possible after election day

4. NOMINATIONS AND CANDIDATE ADMINISTRATION

The Clerk shall receive and review nomination papers and determine completeness based on the requirements of the Act. Where deficiencies are identified, the Clerk shall determine whether they may be corrected within the permitted timeframe or whether the nomination must be rejected. Certification of candidates shall be conducted following review, and the Clerk shall maintain the official list of certified candidates.

The Clerk shall administer candidate withdrawals and update all records accordingly. Access to the Voters' List shall be controlled by the Clerk and provided only to certified candidates in accordance with established procedures. All communications relating to election administration shall be issued through the Clerk's office.

5. THIRD PARTY ADVERTISERS

The Clerk shall administer the registration of third party advertisers and maintain a registry of all approved participants. The Clerk shall provide administrative guidance respecting the registration process and maintain records for reporting purposes.

6. USE OF MUNICIPAL RESOURCES

Municipal Elections Act, 1996 section 88.18

Municipal resources shall not be used for any election campaign purposes, the Township's Policy is set out in By-Law #2026-19 attached under Schedule A

The Clerk shall oversee compliance with this requirement and shall address any concerns that arise. Staff shall remain neutral and shall not use municipal equipment, facilities, or communication systems for campaign-related activities. Where a potential breach is identified, the Clerk shall review the matter and take appropriate administrative action.

7. CLERK'S REVISIONS TO THE VOTER'S LIST

The Returning Officer will delegate powers and duties to a Deputy Returning Officer(s) and Election Officials. These individuals will be considered to be election staff and will be required to take an oath and be assigned such duties related to the election as are deemed necessary by the Returning Officer.

The *Municipal Elections Act*, section 12(1) provides that a clerk who is responsible for conducting an election may provide for any matter or procedure that, is not otherwise provided for in an Act or regulation; and, in the clerk's opinion, is necessary or desirable for conducting the election.

While the provisions of sections 24 and 25 of the *Municipal Elections Act* set out a process for the addition or removal of names for the voters' list during the period that begins on the September 1, 2026 and ends at the close of voting on voting day (the Revision Period), these sections do not prohibit the clerk from deleting or adding names. Rather, they provide a person with the opportunity to apply to have their name added or removed or have another person's name removed.

The goal of having a voters' list that is as accurate as possible to both desirable and necessary for the conduct of an election and the integrity of the voters' list is particularly important when the election is conducted by mail. With this goal in mind, the clerk will make changes to the voters' list during the Revision Period based upon information gleaned from returned mail, the Supplementary Preliminary List of Electors and on information obtained verbally from an elector whose information on the voters' list is incorrect. If the elector does not appear in person, a certified copy showing proof of ID and proof of residence/occupancy is required. *An elector can no longer remove a family member's name from the Voters' List, except in the case of a deceased person.* Material changes made by the clerk will be recorded on the list of revisions that is provided to each candidate.

Nothing in this policy shall prevent the use of bar code or other technology for any purpose necessary for the conduct of the election.

8. SCRUTINEERS

There will be three Counting Stations at the Counting Location. Only one scrutineer per candidate is allowed at any Counting Station. The candidate and their scrutineer ARE NOT permitted to be present at the same Counting Station.

Before being admitted to the Counting Location, a person appointed as a scrutineer shall produce and show their appointment form (Scrutineer Form EL 12) to the Deputy Returning Officer for the Counting location and take the oral Oath of Secrecy (Form EL

12B) from the Deputy Returning Officer. Anyone who is creating a disturbance at the Counting Location will be removed by the Deputy Returning Officer.

Scrutineers are reminded to provide a clipboard for their own use as sitting at the table, which is provided for the Deputy Returning Officer and Voting Place Clerk, IS NOT permitted.

During the counting of the votes, scrutineers may examine all ballots but SHALL NOT handle them. Scrutineers may object to the counting of a ballot and any objection will be noted on the back of the ballot. The final decision as to whether a vote shall be counted is the sole responsibility of the Deputy Returning Officer. Scrutineers/candidates shall not, in any way, impeded the progress of the counting of the votes.

9. VOTE BY MAIL PROCEDURES

Where an election is required to be held for an office, the vote by mail procedure shall be as follows:

On or before September 29, 2026 delivery of Voter's Kits to electors will begin. Each Voter's Kit shall be assigned a unique identifier for tracking purposes. Where a replacement kit is issued, the original kit shall be voided in the tracking record to ensure that only one ballot may be counted per elector.

