

# Emergency/ Contingency Plan for Elections in the Town of Chester

The following document provides a plan for handling incidents and situations that may affect the administration of an election in the Town of Chester.

## Polling Place Relocation

In the event that in the days leading up to or of the election day, the current polling place (the Community Room) within Town Hall becomes unusable, the polling place will be moved to the first floor of Town Hall.

Should the Town Hall become unusable, the alternate site is the firehouse on High Street which has generator power and internet access. This site is handicap accessible and has plenty of parking. Appropriate signage will be placed at Town Hall directing voters to the firehouse, along with notice over the town's social media and email. The equipment and ballots will be transferred following applicable state statutes and procedures prescribed by the Secretary of State.

In the event of a life-threatening emergency situation during polling hours such as fire, explosion, etc. The polling place will be evacuated.

The moderator shall:

1. Alert all individuals present of the emergency situation and direct them to evacuate the building and gather at the north corner of the parking lot. The moderator will identify specific poll workers to assist with evacuation.
2. Get a headcount to make certain everyone present is evacuated
3. Identify individuals who may need assistance to evacuate the building and assign a poll worker to assist.
4. Direct the registrars to secure voting equipment and materials
5. If the emergency situation has been resolved, consult with emergency personnel and the Registrars of Voters to determine if the polling location can be re-entered.
6. If the polling place can ultimately be re-entered, continue to run the election from the parking lot until re-entry is available
7. If it is determined that the alternate site must be utilized, announce the location/address of the new polling place. Direct the registrars and poll workers to provide signage and messages on social media and email about the change in polling place location.
8. Work with registrars and poll workers to arrange for the transport of tabulators, ballots and other election needs.

## **Severe Weather**

In the event of possible severe weather, the registrars and moderator will review the weather service reports and consult with the First Selectman and town emergency personnel. Depending upon the nature of the severe weather, they will determine a plan of action and notify the poll workers. If the alternate polling site will be used, the registrars will ensure that there is signage posted at Town Hall providing the location of the polling place. In addition, notice will go out through the town's social media and email.

## **Pandemic/Epidemic**

In the event of a pandemic/epidemic, the registrars will confirm a list of poll workers able and willing to work and create a list of supplies necessary for election administration beyond the usually required items (more ballot marking pens, PPE for poll workers, cleaning supplies, etc.). The registrars will also prepare the polling place in such a way as to follow social distancing guidelines for elections as laid out by the Connecticut Secretary of the State or CDC or the local municipal health office.

## **Other situations that may affect the administration of an election:**

**Ballot Shortage:** In the event of a ballot shortage, the registrars, with the moderator's approval, will first use any extra Absentee Ballots. The computer markings on the side of the ballot will be crossed through so the tabulator cannot read it. After filling in the ballot, the voter will be instructed to place the ballot in the side slot on the tabulator for hand counting. If absentee ballots are not available, then the registrars will photocopy enough ballots as deemed necessary using the onsite photocopier. After filling the ballot, the voter will be instructed to place the ballot in the side slot on the tabulator for hand counting.

**Malfunction of electronic voting equipment:** In the event of a tabulator or IVS malfunction, the town has backup tabulators and IVS equipment prepared for use. The moderator can also direct voters to place their ballots in the side pocket of the tabulator to either be put through a tabulator at a later time or be hand counted. The moderator will also ensure that should IVS not be working, voters needing assistance are provided with the appropriate support.

**Replacement of Poll Worker or Moderator:** Should a situation arise that results in the moderator or a poll worker unable to fulfill their duties, the registrars keep a list of back up moderators and poll workers to call on.

**Disorder in or around the Polling Place:** If a situation arises that causes disorder, the moderator will investigate and, if necessary, call the police.

**Internet access unavailable:** If access to the internet should become unavailable during an election the process for EDR would be interrupted. The registrars shall continue to accept voter registration cards and allow voters to vote using the EDR process. If internet access is returned, registrars will process the

registration cards through CVRS and follow up appropriately depending upon the voter's status as either a new voter or a voter who is registered in another town. If internet access is not returned before the end of the election day, the registrars will follow instructions provided by the Connecticut Secretary of the State or hold the ballots until service is restored prior to reporting the final results of the vote.