Upon receipt of the Voter's Kit, each elector should follow the instructions provided in the kit exactly. These instructions require the elector to:

- Complete the ballot;
- Insert the ballot into the ballot envelope;
- Seal the ballot envelope;
- Complete a voter declaration form;
- Place the completed voter declaration form and the ballot envelope into the business reply envelope;
- Seal the business reply envelope; and,
- Mail the business reply envelope by October 15, 2026 or deliver it by some other means to the Municipal Office no later than 8:00 p.m. on Voting Day. *The postage paid envelope is only applicable for mail originating within Canada.*

October 15, 2026 is the final day to mail a ballot package. Electors who have not mailed their ballot package by that date are encouraged to take steps to ensure alternate delivery to the Municipal Office during regular office hours or up to 8:00 p.m. on Voting Day. All electors on the Voters' List up to and including, will receive a Voter's Kit by mail from the Township's election service provider.

Electors added to the list between September 1st and September 30th will receive a Voter's kit by mail from the municipality. After September 30, it is recommended that persons making application to add their names to the list do so in person at the Municipal Office. If the application is certified by the Clerk, a Voter's Kit will be issued at that time.

It must be emphasized that, in a vote by mail system, the onus is on eligible electors to ensure that their names are on the Voters' List. Due to time constraints the Clerk cannot

ensure that Voter's Kits mailed after September 30, 2026 will reach electors in time for them to exercise their right to vote.

Where it is not possible to mail a Voter's Kit to an elector, and if the elector undertakes to pay the cost of courier services, the Clerk will arrange for a Voter's Kit to be delivered to the elector by courier, collect.

If an elector does not receive a Voter's Kit, or if the Kit is lost or destroyed, the elector may attend at the municipal office to obtain a replacement Kit. The Clerk will confirm that the elector is qualified, administer the appropriate oath, and issue the replacement Voter's Kit.

Where a Voter's Kit is returned by Canada Post as "undeliverable", reasonable attempts will be made to obtain the elector's address or to advise the elector that the Voter's Kit was returned.

10. PROCESSING DECLARATION FORMS & RETURN ENVELOPES

The following procedures shall be followed to store and process returned ballot packages:

- 10.1. Ballot packages which are received at the Ballot Return Station (Municipal Office) will be stored in a locked cabinet in the office of the Clerk in the Municipal Office for safekeeping until the designated time for the ballot packages to be opened in accordance with the procedures set out below. Access to this cabinet will be restricted to authorized election officials commencing at the time of receipt of the first ballot package until the close of the Ballot Return Station on Voting Day.
- 10.2. On October 26, 2026, beginning at 4 p.m. two or more election officials will together open ballot packages which have been received at the Ballot Return Station and shall:
 - a) Remove the ballot envelope and elector declaration from the return envelope.
 - If a ballot package contains a different number of elector declarations than the number of ballot envelopes, the ballot(s) will be rejected
 - If a ballot package contains an elector declaration which has not been signed, the ballot will be rejected.
 - If a ballot package contains no elector declaration the ballot will be rejected.
 - If a ballot envelope contains writing or marks that may identify the elector or is torn or defaced or otherwise dealt with by the elector in a way that may identify them, the ballot may be rejected. Since ballot envelopes will be opened and separated from the ballot prior to counting, ballot envelopes dealt with in such a manner will not automatically be rejected. The decision of the Deputy Returning Officer is final.
 - If, upon opening the ballot package, it is found that the ballot envelope has not been sealed, the election official may seal the envelope without examining the ballot.

- Where a ballot envelope is rejected, the reason for the rejection shall be recorded by numbering the ballot envelope and noting the reason for the rejection on a Rejected Ballots Record.
- b) Update the Voters' List by striking the name of the elector.
- c) Place the elector declaration in a container, filed alphabetically.
- d) Place the ballot envelope in a ballot box.
- e) Leave 10 unopened kits until 8 p.m. Then proceed following the above instructions including any ballot envelopes received between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. on voting day.
- f) After all ballot packages have been dealt with, affix a seal to the ballot box.

As soon as possible after 8 p.m. the sealed ballot box will be moved, by two election officials, to the Ballot Counting Location. (Park Centre),

- 10.3. Ballot packages received after 8:00 p.m. on Voting Day will be date stamped, will not be counted and will be placed in a secure drop box and retained for the statutory document retention period.

11. COUNTING PROCEDURES

The following procedures shall be followed for ballot counting:

At 7:45 p.m. on Voting Day the following persons shall be sequestered at the Counting Location (Park Centre) and shall remain sequestered until the end of the vote count.

- Deputy Returning Officers
- Designated Election Officials
- Candidates and scrutineers who choose to be present.

The following procedures apply to those persons sequestered:

- a) The doors of the Counting Location will be locked during sequester. Only the persons set out above will be permitted at the Counting Location.
- b) With the exception of the Clerk, and the Election Consultant, no election official, candidate or scrutineer will be permitted to leave until completion of the count.
- c) Notwithstanding sequestering for the purposes of processing the ballot packaging, voting will be permitted and will continue until 8:00 p.m. on Voting Day.

Cell phones or other communications equipment will not be permitted in the Counting Location other than for election officials.

Candidate and scrutineers shall not interfere with the vote count in any manner either during sequester or during the vote count after 8:00 p.m.

No campaign materials will be allowed at the Counting Location.

During sequester, the Election officials shall:

- a) Remove the ballot envelopes from the ballot box;
- b) Open the ballot envelopes and remove the ballots. In the event a ballot is accidentally cut when the ballot envelope is opened, the election official shall

repair the ballot and note on the reverse of the ballot that the damage to the ballot was caused by the election official;

- c) Sort the ballots into bundles of fifty (50) in preparation for the count. Election Officials responsible for sorting will not examine the ballots. Examination of the ballot will take place during the counting of the ballots.
- d) When all ballot envelopes have been opened and bundled, the count will begin.
- e) At each of the three counting stations there will be three election officials and one scrutineer or candidate per nominated person. Scrutineers are not permitted to sit at the table with the election officials.

Any part of any ballot rejected shall not invalidate the remainder of the ballot except if there are identifying marks, in which case the entire ballot will be rejected.

If a ballot envelope contains more than one ballot, the ballots will be rejected.

If a ballot contains writing or marks that may identify the elector or its torn or defaced or otherwise dealt with by the elector in a way that may identify them, the ballot may be rejected.

Once all ballots have been counted the ballots will be returned to the ballot boxes, ballot boxes sealed and returned to the municipal cabinet.

During sequester, Candidates and Scrutineers shall not be permitted to inspect or examine the ballots.

Tabulation of the Statements of Results shall be conducted in the office of the Clerk.

Unofficial results of the counting will be posted on the Township's bulletin board in the Municipal Office as soon as possible after all ballots have been counted.

12.RECONCILIATION OF BALLOTS

Reconciliation of ballots will be based on:

- Number of Voter's Kits mailed to electors
- Number of Voter's Kits issued through the revision process
- Number of Voter's kits returned as "undeliverable" by Canada Post
- Number of ballot packages returned to the Municipal Office in time to be counted
- Number of ballot packages returned after the close of voting

Statistical analyses of "voter turnout" will be drawn from the reconciliation process and by counting the number of ballots dealt with on Voting Day as set out in the Statement of the Deputy Returning Officer.

In a traditional election, reconciliation of ballots is a means of ensuring that the number of ballots handed out is the same as the number of ballots returned. It must be noted that in the vote by mail process, the reconciliation is only meaningful in terms of election statistics.

13.RECOUNT PROCEDURES

Where a recount is required or authorized, the Clerk shall conduct the recount in a controlled environment and in a manner that is consistent with the original voting method where practicable. The Clerk shall provide notice of the recount to affected parties and shall ensure that the process is conducted in a manner that preserves the integrity of the ballots and the secrecy of the vote.

14. TIE VOTE PROCEDURE

In the event of a tie vote, the Clerk shall conduct a draw by lot to determine the successful candidate. The process shall be conducted in a controlled and transparent manner, and the outcome shall be recorded as part of the official results.

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16. DECLARATION OF RESULTS

Upon completion of the counting of ballots, the Clerk shall verify and compile the results. Unofficial results may be released following the completion of the count; however, the Clerk shall declare the official results once satisfied as to their accuracy. The declaration shall be recorded and made available to the public.

17. ACCESSIBILITY

The Clerk shall ensure that the election is accessible to all electors and shall provide assistance or alternative arrangements where required. Following the election, the Clerk shall prepare a report outlining accessibility measures and any identified improvements.

18. RECORDS RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION

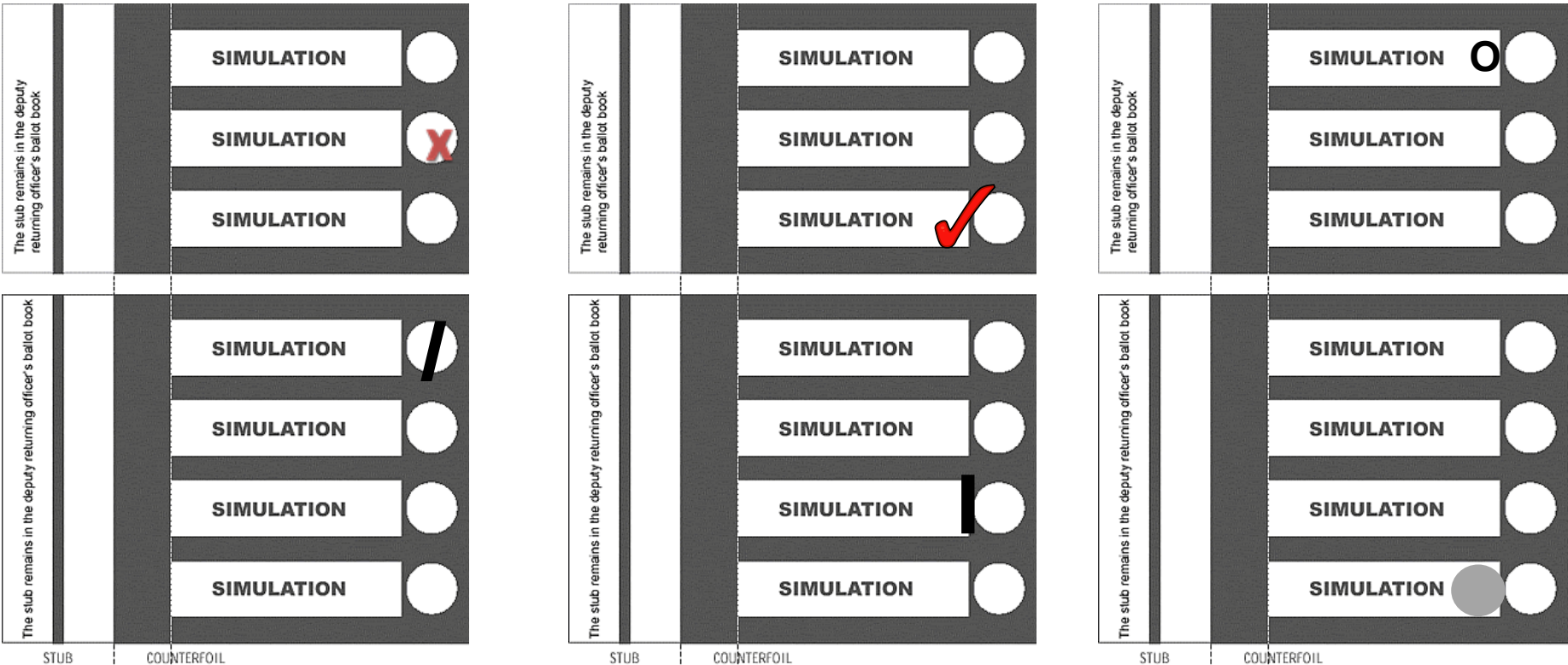
All election materials shall be retained in accordance with statutory requirements and shall be stored securely under the control of the Clerk. At the end of the retention period, materials shall be destroyed in a secure manner, and a record of destruction shall be maintained.

19. FORMS

All forms used in the administration of the election shall be approved by the Clerk. Forms may be updated as required, provided that they remain consistent with these procedures.

Sample Marked Ballots

The sample marked ballots below should be **accepted and counted**.



The sample marked ballots below should be **rejected**.

The stub remains in the deputy returning officer's ballot book	SIMULATION ☐ SIMULATION ☒ SIMULATION ☐				
The stub remains in the deputy returning officer's ballot book	SIMULATION ☐ 2 SIMULATION ☐ 1 SIMULATION ☐ 4 SIMULATION ☐ 3				
The stub remains in the deputy returning officer's ballot book	SIMULATION ☐ 0 SIMULATION ☐ 0 SIMULATION ☒				
The stub remains in the deputy returning officer's ballot book	SIMULATION ☐ ~~SIMULATION~~ ☐ SIMULATION ☐ SIMULATION ☐				
The stub remains in the deputy returning officer's ballot book	SIMULATION ☐ 12 SIMULATION ☐ SIMULATION ☐				
The stub remains in the deputy returning officer's ballot book	SIMULATION ☐ SIMULATION ☐ SIMULATION ☐ SIMULATION <i>Ben</i> ☒				
STUB	COUNTERFOIL	STUB	COUNTERFOIL	STUB	COUNTERFOIL